SQA Advanced Unit Specification

General information

Unit title: Human Resource Management: Introduction (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J2FD 47

Superclass: AJ

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Version: 02

Unit purpose

This introductory unit is intended for learners who plan to pursue an extended course of study in Human Resource Management (HRM), or who are considering a career in this discipline. It is also suitable for those learners who may wish to gain a holistic overview of how human resource management can add value to an organisation. It is designed to develop knowledge of the role of human resource management as a key function within organisations and to develop an understanding of the factors of change that have shaped and continue to influence the discipline of human resource management.

It introduces learners to the activities that make up human resource management and how these activities contribute to the success of individuals, teams and organisations. It also allows learners to focus on a contemporary human resource management issue of particular interest to themselves. The research and presentation methods demanded of this unit should develop skills which are transferrable into the workplace. These elements alongside the research aspect of Outcome 1 should help prepare learners who plan to continue to further levels of study.

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Outcomes

On successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

1 Contextualise and explain the factors that are currently shaping human resource management policy and practice.
2 Explain the main activities of an effective human resource function.
3 Analyse the benefits of, and barriers to, achieving an effective human resource management function.

Credit points and level

1 SQA unit credit(s) at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7).

Recommended entry to the unit

It is recommended that learners undertaking this unit possess good communication skills at a level equivalent to SCQF level 5.

Core Skills

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following Core Skills component:

Core Skill component   Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5

There are also opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills which are highlighted in the Support Notes of this Unit specification.

Context for delivery

If this unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods, or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Where evidence for outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Contextualise and explain the factors that are currently shaping human resource management policy and practice.

Knowledge and/or skills

♦   Current priorities and recent developments within the human resource discipline
♦   Psychological contract

Outcome 2

Explain the main activities of an effective human resource function.

Knowledge and/or skills

♦   Range of human resource management activities and their purpose
♦   Integration of the human resource management function throughout operational management activities
♦   Impact of technology on the human resource management function

Outcome 3

Analyse the benefits of, and barriers to, achieving and maintaining an effective human resource management function.

Knowledge and/or skills

♦   The impact on individual, team and organisational performance of an effective human resource management function
♦   Barriers to implementing an effective human resource management function
♦   Minimising and overcoming barriers to implementation of an effective human resource management function and maintaining an effective HRM information system

Evidence requirements for this unit

Outcome 1

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate that they understand the recent history of the human resource function and can identify key factors currently affecting the profession.

♦ Briefly describe the key factors influencing the human resource management discipline since the Second World War.
♦ Identify three priority areas currently shaping the human resource management profession.
♦ Discuss the psychological contract in relation to the three identified priority areas.
♦ Analyse one priority in significant detail.

The final submission requires a satisfactory response to all the evidence requirements listed above.

Outcome 2

The evidence requirements for this outcome can be combined with that of Outcome 2 to form a single submission. Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and/or skills by showing that they can:

♦ describe four of the activities that make up human resource management
♦ explain operational management activities which are interdependent with the HRM function
♦ discuss current thinking on information technology's impact on the effectiveness of the human resource function

The final submission requires a satisfactory response to all the evidence requirements listed above.

Outcome 3

The evidence requirements for this outcome can be combined with that of Outcome 1 to form a single submission. Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate that they can:

♦ analyse the contribution of human resource management activities to organisational success
♦ analyse the contribution of human resource management activities on team performance
♦ analyse how human resource management activities impact on the behaviour of employees
♦ describe four barriers to implementing and maintaining an effective human resource management function
♦ explain how barriers to implementing and maintaining an effective human resource management function can be minimised and overcome

The final submission requires a satisfactory response to all the evidence requirements listed above.

Support notes

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Unit support notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this unit

This unit is designed to give learners a broad introduction to the human resource function. The subject matter should be taught at a generic level. It is important that learners should understand:

♦ the origins and development of the function we now call human resource management
♦ the range of activities an effective human resource management function implements and/or manages
♦ how an effective human resource management activity contribute to individual, team and organisational success
♦ the challenges of achieving and maintaining an effective human resource function
♦ how the human resource management function has developed in response to contemporary external forces
♦ the contemporary human resource environment

It should aim to set human resource activities in the overall context of the organisational environment.

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) web areas should be signposted as a rich resource of current, and reliable information both for the learner or the HRM professional. Learners should, in particular, be made aware of CIPD Knowledge Hub.

It is important that learners are given explicit guidance on the importance of using UK sites for gathering additional information. The need to develop good research techniques and use appropriate referencing is implicit throughout this unit.

It should be remembered that the human resource management function is a continually developing and evolving discipline. The list of activities and terminology shared with learners, should be reviewed annually to ensure they are current and contemporary.

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Outcome 1
Contextualise and explain the factors that are currently shaping current human resource policy and practice.

When dealing with this outcome the greatest focus should be on an area of personal interest chosen by the learner. A brief contextualisation of the changing face of HRM post WW2 is required and should aim to help learners understand the changes that have shaped the HRM function. This should be followed by an exploration of the priority areas that are currently shaping human resource policy and practice. These could be areas such as employment legislation, gig economy, zero hour contracts, gender equality, mental health in the work place, social trends, engagement, public policy, etc.

Learners should then be encouraged to consider external factors of change and to identify how current and topical factors influence the HRM resource — picking one to focus on for their submission. Alternatively, learners could choose to focus on a particular organisation/sector of interest. If this latter option is chosen learners will need to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the human resource function in their organisation of choice. It is unlikely this level of information will be able to be gathered only through desk research.

This task should be significantly different than Outcomes 1 and 2 in as much as the discussion about issues, or functions must be clearly linked to the issue, organisation or sector of choice. It is expected the submission will offer an overview of the development of human resource management and identify the contemporary issues of the time. A background to the issue/organisation/sector would follow. The main body of the work will vary depending on the choice of topic — but should demonstrate a good understanding of the issue/organisation/ sector and identify explicitly the role the human management resource plays in the context. It should not be a piece of generic HR theory. The piece of work should conclude with a reflection on the future and/or recommendations to the HRM department.

This outcome allows the learner to take a greater control of their learning therefore much of learners' time should revolve around independent learning with ongoing-tutor support.

Outcome 2
Explain the main activities of an effective human resource function.

This outcome should focus on the core human resource activities such as human resource planning, recruitment, selection and induction, employee relations, pay and reward, job design and evaluation, training and development, performance management and appraisal, employee welfare and equality. When introducing how human resource management functions operate in organisations, centres should briefly mention: centralisation, de-centralisation and outsourcing, generalist and specialist human resource management roles and the use of external human resource management consultants for specific tasks. It should be remembered that human resource management functions can operate at different levels from clerical and administrative to strategic.

When considering the variations in the human resource management activities centres should refer to why these arise. For example, the values and beliefs of top management, the organisation's business strategy and core activities, organisational structure, integration with line-management, the credibility of the human resource management function, the need the organisation has for professional advice.

When dealing with the impact of information technology, there should be mention of how IT is affecting work and the workplace, and what it may look like in the future. The opportunities that information technology offers to the human resource function should be explored. Areas covered would include; but are not limited to management information systems, social media, virtual learning environments, mobile communication tools.

Outcome 3
Analyse the benefits of, and barriers to, achieving and maintaining an effective human resource management function.

This outcome should identify the impact of the human resource function on different aspects of the organisation — in particular the individual, team and organisation. There should be a discussion of the challenges of evaluating the impact of human resource activities and the importance of review and evaluation to ensure the function remains relevant and valuable to any organisation — which itself will be continually developing and changing. It is important that the vital relationship between the human resource function and operational and strategic management is understood by learners. Barriers should also be considered at an individual, team and organisational level. These could include, but are not limited to management attitude, perceived lack of skill amongst current HRM staff, reluctance to invest organisational resources; employee distrust.

Guidance on approaches to the delivery of this unit

There are several ways to approach this unit. The unit provides learners with a foundation for understanding human resource management. It enables them to move more easily to a more detailed study of human resource activities. As such it is suited to delivery at the beginning of the SQA Advanced Certificate in Human Resource Management. It introduces learners to concepts that will be developed further in other units in the SQA Advanced Certificate and SQA Advanced Diploma in Human Resource Management. As a general introduction to human resources, it is suitable for inclusion in related qualifications where an appreciation of the purpose of these activities is helpful. Centres may choose to contextualise the unit as appropriate. For example, when this unit is part of a group award that is sector specific centres can contextualise the unit to that sector, for example, *Sports Management*.

Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Outcome 1

Outcome 1 allows learners to choose an area of particular interest to them. Learners may choose a specific issue, organisation or sector to complete their research, or a case study could be provided. Desk research only, is an acceptable method of gathering information, but the task must be completed in acceptable depth. If field research is appropriate and realistic (within the given time scales) this should be encouraged. Learners should be supported to conduct independent research for this outcome building on the foundations of contemporary issues. Learning materials should provide a framework with the onus of information gathering being placed on independent work. Learners should again be encouraged to use a format that they are comfortable with, eg a business report format, advisory video, smart phone app format, etc. It is suggested that Outcome 3 should take up approximately 35% of the allocated delivery time.

Learners should be encouraged to adopt a different format to present their evidence from that chosen for Outcomes 1 and 2.

Outcomes 2 and 3

Outcomes 2 and 3 lend themselves to holistic assessment using a combined approach. The creation of PowerPoint presentation (10 slides max) with supporting speaker notes (1,750–2,000 words approximately) is suggested as an optimum method of assessment. This would be focussed on informing interested businesses about the human resource function and the benefits it could bring to their organisation — learners would not be required to formally present their work. Learners should however be encouraged to use a format of their choice; a business report, advisory video, smart phone app or any other appropriate means suitable for use in a professional context could all be accepted. This submission does not lend itself to posters or short leaflets. This assessment task should be shared with learners early on in their course of study and conducted under open-book conditions.

Outcomes 2 and 3 can also be completed separately if this is deemed more appropriate.

If the final submission results in a combination of Outcomes 2 and 3 at least one project review should take place during the duration of the project. This allows for an ongoing review of progress and content, whilst also introducing learners to working on larger scale academic or business projects. Learners should receive constructive feedback at these review stages. Feedback should be both reflective and forward facing.

Learners should be encouraged to adopt a different format to present their evidence from that chosen for Outcome 1. It is suggested that the combined delivery of Outcomes 2 and 3 should take approximately 65% of the allocated delivery time.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment, we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology, such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres wishing to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment — as specified in the evidence requirements — are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at: www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

The Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this component.

All outcomes in this unit afford learners the opportunity of developing Core Skills at SCQF level 6 as noted below.

Communication: Reading, Written and Oral
Outcome 1 provides research for an in-depth report. This provides underpinning knowledge by reading complex information on theory and practical applications of HRM in organisational success. The holistic written report covering the application of HRM and its contribution to organisational success develops written communications. Oral communication could be developed by group discussions through the analysis and evaluation of information related to each outcome and through verbal exploration of complex issues.

Problem Solving: Critical Thinking
Critical thinking is developed by learners through study of the behavioural theories and practical approaches to problem solving in organisations.

The Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this component

History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 embedded	21/11/19

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of SQA Advanced Qualifications.

Further information

Call SQA's Customer Contact Centre on 44 (0) 141 500 5030 or 0345 279 1000. Alternatively, complete our Centre Feedback Form.

General information for learners

Unit title: Human Resource Management: Introduction (SCQF level 7)

This section will help you to decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining: what the unit is about; what you should know or be able to do before you start; what you will need to do during the unit; and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit is designed to give you a general understanding of the development of human resource management. It will introduce you to the range of activities that make up the human resource management function and how they can operate in organisations. You will learn the purpose of these activities and how they can contribute to organisational success.

You may be someone considering human resources as a career. You may already have human resource management or administration as part of your role at work. Whatever your starting point this unit will give you a broad overview of the function.

Whether you are considering general management as a career or if you are already in a management role, this unit will give you a greater understanding of the context and purpose of the human resource management function. It will give you an insight into how the human resource management function can positively impact on individuals, teams and organisations and will enable you to review and develop your approaches to managing people.

During this unit you should demonstrate an enthusiasm for the human resource function, the desire to apply core knowledge and information in a focussed manner, and a willingness to develop independent research skills.

For successful completion of the unit, you will be required to provide evidence that you can explain the activities of an effective human resource management function; analyse the benefits of, and barriers to, achieving this and explain the key areas that are currently shaping human resource management policy and practice. You can present this evidence in a number of ways such as a report, presentation, research project, etc. Your tutor will explain exactly what is expected of you.

The Critical Thinking component of Problem Solving at SCQF level 5 is embedded in this unit. When a learner achieves the unit, their Core Skills profile will also be updated to include this component.

Depending on how the unit is delivered, there may be opportunities to develop Core Skills in *Communication* although there is no automatic certification of these Core Skills.