

BHM349 EMPLOYEE RELATIONS IN CONTEXT

Academic Year 2013/14

Number of Aston Credits: 15

Number of ECTS Credits: 7.5

Staff Member Responsible for the Module:

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Staff teaching the Module:

Mrs. Kathy Daniels, Teaching Fellow,
Work & Organisational Psychology Group
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Pre-requisites for the module:

None.

Mode of Attendance:

On campus

Module Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

- > To develop understanding of the basic concepts, theories and perspectives of employee relations.
- > To understand the impact of local, national and global contexts shaping employee relations
- > To understand the roles and functions of different groups in the employment relationship

- > To understand the importance and relevance of employee involvement and participation and other key processes in employment relations
- > To understand how employment relations processes support the organisation and impact on the business strategy
- > To develop appropriate skills to manage conflict situations effectively

Module Content:

- Week 1:** What is the employment relationship? Key concepts, theories and perspectives
- Week 2:** The local and national context of employee relationships
- Week 3:** Strike: When Britain went to war
- Week 4:** The roles and functions of different groups in the employment relationship, including HR Outsourcing
- Week 5:** The impact of the law on employee relations, and global factors
- Week 6:** The roles of trade unions, and their purpose
- Week 7:** The process of negotiation and collective bargaining, conflict resolution and change management
- Week 8:** Employee involvement and participation, employee engagement, communication and diversity management
- Week 9:** Preparation of coursework
- Week 10:** Hand in coursework

There will also be one workshop which will be focused on the process of managing conflict. In this workshop the practical skills required to manage disciplinary situations, to negotiate, to listen and to communicate effectively will be addressed.

Corporate Connections:

An experienced practitioner, who worked for many years in a unionized manufacturing environment, teaches on the module. The lecturer sits on employment tribunals, and hence is able to bring an extensive knowledge of difficulties that occur in the employment relationship.

The student body is a mixture of full-time and part-time students, many of whom are currently working in or have worked for organizations and this experience is shared with module participants.

International Dimensions:

Comparative examples are used within the module content to illustrate similarities and differences within employee relations systems on an international basis. There is tutor input on the impact of the European Union.

International students are asked to give a brief presentation about employee relations in their home country in week 5, and a discussion will take place about the differences that are identified.

Students are encouraged to explore internal examples and critically analyse the applicability of dominant Western approaches. Articles from internal journals are utilised on the reading list.

Contribution of Research:

The core text book has been researched and written by the module tutor. Issues relating to Employment Law and Diversity are supported by text books that have also been researched and written by the module tutor. Research by members of the Work & Organisational Psychology Group and the CIPD is also used throughout the module.

Ethics, Responsibility & Sustainability:

In this module the students will be thinking about both sides of the employment relationship. In doing this they will be thinking about appropriate behaviours from both the employer and employee. This will require the students to reflect on ethical behavior, legal compliance and the responsibilities that both the employer and the employee have in ensuring that the organisation operates effectively. The implications of unethical behaviour or irresponsible behaviour will be considered when looking at examples of conflicts that have occurred in organisations.

Method of Teaching:

There are weekly lectures, all of which will contain the opportunity for discussion and group work. In week 3 a documentary of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike is shown, and used as a basis for discussion. A wide variety of case studies are used.

There is also a one day workshop titled 'Managing Conflict' that further develops skills relevant to this module. During this workshop the focus will be on the practical skills that are required to manage disciplinary situations. Negotiation, interpersonal skills and communication skills will all be addressed.

Method of Assessment and Feedback:

90% Coursework essay.

This is a practical based piece of work, requiring students to apply the knowledge they acquire throughout the lectures. Feedback will be provided to students on individual feedback sheets.

10% Reflection on workshop

In this reflection students will be asked to identify the skills that they need to develop further, and identify why these identified skills are necessary in the workplace.

Learning Hours:

Pre-reading	25
Contact hours	27
Class/workshop preparation	17
Directed learning/additional reading	40
Private study/coursework preparation	35
Workshop	6
Total	150

The following readings are subject to change. Students should not therefore purchase textbooks prior to commencing their course. If students wish to undertake background reading before starting the course, many of the chapters/readings are available in electronic form via on-line library catalogues and other resources.

Pre-reading:

It would be very useful for students to have an overview of employee relations prior to starting the course. The purpose of the pre-reading is to gain that overview.

Students should read the following:

1. An introduction to the Employee Relationship

Chapter 1 of Daniels, K (2006) Employee Relations in an Organisational Context, London: CIPD Publishing

This chapter sets out some of the key concepts relating to the employment relationship.

2. Workplace Employee Relations Study 2011

Every four years the UK government carries out a survey into employee relations in the UK. Read the following report to gain an up to date understanding of employee relations: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210103/13-1010-WERS-first-findings-report-third-edition-may-2013.pdf

3. An insight into trade unions

Trade unions play an important in regulating the employment relationship. Choose a trade union of interest to you (some examples are Unison, Unite the Union and the Public and Commercial Services Union). Go to the website of that trade union and spend some time browsing through their news articles, gaining an understanding of the main issues that they are addressing.

4. An insight into the employer

Now that you have gained an insight into the trade unions we turn to the employer. The CBI (Confederation of British Industry) is one of the biggest employer representative bodies in the UK. Go to www.cbi.org.uk and spend some time gaining an insight into the issues that employers see as important.

Essential Reading:

Daniels, K (2006) *Employee Relations in an Organisational Context*, London: CIPD Publishing

Indicative Bibliography:

Blyton, P. Herrey, E & Turnbull, P. (2010) *Reassessing the Employment Relationship*, London: Macmillan

Dibben, P, Klerck, G and Wood, G (2011) *Employment Relations: A Critical and International Approach*, CIPD Publishing

Gennard, J. & Judge, G. (2010) *Managing Employment Relationships*, 5th Edition CIPD

Hollinshead, G., Nicholls, P. & Tailby, S. (2003) *Employee Relations*, 2nd Edition, London: Financial Times Management

Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., Saunders, M. (2003) *Employee Relations: Understanding the Employment Relationship*. FT Prentice Hall.

Salamon, M (2000) *Industrial Relations: Theory and Practice*, 4th Edition, FT Prentice Hall



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Recommended Journals:

British Journal of Industrial Relations
Employee Relations
Employment Review
Industrial Relations Journal
International Journal of Human Resource Management
Labour Market Trends
Labour Research
Human Resource Management Journal
People Management
Work, Employment and Society



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