

York St John University

Quality and the Student Experience Committee

Report on the HEAR Project at York St John

York St John Progress September 2010

As a pilot site York St John University undertook to test the potential for producing a Higher Education Achievement Record for its full graduating cohort in Session 2010/2011. Deputy Registrar Student Information has succeeded in producing this in a test environment . However, the information which would distinguish a Higher Education record from the transcript which is routinely supplied has been added to the student data base in an artificial way . The trial is limited by the fact that the university has not yet systematically committed itself to the sort of activity which would generate such data and collect it in a routine way against the student record.

The approach taken in respect of Section 6.1 information (the additional information encouraged by the HEAR project) was to utilise information which was held by different areas of the University. Examples were

- Student Union data base on student roles in respect of societies and the Union
- Placement information from the Faculty of HLS
- Information on the Student Warden team from Accommodation
- Information on the Student Ambassador Team from Marketing
- Information on Prizes (and scholarships?) from Registry and Development Office

The information was held inconsistency in a range of formats and was extracted and input to SITS by a manual operation . If this was to be done on sustainable, regular basis , much work would have to be done to ensure that information was kept in standard formats.

In addition to the section dealing with achievements outside the formal academic programme , information had to be imported into SITS form programme specifications so that more detail could be provided about the intentions of the programme . This has been done successfully as a manual operation in the first instance. The experience has suggested that subject areas would wish to review and revise the information included in the programme specifications to make it more manageable for this purpose.

In taking the project forward, we had initially considered displaying the draft HEAR reports to the students of the graduating cohort so that we could seek comment. After further consultation with the HEAR Group, it was decided not to do so. There were a number of reasons. For many the documents would not be intrinsically different from the transcript but the new terminology would cause confusion. Secondly, it would be strange to display the report but not then supply it. We have decided to test the record by sending a sample to Heads of Programme for review .

Following our experience, we are confident that the document can be produced on a large scale basis . The significant **technical** issues still to be resolved are

- Formats for the collection and input of additional data
- Final format of the report

- Publication and circulation methods

In addition to the set of technical issues, the University must

- Determine and commit to its approach to the additional information which should be included in the HEAR report
- Ensure that programmes are clear about the information they will include on the HEAR report by amending their programme specifications.

Future plans

The Burgess Group is likely to report on the HEAR project during the autumn term of 2010/2011 and make recommendations about a roll out across the sector. There is a strong wish on the part of the project team to hasten the introduction of the HEAR as much as possible. There are obstacles to roll out, however, in the form of lack of progress on the part of software houses in the adaptation of student record systems. However, thinking is pointing towards an intention to offer a HEAR to the main group of students commencing HE studies in 2011 and graduating in 2014. Students entering in 2010 and leaving HE with completed modular achievement, interim awards and FDs between 2011 and 2014 will need a HEAR. This means that by September 2011 the University will

- Need to be able to explain the concept of the HEAR and associated arrangements on entry in 2011
- Encourage students to start the process of engaging with and recording any activities additional to their programme
- Have mechanisms in place to verify and record such activities
- Have in place mechanisms to share the HEAR reports with employers as and when students apply for jobs.

Extra-curricular achievement

The single most significant task for the University is to agree the ways in which it will facilitate students in enhancing their academic transcript through recording information additional to their modular syllabus.

The University will need to decide whether the HEAR will merely achieve participation in agreed activities or that specific roles have been undertaken or whether it wishes to record achievement of additional skills gained through participation in a range of activities. Crudely, the first approach might be characterised as defining a process which would permit the University to include a statement on the HEAR to the effect that a student was a programme representative, captain of a sports team, student warden etc. It would not differentiate between an effective programme representative or sports captain and one who was elected but did little. The second process might be more concerned with specific skill categories such as helping skills, communication skills or organisation skills. A student would apply for inclusion of the skills on the HEAR on the basis of a process of accreditation of a piece of reflection based on verified experience. (Please see the annex for indications of the respective approaches.)

In either case, a mechanism for the capture of the data will be required. In the second instance, a panel of verifiers would need to be convened. It should be emphasised that this need not be a burden on academic staff but there is the possibility for wider community involvement. The second

approach is more aligned with positive skills acquisition and will also allow verifiable experience gained for outside the university to provide the basis for the reflection on skills acquired.

The University's guidance on the approach to be favoured would be welcomed .

<p>Alternative approaches to Section 6.1 additional information</p>	
<p>(a) Record university roles simply</p>	
<p>QSEC agrees list of roles eligible for recording on HEAR e.g. Student Warden , SU official</p> <p>Designated University officers produce short descriptors of role for publication</p> <p>Designated University officers maintain data base of those holding roles in current year</p> <p>Student invited to indicate roles which they want to be recorded</p> <p>Registry cross checks student requests against data bases provided</p> <p>Registry refers discrepancies to Designated University officers holding data for a final decision</p> <p>Information recorded in Section 6.1</p>	<p>There is no reflection on adequacy of performance</p>
<p>(b) Record achievement by category on the basis of simple assessment</p>	
<p>QSEC approves a set of skills or experience profiles for recording on HEAR e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People • Communication Skills • Organisation • International Perspectives <p>Achievement criteria and evidence base approved and assessors are identified. These may be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verification of participation in cited activity • Short piece of reflection on learning achieved . <p>Student assembles required material and enters claim for record via Moodle site?</p>	<p>Overseas experience not leading to academic credit could be acknowledged</p> <p>The experience leading to learning could be university activity or offsite community activity provided that it is verified (e.g, running a Brownie pack) The value rests in the demonstration skills or learning acquired</p>

<p>Assessors approve claims</p> <p>Registry add approved citation and details of experience to HEAR</p>	<p>The explanation for the category could be followed by a record of the nature of the activity through the experience was gathered.</p>
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