



Information note

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Update on the Development of the Higher Education Achievement Report and National Conference

Reason for paper

To provide an update on the work of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group in developing the Higher Education Achievement Report and to announce a national conference.

Action

For action inside your institution, conference booking forms need to be returned to externalevents@heacademy.ac.uk by 16th October 2009.

Suggested distribution

Vice-Chancellors and Principals, Pro-Vice-Chancellors responsible for quality, teaching and learning and Academic Resgistrars

Attachments and links

I-2009-091(a) Conference Invitation Letter

I-2009-091(b) Conference Booking Form

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Background

Professor Robert Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, was invited by UniversitiesUK and GuildHE to consider a number of issues relating to measuring and recording student achievement, including degree classification and academic credit in England. This work has been supported by the funding councils and would not have been possible without their financial support. It has also been supported by a wide range of other agencies and organisations including the Higher Education Academy, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Centre for Recording Achievement and JISC.

A number of groups chaired by Professor Burgess, drawing in wide representation from the sector and engaging with the sector and wider stakeholders, have sought to address these issues. After considerable debate and consultation, the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) was proposed as a way forward in terms of increasing the amount of information available on student achievement in UK higher education. It may also, in the future, prove an effective replacement for the degree classification system.

The draft template for the HEAR was published in the final report of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group *Beyond the honours degree classification: The Burgess Group final report* available at:

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-272.aspx>

The template has drawn upon existing practice, including the European Diploma Supplement. UniversitiesUK and GuildHE invited Professor Burgess to trial the HEAR template with a selection of institutions to ensure that it was an effective and useful tool before considering adoption by the higher education sector as a whole. The Burgess Implementation Steering Group (BISG) was established to oversee this task; its members are:

Professor Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester (chair)
Professor Richard Barnett, Vice-Chancellor, University of Ulster
Professor Patricia Broadfoot, Vice-Chancellor, University of Gloucester
Professor Tony Chapman, Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Wales
Institute, Cardiff
Mr Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive, Association of Graduate Recruiters
Mr Stephen Isherwood, Senior Manager, Graduate Recruitment, Ernst & Young
Professor Anton Muscatelli, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Heriot-Watt University
Professor Paul O'Prey, Vice-Chancellor, Roehampton University
Mr Aaron Porter, Academic Affairs Officer, National Union of Students'
Professor Paul Ramsden, Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy
Professor Ella Ritchie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), University of
Newcastle
Mrs Ann Tate, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Northampton
Professor Elaine Thomas, Vice Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts
Professor Paul Webley, Director and Principal, School of Oriental and African Studies

Professor Diane Willcocks, Vice-Chancellor, York St John University
Mr Peter Williams, Chief Executive, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Supporting Officers:

Mr Greg Wade, Policy Adviser, UniversitiesUK
Mrs Helen Bowles, Policy Adviser, GuildHE
Mrs Jo Wood, Assistant Registrar, University of Leicester

Trialling the Higher Education Achievement Report

A number of institutions agreed to participate in the trialling of the HEAR:

University of Aberystwyth, University College London, University of Cumbria, University of Derby, University of Gloucestershire, Goldsmiths - University of London, University of Greenwich, University of Keele, University of Leicester, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, Newman University College, University of Northampton, University of Northumbria, University of St Andrews, University of Ulster, University of Wales Institute Cardiff, York St John University.

The HEAR has been trialled in stages with institutions starting with a small number of students in a selected number of subjects to identify a range of issues in relation to implementing the HEAR. These have included technical feasibility, the degree to which additional information could be included, the views of students and employers and implementation costs.

To enable full and critical testing of the template as well as respecting the confidentiality of the trialling institutions the initial results of the trial have remained confidential. Now that institutions are extending the trial of the HEAR to additional subjects it was considered an appropriate time to update and inform the sector on progress with trialling the HEAR.

The sections of the HEAR that have involved the greatest amount of discussion and testing have been concerned the amount of information available about assessment (section 4.3) as well as information about other activities and skills that can be verified by institutions (section 6.1). Considerable work has been undertaken considering the position of informal learning in relation to the HEAR and a number of examples from the trialling institutions have been tested and will be outlined at the national conference.

As well as trialling the format of the HEAR, research has been undertaken into the costs of implementing the HEAR for institutions, discussions have been held with the vendors of student records software and students' and employers' views have been sought both nationally and within the trialling institutions.

Other Activities

Alongside the trialling of the HEAR the BISG commissioned the Credit Issues Development Group, chaired by Professor Muriel Robinson, Principal of Bishop Grosseteste University College and supported by a QAA Secretariat, to develop a credit framework for England arising at the recommendations in the Burgess report. Again, in collaboration with the QAA, a survey has been conducted into the adoption of the credit framework in England and the results of this survey will be made available by the end of October 2009.

The BISG has also held ongoing discussions with the work of the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP) project which is developing the Unique Learner Number and the Individual Learner Record. The BISG is cooperating with this initiative to consider how it relates to the HE sector and impact upon the development of the HEAR. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.miap.gov.uk/>

Next steps

The BISG is currently working on the future timetable for the HEAR to ensure that institutions are given sufficient advance notice and guidance in relation to the proposal to adopt the HEAR across the HE sector. Further detail on this will be provided at the national conference on 4th November.

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