Employers' introduction to the Higher Education Achievement Report

The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) provides a detailed record of a student's achievement during their time in higher education. This introduction explains the benefits of the HEAR to employers.

A more detailed, technical guide on the HEAR's contents is also available – the Employers' Detailed Guide to the HEAR – along with further information for employers – including examples of different HEARs on these pages.

Summary of the changes

- From now onwards, increasing numbers of new graduates leaving higher education will do so with a Higher Education Achievement Report – a HEAR.

- The HEAR provides a detailed record of a student's achievement during their time in higher education.

- Higher education institutions start compiling the HEAR when the student enrols so it is a cumulative document, but is final when issued at graduation.

- The HEAR will be accessible by potential employers (with the student's permission) at any time during the student's academic career and afterwards.

- The HEAR will allow employers to access better, more detailed, information about the performance of student/graduate applicants.

- The HEAR is a formal document produced, and signed off, by a higher education institution.

- The HEAR is an electronic document. It follows a standard format and is a maximum of six pages long. All higher education institutions issuing a HEAR are using this template.

- Students and graduates are likely to use their HEAR in a variety of circumstances, not least to support applications before the final award is made. In all cases, however, a direct and authenticated interaction with the awarding institution, holding the true HEAR record, can confirm any assertion made regarding the HEAR.

- Graduates will continue to leave higher education with a traditional degree certificate, in addition to the HEAR.

What is the HEAR?

The HEAR is an electronic document, prepared and signed off by a higher education institution, which provides a record of a student's achievement during their time in higher education. All HEARs follow a standard template, updated at specific points. The HEAR can be accessed at any time during a student's career with the institution and afterwards.

It is issued as an **electronic document and will not be longer than six pages**. The HEAR contains new, more detailed, information which contextualises the overall honours degree classification or other award. In particular:

- The HEAR provides details about the **contents of the programme studied**. This includes: details of the course coverage, knowledge and understanding the student can be expected to have gained; year-by-year breakdown of modules studied and marks obtained; and the main intellectual, practical and key transferable skills that the student should have developed during their studies; and

- One whole section of the HEAR provides **additional information** – rounding out the picture of the student beyond traditional academic achievement. This is verified and validated by the institution in three categories of:
  - additional awards
  - additional recognised activities; and
  - university, professional and departmental prizes.

What is the HEAR not?

The HEAR is not a replacement for the traditional degree certificate or a substitute for the degree class. All degree students will leave higher education with a degree certificate as well as a HEAR.

The UK honours degree remains the core product of the UK higher education system. The classification of honours degrees is currently done on a summative scale - usually including First, Upper Second, Lower Second, Third and Fail. This information is not being replaced, it is being contained and contextualised within the more detailed HEAR and, therefore, supplemented with richer and fuller information about the knowledge, skills and achievements students have gained.

The overall intention is that, ultimately, the honours degree classification will be eclipsed by the better information contained in the HEAR, as students, employers and others become familiar with using it. In the meantime, however, the honours degree classification system will remain, and is included in the HEAR.

Many students already engage in personal development planning activities (PDP). The HEAR will complement these activities but the **HEAR and PDP are largely separate** and the essential difference is that PDP is compiled and owned by the student whilst the information in the HEAR is verified and signed off by the institution.

The HEAR is **not an attempt to create a ready-made CV for students**. It is a readily-accessible resource that will inform a student's CV. It will impact upon the way students tailor their CVs – resulting in more effective, relevant, targeted applications to employers.

What are the benefits to employers of introducing the HEAR?

Employers are a diverse group and, research shows, will use the HEAR, or aspects of it, in different ways.

For ease of reading and comparison, the HEAR has been designed in a **clearly set out, standard, format**. All higher education institutions issuing a HEAR will use this template.

The HEAR gives employers **better, more detailed, information** about the performance of student applicants during their time in higher education.

All of this information is verified and validated by the institution, **so employers can have confidence in it.**

The HEAR is an electronic document held securely by the issuing institution. Information from it can be uploaded directly into online recruitment systems. With the student's permission, employers can have access to their HEAR information thus **verifying key information quickly and simply**. The HEAR may even obviate the need for academic references by providing detailed, rapid and automated confirmation of student/graduate achievement.

The HEAR is designed to emphasise **continuing learning and professional development**, that employers expect of their employees. Some plan to use it with new recruits as a basis for further employee development.

In addition, and subject to the student's permission, the HEAR information will be **accessible to employers before graduation**. This will be especially useful in recruiting for internships during the academic year as well as permanent employment in advance of final results.

The HEAR will help students to prepare more **effective, relevant, targeted applications**.
It will provide an aide memoire in making applications, and employers should reap the benefits of this.

When will employers first use the HEAR?

The HEAR is being introduced in some higher education institutions now, and the intention is that a significant proportion of the UK higher education sector will be implementing it by 2012.

Further information

As described, the HEAR is strictly limited to a maximum of six pages. Its electronic format will enable employers, should they wish to do so, to link to further explanatory information about the course, institution, systems and process used etc, via hypertext.

A suite of documents and resources have accompanied the announcement of the changes. A set of materials and resources, dedicated to employers, are available on the HEAR website:

www.hear.ac.uk