Two-Year Progress Report: Human Resources Management Minor Program
(April 2015)

Introduction

The self-study prefatory to the review of the Human Resources Management (HRM) Minor program, a program hosted by the Department of Psychology, was submitted November 8, 2010. The site visit by the review team was conducted March 2, 2011. The review team submitted its report on May 10, 2011. The Department’s initial response to correct factual errors was submitted in April 2011; the final response was submitted on June 24, 2011. The academic program review report was presented to Senate on November 11, 2011. The present report is being submitted in April 2015 and describes changes in the HRM Minor undergraduate program since the review process was completed.

The HRM Minor Program

The HRM Minor program, administered by the Department of Psychology, is a large and highly successful undergraduate program with a set of 10 courses leading to designation as a Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP). When Psychology took on hosting this program in 2003, there were 65 students; at present, roughly 400 students are enrolled in the program, in addition to 36 students currently doing an HRM Diploma.

Responses to Recommendations

There was a set of 7 main recommendations made by the review committee and listed in the final paragraph of their executive summary. Each of these is outlined below, and the progress made since the time of the review is sketched. [Note that, for emphasis, Recommendation 0 was unnumbered and stated separately prior to the others in the report.]

Recommendation 0. Appoint an Executive Director, who would be charged with developing and implementing a strategic plan for the program.

It was argued that a champion was needed for the program “to provide direction for strategic growth and development.” Although we did request creation of such a staff position, given no additional funds, we have not been able to appoint an Executive Director. Rather, the instructor most heavily involved in and committed to the program serves as head of the program/plan although this remains a contract position and most recently was reduced to a year-at-a-time contractual appointment. With regard to a strategic plan, we have during the current academic year explored the possibility of a Master’s program in this realm, and have a proposal for how our MASc in Psychology in the area of Industrial/Organization (I/O) psychology could be revamped to provide a valuable experience for top HRM students and people in the field. This has been forwarded to the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts.
Recommendation 1. Provide appropriate compensation for and regularization of part-time faculty at the core of the program.

Compensation for sessional instructors in this program—almost all instruction is by sessional instructors from the business world—was increased in the 2011-2012 academic year beyond the standard sessional stipend, which HRM instructors had formerly received, but remains lower than what was requested by the reviewers. Contracts, which then were for 1-3 years, now are for one term at a time, except for the instructor most heavily involved in the program, who has an annual contract. This is far from ideal; without longer-term contracts, we risk losing the excellent sessional instructors who currently are the backbone of the program. One key goal will be to convert the principal sessional instructor to a continuing Lecturer; this discussion has begun with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts with the intention of making the change within two years. This program is vulnerable, given its reliance on one instructor without a regular UW appointment, plus several sessional instructors.

Recommendation 2. Appoint a managing director to handle ongoing operations and administration.

Although we did request creation of such a full-time staff position, given no additional funds, we have not been able to appoint a managing director. In addition to the principal sessional instructor, there is currently a staff person in charge of the HRM program whose duties are about 2/3 HRM and 1/3 Psychology.

Recommendation 3. Appoint academic faculty with industry experience to enhance the scholarly reputation of the program.

In the past two years, we have been able to hire two faculty members on the Personnel (Industrial) side of our Industrial/Organizational Area. These hires strengthen our I/O Area and will also contribute to the HRM program development. These two new colleagues have already been instrumental in helping to develop the proposal for a revamped Master’s program—recently forwarded to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts—that should appeal to HRM students and professionals. What we need now is the continuing Lecturer appointment for the current champion of the program (referred to in Recommendation #1 above), who is so pivotal to its success.

Recommendation 4. Expand course offerings and course delivery options to create an HRM Major plan while building on the synergy between academic and practitioner perspectives.

We find it impossible to imagine creating a Major program without any full-time regular faculty associated with that Major, and so have not pursued this recommendation. Indeed, the HRM minor program runs on a very limited budget and, likely because it is a minor program, does not seem to have the necessary features to attract additional support, the 400 students in the program notwithstanding. Due to the demands of the large number of students in the program, we need to increase sections and frequency of course offerings in the HRM Minor, but this will depend on an infusion of funds to support expansion and the hiring of additional
instructors. We also have to carefully monitor changes in the HR profession that will influence our HRM minor. The guiding body in all of this is the HRM Advisory Committee made up of one or two of the I/O Psychology tenure-stream faculty, the head of the program, and the staff person in charge of HRM, with the Chair of Psychology ex officio.

**Recommendation 5.** Explore continuing education initiatives including the possibility of developing a Master’s program, most probably with online components.

The goal this year, with the addition of the two new Assistant Professors in I/O, was to consider possible models for a Master’s program that would be academically rigorous and also appealing both to UW graduates with the HRM Minor and ideally to HR professionals. We examined other such programs and considered possible versions that could work here at UW, considering likely enrollment and also need for funding. The result is the proposal for a revived MASc in I/O Psychology that would offer a research focus different from other HRM Master’s programs in existence. This is where our strength lies, and it would also differentiate us from the other programs. As mentioned, this proposal is in the hands of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts.

**Recommendation 6.** Develop an HRM Club to strengthen the sense of community among students and prepare them for professional life.

An HRM club was created last year and is already a success. Again, this has been very much at the initiative of the current head of the program, whose devotion to this program is exemplary.