

# **BH3303 – CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Module Number:** BH3303

**Module Title:** Contemporary Issues in HRM

**Number of Aston Credits:** 20

**Total Number of ECTS Credits:** 10  
(European Credit Transfer)

**Staff Member Responsible for the Module:**

**Dr. Christine Hemingway (Module Leader)**  
Work & Organisational Psychology Group

Availability: Please see Jenny Thompson, SW802,  
Extension 3257

**Other Staff Contributing to the Module:**

Dr. Jonathan Crawshaw  
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Availability: Please see Jenny Thompson, SW802,  
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Mrs. Carole Parkes  
Work & Organisational Psychology Group

Availability: Please see Jenny Thompson, SW802,  
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**Pre-Requisites:** BH1107 Introduction to  
Organisational Behaviour

Advised to have taken and passed  
BH2239 Psychology & Work

**Requisite:**

This module is all about applying theory to practice and the synthesis of different viewpoints regarding management and the role of HRM. Those different viewpoints will be accessed from your own reading which must be in addition to information from the lectures. Importantly, those different perspectives must also come from students' experience of paid or unpaid work, which does not necessarily have to be a placement. Students will thus

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be expected and encouraged to *make their own decisions* based on their own desk research - as in management. In this way, the module prepares students for their management careers by highlighting the highly complex nature of management - and that looking for right and wrong answers in the study of management (and in the assessment) is folly.

### **Module Learning Outcomes:**

- To appreciate the complexities of organisational functioning and issues facing contemporary workplaces and apply management concepts, theories and techniques. This is achieved using a format of lectures and interactive reflection incorporating students' own paid and unpaid workplace experiences.
- To critically evaluate through the application of different theories, the nature of contemporary organisations and key aspects of the management of people within organisations. This is achieved partly by means of exploring different theoretical perspectives, through examining recent organisational experiences, the successful management of individual and group assignments and from readings and case studies. The coursework will directly focus on this experience.
- To feel confident about working and presenting in a group situation and postulate about different organisational cultures and approaches through learning and sharing organisational experiences.
- To fuse the analytical with the creative to develop and present informed and innovative recommendations for the practice of HRM, using clear and concise writing and presentation skills based on students' own desk research
- To manage self and group in order to synthesise different viewpoints and develop plans and/or recommendations for effective organisational, group or individual performance.

### **Module Content:**

This module is unusual as it is based on students' experiences. This offers a unique opportunity to re-assess and appraise individual and organisational issues. The use of different methods of looking at organisational life is important, providing the basis for a *critical review of theory*.

Topics include areas such as:-

- An overview of contemporary HRM and key issues for the management of people in organisations, including high performance organisations, flexibility, involvement, empowerment and impact on careers.
- The nature and purpose of the HR profession

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- Psychological contracts and communication from an individual and organisational perspective
- The changing context of work and managing organisational change including downsizing and outsourcing.
- A macro and micro look at CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and irresponsibility, including misbehaviour. Why managers cannot rely on the law.
- Morality at work; 'ethical' decision-making and whistle blowing
- Surveillance and control at work
- Bullying in the workplace
- Careerism – moral and economic implications for both employers and individuals
- Organisational and individual stress
- The glass ceiling and implications for organisational effectiveness
- Other diversity issues

### **International Dimensions:**

Course materials are drawn from a wide range of sources and include organisational and theoretical perspectives drawn from different cultures. Students with international work experience are encouraged to share their reflections with the group.

### **Connections with corporations; SMEs; the public and voluntary sectors:**

This module draws on the placement experience of students and company case studies are used throughout the lecture sessions and for student assignments (see assessment section). In addition, contributions may be organised from local business professionals.

### **Links to Research:**

The module draws on research undertaken by the tutors specifically in relation to HRM, Managing Change, CSR and Ethics together with a combination of academic journal articles and CIPD practitioner focused research for the specific topics covered

### **Learning and Teaching Rationale and Methods:**

(Including composition of learning hours)

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Lectures/workshops (inc. practical exercises and cases)  
for terms 1 & 2 lasting 2 hours per week.  
Handouts and References for self directed learning.

## **Contact and directed learning**

Lectures	40 hours
Individual Assignment Including reading	40 hours
Group Work	60 hours
Individual Reading	58 hours
Examination	2 hours

**Total** 200 hours

**Ethical Approval:** Primary research is not required for this module

## **Assessment and Feedback Rationale and Methods**

The assessment is via an examination (50%) and coursework (50%).

Individual assessment constitutes 70% of the module and group work 30%. The coursework will involve elements of both individual and group work. Two pieces of work will be set, one individual and one group based. Students will also be assessed on a group presentation designed to aid revision for exam preparation. Full details of all assessments and requirements are posted on Blackboard

Feedback is provided individually for course work and a summary of all comments made are collated and posted on Blackboard to highlight good practice and areas for improvement.

## **Group Work:**

Group work is a vital part of the learning experience in this module. Students will be placed in groups from early in the module and will remain in them for the duration of the module. Membership of groups will be based on blending previous organisational experience. The purpose of this is to facilitate the comparison of students' experiences. Group and team working is a strong issue within organisations today. Through the experiences of having to work together in terms of both organisational and personal problems students will gain a better insight into the main topics of the module. Peer assessment is also a feature of the module. Students will be required to evaluate the contributions of other students within set criteria and justify their evaluations. Those who feel unable to work in a group format are discouraged from taking this module.