HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Review Process

The previous self study of the Human Resources Management (HRM) program was submitted June 2001. In response to the recommendations issuing from that report, the program underwent many important changes, including the move to the Department of Psychology, the appointment of a full-time academic advisor, and the design of new programs of study.

The self study for the present review of the HRM program was completed November 8, 2010. The self study includes results from a formal survey of HRM students and alumni. Those comments, as well as others, obtained from HRM faculty members and current students after reading a draft of the self study have been incorporated into the statement.

The site visit was conducted March 2, 2011, and the review team report was received April 25, 2011. The responses from the Department and the Dean were received February 28, 2012.

Characteristics of the Program

Historical Overview

The HRM program, originally known as the Personnel and Administration Studies program, began to accept students in Fall 1981.

In a review of the program conducted in 1989, it was recommended, because most of the courses included in HRM were within the Faculty of Arts, that the program be housed in Arts with an appointed Director and an advising committee from the Faculty of Arts. After another review in 2001, it was recommended that administration of HRM be moved to the Department of Psychology. This occurred in 2003.

Following 2003, the Psychology Academic Advisor, the Undergraduate Program Assistant, and the Admissions Officer developed policies, procedures, and recruited HRM course instructors.

In 2006, an HRM Management Committee composed of the Psychology Department Chair, the Admissions Officer, the HRM Director, the HRM Academic Advisor, and one of the instructors of HRM, was formed. In 2009, the position of HRM Director was eliminated, as management by consensus among the members of the HRM Management Committee was deemed to be an effective model. The HRM Academic Advisor is responsible for reporting short- and long-term planning issues to the Psychology Undergraduate Associate Chair who represents the programs at the Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Studies Committee.

The HRM program at the University of Waterloo (UW) aims to offer a variety of different academic plans so that students across all six Faculties can combine HRM plans with other academic plans within their discipline core.

The HRM programs have been on an upward trajectory of growth and consolidation since the 2003-04 academic year. In the last six years student enrolment in HRM plans has increased approximately six-fold.

Of particular note is that, as of 2010-11 academic year, a full slate of courses required for fulfilment for certification as a Canadian Human Resources Professional (CHRP) will be offered. In addition there are plans to establish a professional Master’s degree in HRM.
Program Objectives

The HRM program’s objectives are:

a) To grow sustainably toward a program that offers high quality instruction of HRM including courses required for CHRP certification;

b) To offer a variety of different academic plans so that students across all six Faculties can combine HRM plans with other academic plans within their discipline core;

c) To build community, both by employing Human Resources (HR) professionals as instructors for courses whenever possible, and by building bridges to professional organizations related to Human Resources such as the Grand Valley Human Resources Professionals Association (GVHRPA).

Distinctiveness/Benchmarking

With the exceptions of York University and the University of Prince Edward Island, Waterloo’s HRM program is the only one that offers a variety of programs of study that can be combined easily with other majors in any Faculty.

Academic Plans Offered

The following plans are offered in HRM:

- a Minor;
- an Option;
- a Diploma;
- a Specialization for Honours Psychology students;
- a Specialization for Honours Arts and Business students.

Admission to any of the plans consists of successfully completing HRM 200 (Basic Human Resources Management), a minimum HRM plan average of 70%, and “satisfactory standing” in the student’s main program of study.

Currently the backbone of all the HRM plans consists of a series of four required courses. All students must complete HRM 200, a course in accounting which can be the two-course sequence AFM 101/102 (Introduction to Financial Accounting/Introduction to Management Accounting) or one of AFM 123/ARBUS 102 (Accounting Information for Management). In addition, students must complete at least two of HRM 301 (Strategic Human Resources Management), PSYCH 338 (Organizational Psychology), PSYCH 339 (Personnel Selection), or PSYCH 340 (Training and Development). These six courses are all approved toward the CHRP designation.

Beyond the core requirements, the programs of study differ in the number of elective courses drawn from a prescribed list. The permissible electives include a slate of courses drawn from Computer Science, Sociology, Economics, English, Peace and Conflict Studies, Philosophy, and Psychology.

Beginning with the 2010-11 academic year, the HRM program will offer an advanced sequence of courses – HRM 303 (Compensation), HRM 305 (Health and Safety), and HRM 307 (Labour Relations) – which can be taken as electives toward the HRM plans. In addition, HRM 400 (Honours Seminar in HRM) will also be offered. Once HRM 303, 305, and 307 are approved toward the CHRP designation [recently approved], UW students will be able to complete the nine courses currently required for the
CHRP designation at UW instead of having to go to another University or College to complete the designation.

Students

The average admission grade of students who entered HRM plans from 2002-03 to 2009-10 inclusive was 80.3%. The breakdown was 81.7% for Honours students in the Option; 83.1% for Honours students taking the HRM Minor; 77.6% for General students taking the HRM Option; 79.1% for those General students who studied for an HRM Minor.

When the Department of Psychology assumed responsibility of the HRM program in 2003 there were 65 students enrolled in HRM plans. By 2005, this had risen to 194 and increased each year thereafter. In 2008, the number enrolled was 285. Of these 285 students, 76 were enrolled in the Honours Arts and Business HRM Specialization; 57 were in the Honours Psychology HRM Specialization; nine were in the HRM Diploma plan; 94 were in the HRM Minor; and 48 were in the HRM Option. Although these 285 came from five different Faculties the majority, 268, came from the Faculty of Arts.

The enrolment in many of the courses in the HRM plans is high. The average enrolment in the HRM 200 course, over the period Spring term 2001 to Winter term 2010 inclusive, was 280 with a low of 93 in Spring term 2002 to a high of 376 in Fall term 2008. Over the same period, the Faculties of Arts and Mathematics accounted for 41.5% and 28.5% respectively of the students in this course each term. In addition, various Psychology courses are required for HRM plans, especially 338, 339, and 340. Since 2001, PSYCH 338 and 339 have also had high enrolments, averaging 293 and 166 students respectively.

Student course evaluations for HRM 200 have varied over the period from Spring term 2004 to Winter term 2010 inclusive. The average course evaluation for the terms Spring 2004 to Spring 2006 inclusive was 3.62 on a five point scale where five is excellent. This was a period when there were a number of short-term adjunct appointments.

The 2006-07 academic year was spent creating a consistent teaching approach with the inclusion of common text books, a common approach to classroom teaching, evaluation, and student advising. In the next academic year, the Department of Psychology provided Teaching Assistants. The result was that the student course evaluation average value, from Fall term 2006 to Winter term 2010 inclusive, rose to 4.00, still below the average for the Psychology Department (4.28) and the Faculty of Arts (4.13) for the same time period, but an increase from the earlier era.

Over the eight year period, 2001-02 to 2008-09 inclusive, 228 HRM students received scholarships, totalling $262,954, after entering University. One scholarship for $1,000 is offered each year by the GVHRPA to the HRM student who has demonstrated both academic excellence and commitment to the field of HR. Unfortunately, in recent years the number and dollar value of awards for HRM students have declined.

Teams of UW HRM students compete in Excalibur, a national HR competition in which teams of students via against each other to demonstrate expertise in the solution of novel HR problems. Students who wish to join UW’s Excalibur team must agree to a rigorous practice schedule involving meetings with coaches of about three hours each for the period from January to March. In 2010, the UW HRM team placed second nationally and in 2008 was placed third nationally. Considering that the UW team was competing against students who are completing full degrees in HR, this was a tremendous accomplishment.

In 2004, 49 students graduated with an HRM plan. By 2009 this had risen to 145 students – an increase of 196%. Of the 609 graduates with an HRM plan over the last six years, 148 graduated with an HRM
Specialization in Arts and Business; 127 graduates with an HRM Specialization in Honours Psychology; 155 graduated with an HRM Minor; 1549 graduated with an HRM Option; and 10 graduated with an HRM Diploma.

Of the 2003-04 cohort of students who entered an HRM plan 73.8% graduated. This figure rose to 83.9% for both the 2004-05 and 2005-06 cohorts.

An online survey of current HRM students and alumni was carried out in March 2010. Students made the following comments:

“Overall, the HRM program at Waterloo has been a fantastic experience,…”

“The professors selected to teach the courses are amazing. They are so experienced, professional, and enthusiastic.”

“The HRM applied apprenticeship course was incredibly valuable. Having the opportunity to network with professionals in the field and make contacts proved to be very beneficial.”

The overall results suggest that students in the HRM program were very satisfied with the educational experience they had been offered in their courses. On a scale of five, where five is the highest, most students gave a score of four or higher to the question as to whether their HRM plan had been worthwhile in terms of their personal development.

Faculty

At the time of the self study there were seven faculty members involved in teaching HRM courses and complementary courses from Psychology. Four are full-time appointments in Psychology – three Associate Professors and one Lecturer. Evaluations of these faculty members occur when the Department of Psychology is reviewed. The other three are Adjunct Lecturers who teach all the HRM listed courses which amount to a total of nine course sections.

The Adjunct lecturers are each appointed for three-year periods to provide continuity.

The normal teaching load for full-time faculty members of the Psychology Department is three courses per year coupled with supervision of both undergraduate and graduate thesis research. The course load of the three HRM part-time lecturers varies in accordance with their availability, their specific expertise, and the course schedule. The current distribution is that one lecturer teaches two 2nd year courses, another teaches three 3rd year courses and one 4th year course, and the third a 2nd year course and a 4th year course. These instructors maintain close connections with GVHRPA, with the result that students have access to front-line information about issues in HR.

Review Team’s Observations

The review team’s overall response is extremely positive. Everyone was consistently impressed by the calibre of the program, the commitment of the academic and practitioner instructors, and the measureable, remarkable growth that has taken place since the last review in 2003. At the same time, it is apparent that the program is currently at a crossroads – there is tremendous potential for expansion as long as there is appropriate institutional support.

It is the opinion of the review team that the program has reached its limit without a supplement of additional resources. Based on the growth the program has enjoyed, the solid support structure that the
program has in place, and the recent augmentation of the program to encompass the full slate of courses required as part of the certification process, the review team made the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** The University provides the necessary resources to permit a controlled expansion under the guidance of a full-time Executive Director.

This person would, with the support from the HRM Management Committee, champion the development of the HRM program by initiating a strategic planning exercise.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department should establish a full-time position for a Managing Director to attend to the ongoing operations and administration of HRM, in light of opportunities for expansion.

**Recommendation 3:** Provide HRM with the necessary resources to expand, redeploy, and compensate instructors appropriately.

**Recommendation 4:** The Department should continue its search for faculty members with industry experience to enhance the scholarly reputation of the program.

*Response:* The Department is in agreement with the above four recommendation. In fact it is the Department’s opinion that these four recommendations must be accomplished before the remaining recommendations can be acted upon. The Dean is of the opinion that these suggestions will continue to be discussed in relation to a Master’s program.

**Recommendation 5:** Determine the best way to increase course offerings while building on the synergy between academic and practitioner perspectives.

*If HRM is to become a major, four or five courses will need to be added to the plan. There is the possibility of sharing resources to allow the inclusion in an HRM major plan of one or more of the following:*

- PACS 323: Negotiation: Theories and Strategies;
- PACS 327: Cultural Approaches to Conflict Resolution;
- SPCOM 227: Leadership;
- SPCOM 325: Organizational Communication;
- SPCOM 432: Conflict Management.]

**Recommendation 6:** Assess course delivery options and implement the most student-centred ones.

[Consideration should be given to the advantages of online delivery of some of the HRM courses in meeting demand. Online courses also offer the potential of extending the HRM program to professionals in the workplace. This would be an effective way of easing into an online HRM Master’s program.]

**Recommendation 7:** Enhance a sense of community among HRM students and provide additional enrichment opportunities. For example, an HRM Student Club should be formalized and made responsible for determining and pursuing items of interest to students and to maintain relationships with a network of human resources professionals.

*Response:* Were the first set of recommendations to be approved, the Department’s HRM Management Committee, including the two newly appointed positions would then begin discussion of the recommendations 5 to 7.