

**BMA330**  
**Strategic Issues in Human  
Resource Management**

*Semester 2, 2009*

This unit will be offered in:

**Hobart and Launceston**

The lecturer responsible will be:

**Simon Fishwick (Lecturer-in-Charge)**

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<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>

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## Introduction to the Unit

This unit aims to develop students' understanding of the complexities of strategic human resource management (HRM) in the context of Australia's changing socio-economic climate and the global arena. The unit builds on the roles and functions of HRM introduced in BMA1/221, by examining the impact of HR policies and practices in organisations from a strategic perspective.

The Unit will have three components:

- Recent advances in HR theory and research;
- Contemporary issues (hot topics) that will include presentations from people currently researching HR topics;
- A project where students will have the opportunity to research an HR topic of choice (agreed with the lecturer) in a reasonable amount of depth.

### Enrolment in the unit

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, students should not enrol in BMA units after the end of week two of semester, as the School cannot guarantee:

- that any extra assistance will be provided by the teaching team in respect of work covered in the period before enrolment; and
- That penalties will not be applied for the late submission of any piece or pieces of assessment that were due during that period.

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## Learning Outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the field of strategic human resource management.
- Demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of the current issues facing managers in the field of managing people.
- Identify contemporary human resource management problems and suggest solutions to these problems.
- Critically analyse theoretical models of human resource management.
- Gain an understanding of contemporary human resource management debates and how research can illuminate these.

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## Generic Graduate Attributes

The University has defined a set of generic graduate attributes (GGAs) that can be expected of all graduates (see <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/policies/index.htm>). By undertaking this unit you should make progress in attaining the following attributes:

### Knowledge

- Demonstrate an understanding of major theories within the disciplines which contribute to the behaviour of people in the working environment.
- Apply theoretical concepts to the management of human resources.
- Use a range of skills to analyse and evaluate scholarly work within the field for the purpose of writing essays and answers to examination questions.

### Communication Skills

- Students will be required to demonstrate both verbal and written communication skills.
- Students will be required to present reasoned, coherent arguments in workshops, essays and examination responses.

#### Problem Solving Skills

- Conceptualise problems related to the management of human resources, and present solutions.
- Locate and use relevant information for the presentation of course work.

#### Global Perspective

- Demonstrate a global and cross-cultural perspective to the management of human resources.

#### Social Responsibility

- Students will be encouraged to act ethically, and with social responsibility in managing people at work.

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## Prerequisites

BMA101, BMA1/221, plus any two level 200 units (i.e. 25% of level 200) in the HRM major.

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## Texts

Any basic HRM textbook provides the background students will already have covered in the prerequisite units. You should re-familiarise yourself with this material before beginning this course.

### Prescribed Text

There is no prescribed text. Students will have an opportunity to purchase a Reader that will cover topics in the first half of the Unit.

### School Publications

Students must obtain the following electronic publications which are available from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>

*Writing Assignments: A Guide*

*Referencing Style Manual*

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## Recommended Reading

The publications listed below are highly recommended for further reading on the topics covered in the unit.

### Books

Boxall, P. & Purcell, J. 2007. *Strategy and human resource management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brewster, C., Dowling, P., Grobler, P., Holland, P. & Warnich, S. 2000. *Contemporary issues in human resource management*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evans, C. 2003. *Managing for knowledge: HR's strategic role*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

Ferris, G.R., Buckley, M.R. & Fedor, D.B. 2002. *Human resources management: Perspectives, context, functions and outcomes* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Hearn, M. & Michelson, G. 2006. *Rethinking work: Time, space and discourse*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Holland, P., Sheehan, C., Donohue, R. & Pyman, A. 2007. *Contemporary issues & challenges in human resource management*. Prahran, VIC: Tilde University Press.

Legge, K. 1995. *Human resource management. Rhetorics and realities*. London: Macmillan.

Mello, J. 2006. *Strategic human resource management*. Mason, Ohio: Thomson South Western.

Marchington, M. & Wilkinson, A. 2005. *Human resource management at work*. London: CIPD.

Nankervis, A. Compton, R. & Baird, M. 2008. *Human resource management – strategies and processes*. South Melbourne: Thomson.

Petzall, S., Abbott, K. & Timo, N. 2007. *Australian industrial relations in an Asian context* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Cowes, Victoria: Eruditions Publishing.

Shields, J. 2007. *Managing employee performance and reward: Concepts, practices, strategies*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

## **Journals and Periodicals**

Apart from books, you will find it valuable to get into the practice of reading relevant articles from journals and periodicals (including newspapers and magazines).

As this is the ‘capstone’ unit in the HRM major, you should be familiar with the journals and periodicals associated with the discipline area. You are expected to keep abreast of developments in the field, and you will find that the following contain material useful to this subject.

*Academy of Management Journal*

*Academy of Management Review*

*Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*

*Human Resource Management Journal*

*Human Resource Planning*

*Industrial Relations*

*International Journal of Human Resource Management*

*Journal of Applied Psychology*

*Journal of Human Resource Management*

*Journal of Industrial Relations*

*Journal of Occupational Behaviour*

*Journal of Organisational Behaviour*

*People Management*

*Personnel Psychology*

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## **Flexible Learning: MyLO**

MyLO software has been incorporated into the delivery of this unit to enhance the learning experience by providing access to up to date course materials and by allowing for online discussion through this web-based environment.

To access MyLO from your own computer you will need the appropriate software, and hardware to run that software. See **Learning Online** <http://uconnect.utas.edu.au/> for computer software you will need.

**Note:** Older computers may not have the hardware to run some of the required software applications. Contact your local IT support person or the Service Desk on 6226 1818 if you experience difficulties.

### **Privacy Policy and Notice**

The School of Management takes the utmost care to protect the privacy and security of your personal information and to ensure its accuracy.

If you have any concerns about your privacy in MyLO please contact the lecturer-in-charge of this unit or view the University of Tasmania MyLO Privacy Policy Statement available from the university website on <http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/privacy.htm>.

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## Assessment

In order to pass this unit you must achieve an overall mark of at least 50 per cent of the total available marks. There are two options for assessment either option A or option B. Details of each item of Coursework are provided in the Assignment Topics section.

Method of Assessment	Value	Due Date	Length*
<b>Options A</b>			
Critical Review of Journal article	15	Friday 7 August	1,000 words
Discussion postings	15	various	2 x 350 words
Research Report	30	Monday 5th October	3- 3,500 words
Examination	40	Exam Period	2 hours
<b>Option B</b>			
Critical Review of Journal article	15	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> August	1,000 words
Discussion postings	15	Various	2 x 350 words
Research proposal	10	Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> August	1 - 1,200 words
Project Presentation	10	Various (mostly on 23 <sup>rd</sup> September)	15 minutes
Final project	50	Monday 19 <sup>th</sup> October	5-6,000 words
Total Marks	100		

\* **Word Limit:** The word count includes such items as headings, in-text references, quotes and executive summaries. It **does not** include the reference list at the end of the assignment.

## Study Week

All undergraduate units offered by the School of Management are scheduled to include a Study Week. The dates for this Semester are shown in the attached Study Schedule.

The purpose of the Study Week is to allow students an opportunity to consolidate their studies thus far, and to research coming assignments.

## Examination

### *Format*

For those that choose assessment option A, there will be a final two-hour closed-book examination.

The examination will consist of two parts. In part A (worth 10%) there will be four (4) questions from which two are to be attempted. Each question in part A is worth 5%. In Part B (30%) there will be four (4) questions from which two (2) are to be attempted. Each question in Part B is worth 15%.

The best preparation for the examination is consistent work throughout the semester.

### ***Scheduled date and place***

Your final examination for this unit will be held during the scheduled examination period as indicated by Student Administration in correspondence to you.

Examinations will normally be scheduled Monday to Saturday inclusive. Examinations may be held during the day or evening and students should consult the university information which will be made available towards the end of semester.

You are advised to make any necessary arrangements with employers now for time off during examination period to sit this examination. Your participation at the scheduled time is not negotiable unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**Note that you will be expected to sit the examination at your recorded study centre.**

### ***Supplementary Examination***

Except in special circumstances and on the recommendation of the lecturer-in-charge or the Head of School, a student who fails will not be granted a supplementary examination.

## **Special Consideration and Student Difficulties**

If a student is experiencing difficulties with their studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect their course of study, they are advised to raise these with their lecturer in the first instance. Students may also contact the Student Adviser, who will be able to help in identifying the issues that need to be addressed, give general advice, assist by liaising with academic staff, as well as referring students to any relevant University-wide support services. The Student Adviser is located in room 318a in the Commerce Building in Hobart and is contactable by phone on 6226 1916. In Launceston the Student Adviser is located in room A168 in Building A and is contactable by phone on 6324 3312. There is also a range of University-wide support services available including Student Services, International Services and Learning Development. Please refer to the *Current Students* homepage at:  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/students/index.html>

Should a student require assistance in accessing the Library, visit their website for more information at <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>

Students who have completed their examinations and who feel that they have been disadvantaged due to illness or other circumstances affecting their study, may fill out a form to request that their lecturer takes this into consideration when marking the examination. Forms should be submitted directly to the relevant school, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation, as soon as possible after the completion of the examination. Granting of special consideration is at the discretion of the lecturer and school. The relevant form can be found at the following website:

[http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations\\_and\\_results/forms\\_files/index.htm#eits](http://www.studentcentre.utas.edu.au/examinations_and_results/forms_files/index.htm#eits)

Students with a non-English speaking background may be permitted to take a bilingual dictionary into an exam. This dictionary must not be annotated, that is, it must have no notes written in it. In order to use a bilingual dictionary students must request permission from the Student Centre.

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## Submission of Coursework

### Lodging Coursework

All Coursework must have the School of Management Assignment Cover Sheet and Title Page attached, both of which are available as a blank template from the School of Management website:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm>

**All assignments must include the tutor's name on the assignment Cover Sheets when they are handed in. If this is not done the assignment will not be accepted and therefore marked.**

Please remember that you are responsible for lodging your Coursework on or before the due date. We suggest you keep a copy. Even in the most 'perfect' of systems, items sometimes go astray.

Note that you may also be required to submit an electronic copy of your Coursework. More details of this will be given in Lectures.

*Hobart students:* Lodge in assignment box next to room 321, Commerce & Economics Building.

*Launceston students:* Lodge in assignment box beside room A170.

**All coursework must be handed in at 2.00 pm on the due date.**

### Late Coursework

#### *Written Work*

Extensions will only be granted on medical or compassionate grounds and will not be granted because of work or other commitments. Requests for extensions should be **made in writing** to the lecturer-in-charge prior to the due date. Medical certificates or other evidence must be attached and must contain information which justifies the extension sought.

Late assignments which have **not** been granted an extension will, at the lecturer's discretion, be penalised by deducting ten per cent of total marks for each full day overdue.

Assignments submitted more than six days late will normally not be accepted by the lecturer-in-charge.

### Return of Coursework

Coursework will be returned during classes or it can be collected from the lecturer's or tutor's room at nominated times; it will not be available from the School's offices.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own, for example:

- using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source;
- using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation; or
- copying another student's work.

**If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor** for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at <http://www.utas.edu.au/tl/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline—Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/ord9.pdf>

**The University reserves the right to submit (or to require you to submit) assignments to online plagiarism detection software, and might then retain a copy of the assignment on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking.**

### **Occupational health and safety (OH&S)**

The University is committed to providing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. In addition to specific requirements of this unit you should refer to the University's policy at: [http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol\\_proc/ohs.pdf](http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/ohs/pol_proc/ohs.pdf)

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## Workshop Program

Workshops are scheduled in weeks 1-6, 10 and 13. These workshops will be video-conferenced between Hobart and Launceston. The remaining weeks are allocated for students to work on their projects.

The first two weeks will focus on the study of strategic human resource management and weeks 3 to 6 will include presentations on current/recent research by School of Management staff and PhD students. The person with an asterisk (\*) will deliver a presentation on their research of approximately 20 minutes and, following the presentations, there will be a discussion of their research and the allocated on-line discussion topic for the week.

### ***Week 1—The current state of development in HR theory & practice (putting the strategy into strategic HRM)***

Boxall, P. & Purcell, J. 2007. *Strategy and human resource management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Basingstoke UK: Palgrave Macmillan - Chapter 1 The goals of Human Resource Management

Sheehan, C. Holland, P. & Di Cieri, H. 2006. Current developments in HRM in Australian Organisations. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Human Resources*. 44 (2): 132-152.

Nankervis, A. Compton, R. & Baird, M. 2008. *Human resource management – strategies and processes*. South Melbourne: Thomson – Chapter 1 Evolution of HRM.

### ***Week 2—Contemporary Issues in HR theory & research***

Ainsworth, S. & Hall, R. Rethinking HRM: Contemporary Practitioner Discourse and the tension between ethics and the business partnership in Hearn, M. & Michelson, G. 2006. *Rethinking work: Time, space and discourse*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press: Chapter 13: 263-284.

Bardeol, E. A., De Cieri, H. & Santos, C. 2008. A review of work-life research in Australia and New Zealand. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 46 (3): 316-333.

Petzall, S., Abbott, K. & Timo, N. 2007. *Australian industrial relations in an Asian context* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Cowes, Victoria: Eruditions Publishing – Chapter 11 Equity in Industrial Relations.

Shields, J. 2007. *Managing employee performance and reward: Concepts, practices, strategies*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press – Chapter 1: Performance and Reward Basics.

### ***Week 3—Hot Topics 1: Expanding the scope of HR research***

Cahoon, S. Recruitment and retention of maritime workers.

Wickham\*, M. & O'Donohue, W. *Conceptualising an employment marketing mix for the strategic human resource management context*.

Peebles, Daryl (PhD student): The value of humour in the workplace.

### ***Week 4—Hot Topics 2: New topics in HR Research***

Adams, D. Skills shortages in local government: implications for Tasmania.

Simpkin, Terri (PhD student). Career decision making, a social constructivist perspective.

Martin, A\*, Gray, C. & Adam, A. 2007. Nurses' Responses to Workplace Verbal Abuse: A Scenario Study of the Impact of Situational and Individual Factors. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 15 (2), 41-61.

***Week 5—Hot Topics 3: HR Research on non traditional employee groups***

Nelson, L. & Tonks, G\*, 2007. Violations of the psychological contract: Experiences of a group of casual workers. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 15 (1): 22-36.

Leighton, P., Syrett, M. Hecker, R\*, & Holland, P. 2007. *Out of the shadows: Managing self-employed, agency and outsourced workers*. London: Butterworth Heinemann: Chapter 2 Context and Evidence: The rise of the non-employee; pages 13-44.

O'Donohue\*, W. & Nelson, L. 2009. The psychological contracts of Australian hospital volunteer workers. *Australian Journal of Volunteering*.

***Week 6—Current trends in HR research***

Hanson, D\*. & Grimmer, M. 2009. Qualitative and quantitative research published in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1998-2007.

Grimmer, M. Quantitative research – a personal approach.

Woods, M. Qualitative research – a personal approach.

***Week 7—Study Week***

***Weeks 8 & 9—Project work (self-directed study)***

***Week 10—Review of project progress***

Presentations by students doing Option B – Long projects

***Weeks 11 & 12—Project work (self-directed study)***

***Week 13—Review week and exam preparation***

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## Assignment Topics

### Critical review of an HR journal article

*Due Date:* 2pm, Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2009.

*Length:* 1,000 words

*Value:* 15 marks

You are required to critically review the content and usefulness of a selected academic research article. Your review will have three sections:

- The first section (approximately 200 words) should provide a brief overview of the article content, summarizing the article topic, the ideas or research it reports and the author's key conclusions;
- The second section (approximately 500 words) should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the author's research or argument. Some suggested areas this section could cover are:
  1. What is the research question(s) and does this follow logically from the literature?
  2. What is the methodology employed and does this suit the research question?
  3. Who are the participants and does the choice of participants fulfill the requirements of the research question?
  4. How is the data collected and does this suit the research question?
  5. How is the data analysed and interpreted and is this logical?
  6. What are the overall strengths and weaknesses of the research?
- The third section (approximately 300 words) should evaluate the article's contribution to the advancement of HR theory or knowledge.

Guidelines and marking criteria will be posted in MyLO.

## Online Discussions

<i>Due Date:</i>	Various, as set out below
<i>Length:</i>	Approximately 350 words per posting
<i>Value:</i>	15 marks (3 by 5 marks: 2 by 5 for assessed postings and 5 marks for the number of postings made)

A feature of the Unit will be online discussions. These will be organised on a weekly basis from Weeks 2-12 (11 weeks). A week starts on Monday and extends to 5pm Sunday of relevant week of the Semester. (For example, for Week 2 the period would go from 20 July to 5pm, 26 July.)

The discussions topics will be based on contemporary issues relevant to HRM in Australia. These will be typically drawn from recent media coverage or specific topics chosen by the Lecturer-in-Charge. Students will be invited to suggest "hot topics" to be used in the following week(s).

All students are encouraged to regularly contribute to the online discussions – discussions should be well structured, clearly expressed and be approximately 350 words. Each student is to select 2 discussions for assessment. These can be nominated at any time (they will be progressively marked and feedback provided within 1 week) within the following timetable:

- One posting must be nominated by 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2009;
- The second posting must be nominated by 5th October, 2009.

Each assessed posting is worth up to a maximum of 5 marks with an additional 5 marks available based on the total number of postings made by each student.

## Research/action report

### Option A

*Due Date:* 2pm, Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October

*Length:* 3,000 to 3,500 words

*Value:* 30 marks

The research/action report is an opportunity for students to participants to undertake a small amount of research on a chosen HRM topic as agreed with the Lecturer in Charge by email. From both the learning and assessment points of view the exercise is about developing some insight into HRM research by doing a more extensive literature review and/or a minor research project. The purpose is to go through the process of identifying, conceptualising and conducting HRM research of a strictly limited character.

In your report you should indicate a possible theoretical framework based on your literature review for considering the issues of contemporary significance in your topic area. You will need to be careful to choose a strictly limited area to research or you will end up with something unmanageable. The nature of the research should not require the seeking of ethical approval.

### Option B

*Due Date:* Research proposal: 2pm, Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2009.  
Project presentation: various dates including 23<sup>rd</sup> September  
Project submission: 2pm, Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October

*Length:* 5,000 to 6,000 words

*Value:*

Research proposal	10 marks
Project presentation	10 marks
Final project	50 marks

Option B involves creating a substantial piece of academic work. It may be done individually or in pairs. A decision on this option and agreement of the topic with the Lecturer in Charge is required by 31<sup>st</sup> July (end of week 3). Choosing this option means that students will not sit a final exam for the Unit.

Students considering undertaking honours or future higher degrees are strongly encouraged to take this option.

This option includes three components:

- A research proposal due 2pm, Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2009. The proposal of 1000-1200 words should outline the topic, the justification for its choice, a summary literature review and description of the “method” to be used;
- A verbal presentation of 15 minutes to the class on a date to be set (including 23<sup>rd</sup> September) that will provide a clear perspective on the project, the method(s) used and likely outcomes;
- A project report of 5000-6000 words submitted 2pm, Monday 19<sup>th</sup>, October 2009.

The research/action report is your opportunity to explore your chosen framework by undertaking some aspect of related research. The purpose here is to offer an opportunity to get beyond the text book explanations, and to use some data and/or information which you have identified as relevant to your topic. The result is less important than the process. It is expected that the nature of the research should not require the seeking of ethical approval (although depending on the nature of the research and the calibre of the students, a minimal risk application may be considered if supported by the Lecturer in Charge).

One option for this project would be to produce a strategic human resource plan for a specific organisation (or a defined part of a large organisation).

# Study Schedule

Semester 2, 2009

Week	Start of Week	Topic	Due Dates
1	13 July	Overview and organisation of workshop; assignment of dates and topics The current state off development in HR Theory & Practice	
2	20 July	Critical approaches to HR	
3	27 July	Hop Topics Week 1 See page 10	
4	3 August	Hot Topics Week 2 See page 10	Article Review, 2pm, Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> August
5	10 August	Hot Topics Week 3 See page 11	
6	17 August	Approaches in HR research	
7	24 August	Study Week	Research proposal, 2pm, Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> August (Option B)
Mid-Semester Break 31 August – 4 September			
8	7 September	Self-directed study	
9	14 September	Self-directed study	
10	21 September	Review of projects and project presentations	Major project presenations (Option B)
11	28 September	Self-directed study	
12	5 October	Self-directed study	Research paper (Option A) due 2pm, Monday 5 October
13	12 October	Revision and exam preparation	Major Project (Option B) due 2pm, Monday 19 October
A Calendar/Study Planner showing dates is available from School of Management website at <a href="http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm">http://www.utas.edu.au/mgmt/student.htm</a> .			