Engaging employers with the HEAR: an action list[1]

For institutions:

1. Identify the levels and channels on which you already engage with employers – not only on an institutional level, but also via departments (more subject/discipline specific). There is an auditing element to this - what's already going on? Do you have a central strategy for employer engagement (do you need one?). Think about engagement not only with individuals but with representative groups such as chambers of commerce (and other local groups) to support collective understanding. Who represents local employer bodies?

2. Think about your existing communication channels with students & academics as well as employers. What can be used and what needs to be developed further?

3. Talk to employers about how the HEAR could most usefully serve students, what do they look for? Are there discipline/professionally specific things that it will be important for the HEAR to include (verify)? Do you need to introduce any new processes/systems/awards to do this? Focus groups and employer forums could be used to inform individual institutional versions of the HEAR. If all of the information employers say they need cannot be included in the HEAR (e.g. if it is not verifiable) where else can students include it?

4. Use the conversations to build understanding of employers' needs e.g. they may want to focus on only some sections of the HEAR. Consider whether there is potential for the HEAR to replace references.

In light of 3 & 4:

5. Talk to employers about how to engage students with the HEAR, to ensure that they see it as relevant and use it appropriately. It will be important for departments to promote the HEAR locally in a way that talks to their students' particular needs. To ensure a two way conversation consider whether there is a role for HEAR ambassadors, students who can 'sell' the HEAR to employers on campus e.g. at careers' fairs.

6. Seek feedback via existing channels (e.g. Careers' Advisory Board) on text for inclusion in the HEAR, especially (lay) descriptions of academic programmes, extra-curricular activities and awards. Are these texts sufficiently accessible/informative/succinct?

7. Involve employers in discussions about how the HEAR can be used for embedding personal development planning and providing careers guidance to students.

8. Consider how your institution already provides access to and verifies student information for employers. Do you have existing interfaces? Do you need to tie in with these/modify these? The HEAR can provide a context for reviewing existing systems with a view to streamlining data management, document distribution etc. Think about accessibility to employers and the balance between safeguarding student data and accessibility.

9. Find out about the timing of different opportunities (internships and placements as well as recruitment cycles etc.) to inform the timescales for enabling access to HEARs prior to graduation. If it is

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important for certain information to be available at certain points, students will need to have the opportunity to share what has been verified for their HEAR at that point.

10. Prepare HEAR exemplars for discussion with employers. (An example with content would be useful to represent the HEAR to employers – perhaps a worked example on the website in the form of an interactive animation to show the HEAR developing over time.)

11. Remember that the HEAR is for all students (international as well as home) and will be available to all employers regardless of where they are based. Are you consulting widely enough (regionally, nationally and internationally)?