

Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

22 May 2019

Final Report of the Task Group to Review the Operation of Section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Report

Description of paper

1. This paper reports the findings of a short-life task group established by Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) in January 2019 to review the operation of section 6.1 of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR).

Action requested / recommendation

2. For approval of the principles to be applied when considering whether or not an activity should be included in section 6.1 of the HEAR (paragraph 6), and comment on the issues raised by Student Systems in paragraph 15.

Background and context

3. The higher education landscape has changed significantly since the HEAR was introduced by the University in 2011/12. In addition, consideration by the HEAR Recommendation Panel in November 2018 of proposals for new categories of wider achievement to be included in section 6.1 of the HEAR raised questions about the types of activity that the University should be recognising. LTC therefore agreed to establish a short-life task group to:
 - Review the principles applied when considering proposals for new categories of wider achievement
 - Review decisions taken in January 2016 around the strategic direction of the Edinburgh Award and the HEAR
 - Review approaches to verifying data associated with activities recognised in Section 6.1 of the HEAR
 - Review the way in which activities are presented in Section 6.1 of the HEAR
 - Undertake light-touch benchmarking against other institutions that are using the HEAR
4. The task group met twice in March and April 2019. In addition, it considered issues around the gathering and verification of HEAR data by correspondence.

Discussion

Purpose and Principles

5. The task group's starting point was to clarify the purpose of section 6.1 of the HEAR. It agreed that its purpose was to record 'meaningful' activity. As such, any activity recorded should:
 - be significant enough to sit alongside an Edinburgh degree
 - have impact

- encourage reflection and provide opportunities for learning development
- have longevity (ie. be available to students every year as opposed to being a one-off activity)
- be worth the effort involved in recording it on the HEAR.

The group noted that the HEAR is not a CV, and does not therefore need to detail every activity undertaken by a student.

6. Taking into account the purpose of section 6.1 of the HEAR, information gathered through light-touch benchmarking against other institutions that offer a HEAR, guidance within the [HEAR Reference Pack for Institutions](#), and the principles applied to the Edinburgh Award, the task group agreed that the following principles should be applied when considering whether or not an activity should be included in section 6.1:

All activity recognised in section 6.1 of the HEAR should be undertaken whilst a matriculated student, and should fit under 1 of 3 headings:

- 1. Additional Awards** – the ‘Edinburgh Award’
(Credit-bearing activity taken in addition to a standard credit load is recorded under Section 4.3 of the HEAR)
- 2. Additional Recognised Activities** – including volunteering, leadership and representative roles and other significant, verifiable roles
- 3. University, Students’ Association and Sports Union Prizes and Awards** – both academic and non-academic

In addition, all activity should be:

- **Substantial** – the activity has impact, encourages reflection, and provides opportunities for learning development and ‘stretch’. It is likely to involve a substantial time commitment.
- **Verifiable** – the activity is verifiable and endorsed by the University
- **Equitable** – the activity is available on an equal basis to a clearly defined group of students, and should be available to students on an on-going basis
- **Factual** – information included is factual and non-evaluative
- **Additional** – the activity is not required as part of the academic, credit-bearing curriculum

7. The task group also agreed the following sub-categories for heading 2, 'Additional Recognised Activities':

<p style="text-align: center;">Students' Association Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh University Students' Association Activities Position • Edinburgh University Students' Association Elected Office Bearer • Peer Support – PALS Student Leader and Peer Support Leader • Student Representative 	<p style="text-align: center;">University Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student membership of University Internal Review team (TPR, PPR and Thematic Review) • Student Representative
<p style="text-align: center;">Sports Union Roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edinburgh University Sports Union Representative or Office Bearer • Edinburgh University Sports Union Sports Clubs – Official Position 	<p style="text-align: center;">Roles Within Other University-Affiliated Bodies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Student Centre Committee Member • Edinburgh Nightline Committee Member • Edinburgh Students' Charities Appeal Executive Committee Member

Relationship with the Edinburgh Award

8. The task group met with a representative of the Edinburgh Award. Members recognised the high value of the Award and agreed that, at present, it should be the only 'Additional Award' (heading 1) recognised in Section 6.1 of the HEAR.
9. To highlight the value of the Edinburgh Award, the task group proposed providing a more detailed descriptor of the Edinburgh Award on the HEAR. Student Systems is investigating the potential to make this change.
10. The task group also agreed that additional text would be added to the HEAR webpage noting that it may be possible to recognise activity not currently recorded in section 6.1 of the HEAR via an Edinburgh Award.
11. The group agreed that it was acceptable for an activity to be recognised both as standalone activity in section 6.1 of the HEAR and through an Edinburgh Award, provided the activity was 'meaningful' and 'substantial' in both cases.

Verification of Data

12. Student Systems was consulted about processes for gathering and verifying the data relating to achievements currently recorded in section 6.1 of the HEAR. It was reported that, in general, the processes work well. There are currently some issues around data quality, but these are being addressed directly with the groups providing the data when they occur.

Future Development

13. The task group agreed that there would be benefit in recording on the HEAR scholarships awarded on the basis of academic merit (under heading 3, 'University, Students' Association and Sports Union Prizes and Awards'). Student Systems is considering whether the relevant data and resource are available to support this change.

14. The task group also agreed that, subject to further developments, the University may in future wish to include volunteering, study abroad, placements and University training courses in the HEAR.

15. In order to assist with planning, Student Systems would be keen to understand more about the University's appetite to expand the scope of the HEAR in future. Specifically, it would benefit from receiving feedback on whether the University might wish to:

- include information about those programmes that are professionally accredited on the HEAR
- include information about work and study away as the University's processes around this develop and capture more data;
- offer a HEAR to a broader group of students: at present, the HEAR is only offered to those on taught programmes. Service Excellence is considering whether it might be possible to offer a HEAR to postgraduate research students. Is there any drive to offer a HEAR to students studying for CPD or other programmes that do not lead to an award, particularly in light of developments around Distance Learning at Scale (DLAS) and Data-Driven Innovation (DDI)?

LTC's views on ways in which the HEAR might develop are sought.

Resource Implications

16. Changing the structure of the HEAR and expanding its scope have significant resource implications for Student Systems. Changes will need to be costed and prioritised before proceeding.

Equality & diversity

17. The revised principles to be applied when considering activity to be included in section 6.1 make it clear that activity should be equitable and therefore available on an equal basis to a clearly defined group of students on an on-going basis.

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Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

18. The changes noted here will be communicated via the University's [HEAR webpage](#).

Author

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10 May 2019

Freedom of Information

This paper is open