

Unit title	Business issues and the contexts of human resources
Level	5¹
Credit value	6
Unit code	5BIC
Unit review date	Sept. 2011

Purpose and aim of unit

Human resources (HR) professionals need to understand key developments in the business and external contexts within which HR operates. This unit enables learners to identify and review the business and external contextual factors affecting organisations and to assess the impacts of these factors on the HR function. The unit also examines HR's role in strategy formulation and implementation. The unit is designed to encourage learners to adopt a critical perspective of these contexts and to provide workable organisational and HR solutions to address them.

This unit is suitable for persons who:

- seek to develop a career in HR management and development
- are working in the field of HR management and development and need to extend their knowledge and skills
- have responsibility for implementing HR policies and strategies
- need to understand the role of HR in the wider organisational and environmental context.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

- 1 Understand key contemporary business issues affecting the HR function within private, public and third sector organisations.
- 2 Understand the main external contextual factors impacting on organisations and the HR function.
- 3 Understand the role of HR in the managing of contemporary business issues and external contexts.
- 4 Understand how organisational and HR strategies and practices are shaped and developed.
- 5 Know how to identify and respond to short-term changes in the business and external contexts.

Guided learning hours

The notional learning hours for this unit are 60 in total. If the unit is provided by attendance mode, the guided learning hours would normally be considered to be 30 with an additional 30 hours of self-directed learning for reading and the preparation of assessment evidence.

¹ Equivalent in Ireland = 7, Scotland = 9

Unit content

Indicative content is provided for each of the learning outcomes of the unit. The content is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive but should enable achievement of the learning outcomes.

1 Understand key contemporary business issues affecting the HR function within private, public and third sector organisations.

Types of organisation; the role of management within them; ways in which HR is delivered; the main functional areas of management; the search for sustained organisational performance, business profit and efficiency; analysing, evaluating and drawing conclusions from financial and non-financial data; balanced scorecard or similar performance measurement tools; managing the change agenda.

2 Understand the main external contextual factors impacting on organisations and the HR function.

The market and competitive contexts of organisations; principal demographic, social and technological trends; globalisation and international factors; government policy and legal regulation; the European Union (EU) and other international bodies.

3 Understand the role of HR in the managing of contemporary business issues and external contexts.

Forces shaping the HR agenda; models of the HR function; HR insights, strategies and solutions to support sustained organisational performance; relationships of HR with senior management and line management; basic issues of ethics, accountability and good governance.

4 Understand how organisational and HR strategies and practices are shaped and developed.

How corporate and HR strategies are shaped by the business and external contexts; organisational insights and sustained organisational performance; strategy formulation and implementation; emergent strategies; techniques and tools to analyse organisational and business environment; vertical and horizontal integration.

5 Know how to identify and respond to short-term changes in the business and external contexts.

HR's role in business planning and review; environmental scanning; sources of data and business information; handling, analysing and reviewing complex business data; interpreting trends, patterns and metrics in the organisation, and identifying obstacles and risks; responding to change: short-term imperatives and long-term horizons; preparing position and policy papers; communicating with senior, middle managers and staff.

Unit title	Developing professional practice
Level	5¹
Credit value	4
Unit code	5DPP
Unit review date	Sept. 2011

Purpose and aim of unit

This unit is designed to enable the learner to develop a sound understanding of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by human resources (HR) professionals, whether in a generalist or specialist role, and as described in the CIPD HR Profession Map (HRPM). The unit embraces the 'thinking performer' perspective and covers the competencies needed by the HR professional in a personal capacity, when collaborating and working with others, and when functioning efficiently and effectively in an organisational context. It will enable learners to assess their own strengths and identify a continuing professional development (CPD) plan, based on the capabilities required for ethical, business-focused and interpersonal professional conduct.

This unit is suitable for persons who:

- seek to develop a career in HR management and development
- are working in the field of HR management and development and need to extend their knowledge and skills
- have responsibility for implementing HR policies and strategies
- need to understand the role of HR in the wider organisational and environmental context.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

- 1 Understand what is required to be an effective and efficient HR professional.
- 2 Be able to perform efficiently and effectively as a self-managing HR professional.
- 3 Be able to perform efficiently and effectively as a collaborative member of working groups and teams and as an added- value contributor to the organisation.
- 4 Be able to apply CPD techniques to construct, implement and review a personal development plan.

Guided learning hours

The notional learning hours for this unit are 40 hours in total. If the unit is provided by attendance mode, the guided learning hours would normally be considered to be 20 hours with an additional 20 hours of self-directed learning for reading and the preparation of assessment evidence.

¹ Equivalentents in Ireland = 7, Scotland = 9

Unit content

Indicative content is provided for each of the learning outcomes of the unit. The content is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive but should enable achievement of the learning outcomes.

1 Understand what is required to be an effective and efficient HR professional.

The role and contribution of the HR professional: three types of professional action: administrative, advisory, executive; the HR professional as ambassador for the HR functions of business partner; change agent; people resourcing, performance and development facilitator; the 'thinking performer' paradigm; defining the contribution of the HR professional and the acquisition of a positive reputation for efficiency, service delivery, trust and reliability; overview of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for effective role performance as identified in the ten professional areas of the CIPD's HR Profession Map (HRPM) at Band 1 and 2.

What it means to be a professional: professional ethics and the CIPD Code of Conduct; corporate social responsibility; role-modelling professional behaviours as described in the HRPM, Band 1 and 2; the fundamental beliefs and philosophical assumptions that underpin professionalism, for example, an outward-looking, customer-focused, flexible, thinking-performer perspective; obligations for integrity, ethical conduct and confidentiality; handling conflict between professional principles and organisation pressures.

The four concentric circles of HR professionalism: managing self, managing in groups/teams, managing upwards, managing across the organisation; how these roles interact.

The customers and stakeholders for the HR professional: determining customer expectations and priorities; exercising discretionary judgement when customer requirements compete; the stakeholder concept and its relevance for the HR professional; the skills of creating and sustaining customer relationships; methods for securing customer feedback; valuing customer complaints as a mechanism for enhancing service performance in the future; the search for service excellence.

2 Be able to perform efficiently and effectively as a self-managing HR professional.

The principles and practice of efficient time and project management: classifying and ordering priorities; controlling time to optimise personal productivity while also sustaining positive people relationships; the prevention and control of stress; setting project objectives; elements of project planning, milestone monitoring, scheduling and control.

The components of analytical and critical thinking: situational analysis, decision-making and problem-solving; exercising judgement about the validity and reliability of information; promoting creativity in self and others; how to question and interpret 'evidence'.

Communication skills for the HR professional: planning and delivering presentations; report-writing; the effective applications for technology as a communication aid.

Building and sustaining positive relationships inside and outside the HR function: the fundamentals of interpersonal effectiveness; the benefits of networking; managing key relationships up the hierarchy; methods for coping with difficult people-related situations.

3 Be able to perform efficiently and effectively as a collaborative member of working groups and teams and as an added-value contributor to the organisation.

Working with others: elements of group dynamics; the skills of collaboration and conflict resolution.

The components of effective and ineffective teams: the roles required for effective group/team operation, productive, proactive and positive leadership within groups and teams.

Formal and semi-formal meetings: the principles of effective membership at meetings; techniques of chairmanship and group leadership.

Techniques for influence, persuasion and negotiating: securing the willing co-operation of others; assertiveness and related skills.

Managing relationships within and across hierarchies: coping with functional conflicts, stereotypes and 'political' tensions.

Working within the cultural grain of the organisation: recognising the 'art of the possible' and the boundaries of the permissible.

Involvement with continuous improvement and transformational change programmes: the benefits of cross-functional involvement in terms of personal development and relationship-building.

4 Be able to apply CPD techniques to construct, implement and review a personal development plan.

Continuing professional development (CPD): the basic assumptions for CPD, predicated on personal responsibility for learning, development and continuous improvement.

The rationale for CPD: reflective practice; the need for continuous learning in a turbulent, transformational world; obligations for CPD within the CIPD and the HR Profession Map; implications of the commitment to lifelong and self-managed learning.

Self-appraisal and the acquisition of knowledge about perceived performance: sources of information about personal effectiveness.

The design of a meaningful personal development plan: the specification of meaningful, achievable, time-bounded yet stretching development goals and objectives; types of learning activity (linked to own learning-style preferences).

The circularity of personal development: plan–performance–review–plan; monitoring CPD progress through, for example, review of CPD log entries and, where appropriate, the implementation of remedial action programmes; sustaining the motivational momentum.

Unit title	Using information in human resources
Level	5¹
Credit value	4
Unit code	5IHR
Unit review date	Sept. 2011

Purpose and aim of unit

Human resources (HR) professionals need to be able to present a viable and realistic case for improvement based on sound work-based research and an understanding of what is considered good practice. This core unit develops the skills of research and enquiry in order to enable learners to identify appropriate data sources to support an investigation into an area of HR practice and to synthesise and apply this data, to evaluate the role of HR in business and strategy formulation and implementation, and to prepare and present a business case for improvement.

This unit is suitable for persons who:

- seek to develop a career in human resources management and development
- are working in the field of human resource management and development and need to extend their knowledge and skills
- have responsibility for implementing human resources policies and strategies
- need to understand the role of human resources in the wider, organisational and environmental contexts.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, learners will:

- 1 Know how to identify and scrutinise appropriate HR data sources.
- 2 Be able to conduct small-scale research and analyse the findings.
- 3 Be able to draw meaningful conclusions and evaluate options for change.
- 4 Know how to deliver clear, business-focused reports on an HR issue.

Guided learning hours

The notional learning hours for this unit are 40 in total. If the unit is provided by attendance mode, the guided learning hours would normally be considered to be 20 with an additional 20 hours of self-directed learning for reading and the preparation of assessment evidence.

¹ Equivalent in Ireland = 7, Scotland = 9

Unit content

Indicative content is provided for each of the learning outcomes of the unit. The content is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive but should enable achievement of the learning outcomes.

1 Know how to identify and scrutinise appropriate HR data sources.

Sources of UK and international information relating to HR and management practice, including online databases and search facilities, academic and professional journals, professional and regulatory bodies and sector skills councils reports, organisational policy and financial accounts, industry reports; differences in the presentation of data across a range of written, electronic and oral media; the difference between primary and secondary data.

2 Be able to conduct small-scale research and analyse the findings.

Range of research methodologies and the applications of quantitative and qualitative methods; conversion of raw data into meaningful HR and management information; the parameters and limitations of different research instruments.

3 Be able to draw meaningful conclusions and evaluate options for change.

Analyse and interpret trends, patterns and metrics; evaluation of data collected to inform the conclusions; the business case for change, incorporating cost–benefit and resource analysis; critical success factors to assess the effectiveness of change.

4 Know how to deliver clear, business-focused reports on an HR issue.

Range of written, electronic and oral media; range of narrative and diagrammatic formats; the needs of various stakeholders; range of ways to present data to meet different stakeholder needs; using insights and observations to shape the views of managers and to influence strategy; suggestions for alternative paths of action consistent with observations.