

European HEI Data Record Project

Submitted by the UK National Recognition Information Centre / National
Reference Point to the European Commission

European HEI Data Record Project
2005-3507/001-001/SO2 61-NAR

This research project report is published by UK NARIC. The project has been funded with support from the European Community.

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Please cite this publication as:

UK NARIC, European HEI Data Record Project, 2005, Cheltenham, England.

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The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom
Oriel House
Oriel Road
Cheltenham GL50 1XP
e.: projects@naric.org.uk
w.: www.naric.org.uk

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Executive Summary

This document relates to the European HEI Data Record Project which has been completed for the European Commission.

The principal aim of the project has been to design and create a database of higher education institutions that can be used as a reference tool with all key details of the status of a university's history. The database not only lists all currently recognised higher education institutions in the European Union, but also details of their previous names and any changes in status, with key dates.

The database is a useful and informative tool giving comprehensive, clear and valuable information regarding the history of each university. The flexible format of the database will facilitate regular updates and can be expanded to include institutions from EU accession countries such as Bulgaria and Romania.

The database is accessed at <http://historicalheis.naric.org.uk/>

1. Introduction

Feedback from credential evaluators at other ENIC-NARIC centres indicates that a lack of historical information on HEIs can prevent mutual recognition of individual qualifications. The gap in information regarding changes in status, name and affiliation can cause problems in the evaluation process and occasionally lead to incorrect decisions being made about the identity of a particular award.

For this reason, the UK NARIC has designed and developed a searchable online database to provide credential evaluators with easily accessible historical information about European higher education institutions.

2. Scope

The database is a comprehensive and detailed record of the historical developments in European higher education institutions, concentrating on recent history since the 1960s to provide credential evaluators with the information they are likely to encounter in their work.

The social and political changes in Eastern Europe and the widening participation in Higher Education over the past fifteen years have led to the modification and restructuring of the HE systems in many EU countries. These events have frequently led to the status of an institution being upgraded or changing name. Institutions have also taken strategic decisions to merge with other centres, or alternatively to separate from larger institutions to establish themselves independently.

The database has been developed to reflect such name changes, mergers and institutional separations. It provides a search function offering credential evaluators the opportunity to verify qualifications from institutions that have changed name or status and are no longer featured on current lists of recognised awarding bodies. The website is convenient and saves time as it lists information and the web addresses of HEIs in one site.

The database contains historical information of national higher education institutions in the following 25 European Unions Member States:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

3. Data Gathering

Various information sources have been used in researching the project. The list of titles of recognised institutions for each country has been provided by official governmental sources. UK NARIC made contact with relevant authorities to determine and verify changes in name and status for each recognised HE institution. These contacts include the Higher Education Institutions, government bodies and ministries, ENIC-NARIC network and British Council offices. Wider research has also been conducted using the information held in-house as well as national, European and international sources and ministry websites.

Research into the names of the institutions revealed that a substantial number of recognised colleges and universities in the EU have official titles in English as well as the language of origin. However, in some cases it was confirmed that there was no officially sanctioned English translation for the title of an institution. For example, the *Technische Universität Bergakademie Freiberg* in Germany does not include a translation. To maintain the accuracy of the data English translations were only listed where they were the official English name. In the instances where an institution only has an English title, the title in the language of origin field was left blank.

It was found that some HEIs do not have websites and other sources of information were unable to provide historical information, so the fields have been left blank in anticipation of further research.

In the cases of HEIs where there have been no name changes, this is clearly indicated beneath the title of the higher education institute.

4. Database Design

The project draws upon UK NARIC in-house technical expertise in the development of online databases.

The database has been developed using a Microsoft SQL back end, which enables the data to be stored and retrieved. The website has an ASP front end.

The database is designed to allow the user to track the history of a university or college that has since changed its name or status and therefore no longer appears on current lists of recognised awarding bodies.

The Basic Search allows the user to search by institution name or a key word from the title.

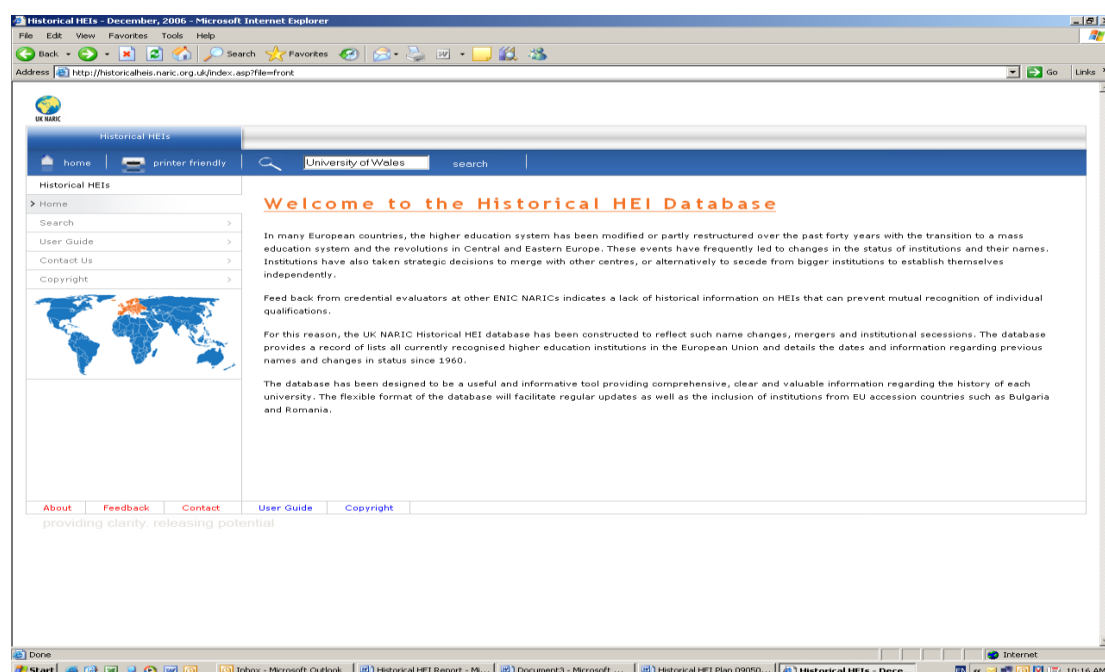


Illustration 1: Home page

The Advanced Search function allows the user to narrow the search or to broaden it by selecting a city or country. The search function has been designed to identify words in English or a foreign language.

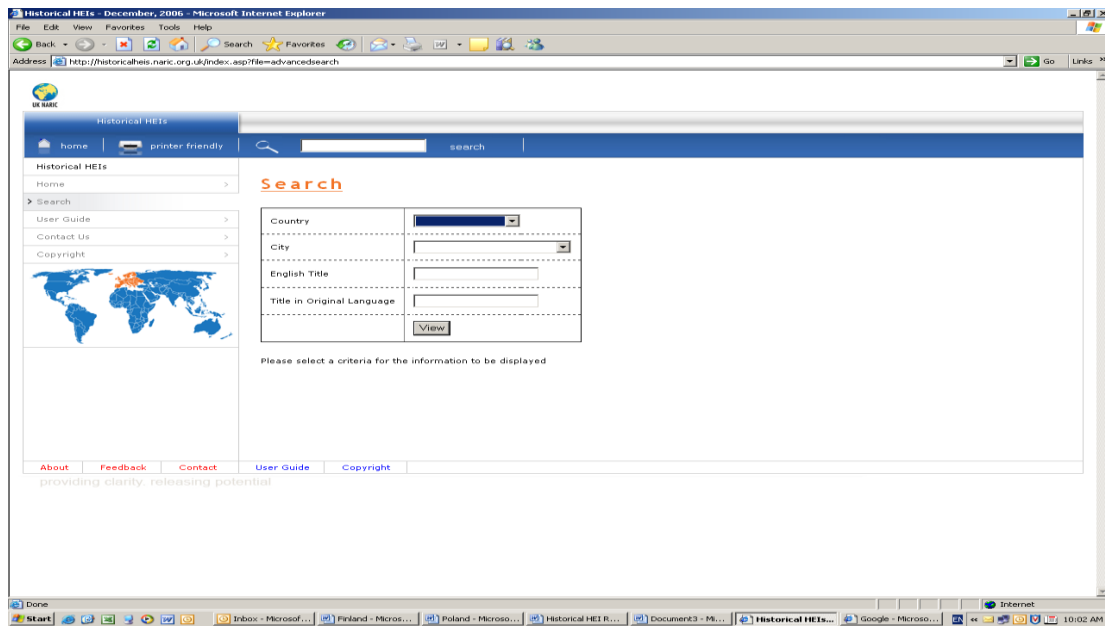


Illustration 2: Search function

Searches return a list of institutions corresponding to the criteria used.

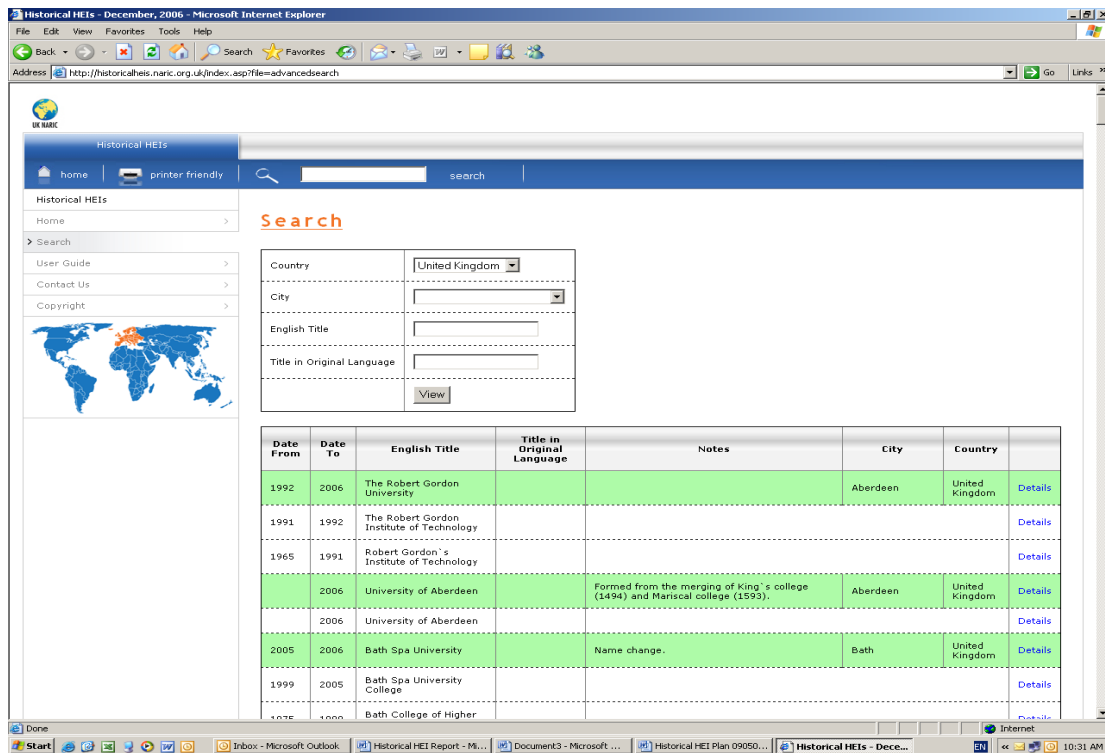


Illustration 3: Advanced search function

Selecting any contemporary institution highlighted, generates a timeline of the key of developments in the title and status of degree awarding institutions. It also reveals more detailed facts about the institution, such as year of inception, institution status, website address and a record from the 1960s of changes, mergers or separations. Below the contemporary institution's fact file, a timeline of historical information illustrates each change to the title or status of the body. More information about the status of the institution at specific points in history is made available by clicking on the institution title.

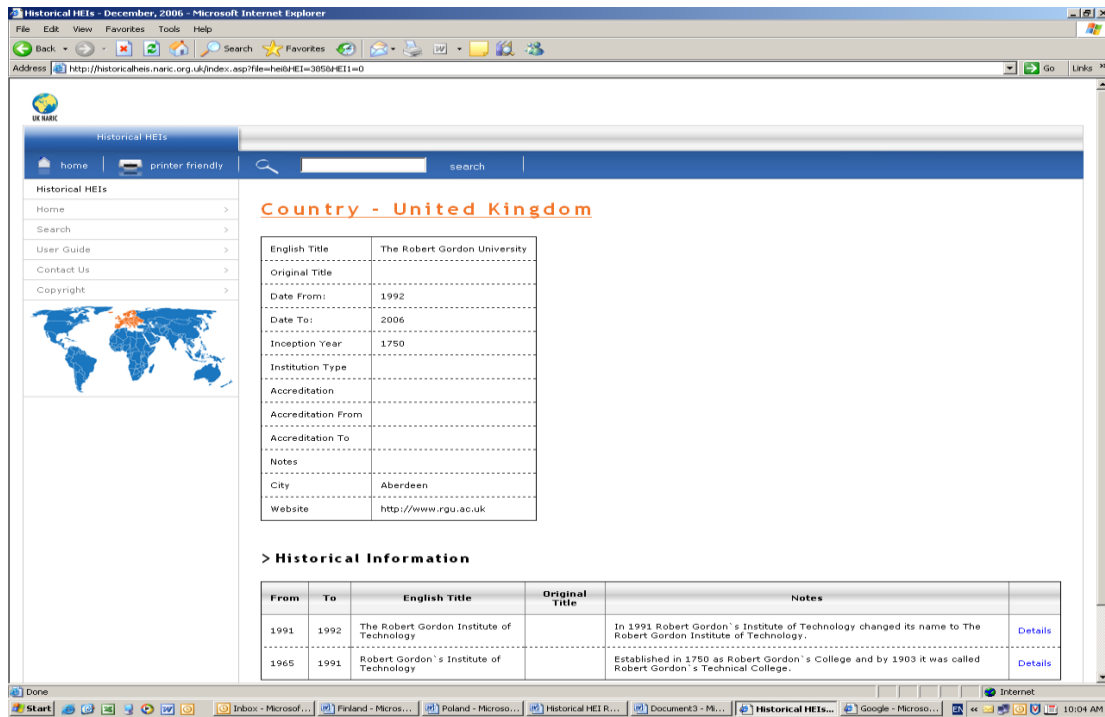


Illustration 4: Country data

Where no historical information regarding name changes or status changes was available, this is clearly indicated beneath the title of the higher education institution.

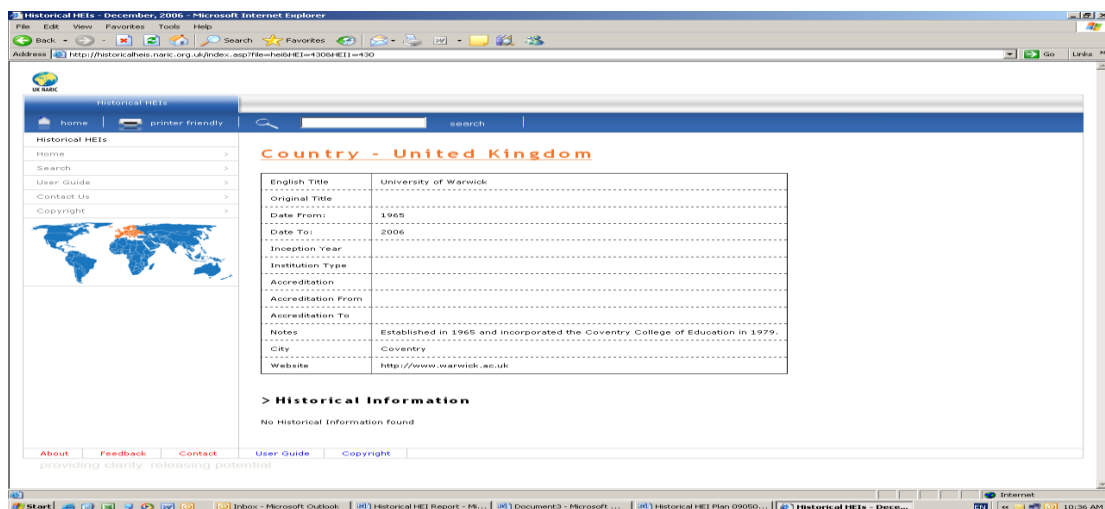


Illustration 5: Historical Information

5. Product Design

Although the database contains the histories of thousands of European institutions, this is an evolving process. While research is an ongoing process, we offer institutions the possibility to contribute to the body of information held about their establishment by filling in the online update form.

The database has been designed to allow continuous development. Not only can it be updated to account for changes to any given institution's status, but its scope can also be expanded to reflect changes in policy.

The product has been designed with a feature to enable institutional and governmental users to easily submit updated information on individual institutions or the system as a whole online.

It is also flexible enough to allow the addition of further countries. This is especially relevant to the accession of Bulgaria, Romania and potentially further countries in the future, but will also permit the inclusion of the remaining Bologna signatory countries and the education institutions of independent states beyond Europe's borders.

The database has also been designed to enable access to further information about European HEIs. The degree programmes of European state HEIs are normally recognised automatically in the country of origin. However, in line with the objectives of the Bologna Process, some countries are now establishing accreditation procedures to verify the quality of higher education. Therefore, stakeholders will increasingly want information about the year of accreditation or which programmes are accredited.