

History of the Department of Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management is the study of human functioning and utilisation in the workplace. This field of study has existed since 1973 as part of the Department of Psychology and since 1986 as an independent, autonomous Department, namely the Department of Personnel Management in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.

A decision to change the name of the Department to the Department of Human Resource Management was taken in 1993. At the same time a decision was taken that the Department would fall under the School for Management Sciences in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. The 21-year existence of the BCom (Personnel Management) degree at the University of Pretoria was celebrated in 1994 with, inter alia, a formal dinner during which the above-mentioned changes were officially announced.

The Department produces market-oriented, high-level human resources and research results of international quality, while financially increasingly functioning at a self-sustaining level. New subject courses succeed in proactively meeting contemporary challenges and needs. In 1994, a course in the Management of Diversity was introduced at honours and master's level and for the first time students completed a MCom degree in Labour Relations Management. In 1998 a MPhil degree in Labour Relations Management was instituted.

At present most courses incorporate 'blended learning' by means of ClickUP. Currently the Department is collaborating with the Department of Engineering and the Graduate School of Management for internet-based tuition programmes.

Probably the biggest task the Department had to attend to since its inception began in 1998. Partially owing to the restructuring of education in South Africa, all university departments had to redesign their curricula and reformulate their study guides. Hereafter, courses had to meet the requirements of outcomes-based education, as well as the standards set by the South African Qualifications Authority ([SAQA](#)). The staff worked strenuously to complete the redesign of curricula by the prescribed deadline. All undergraduate and postgraduate courses were eventually registered with SAQA. Study material is revised annually and has been available in both English and Afrikaans since 1994.

The current degree course in Human Resource Management is based on a generic competence model prescribed by the South African Board for Personnel Practice ([SABPP](#)). This makes the Department the leader in South Africa as the logical, progressive composition of subjects in courses. Postgraduate students of the Department are readily accepted for further study and positions abroad.

During the period from 1995 to 1996 three staff members of the Department, namely Proff Vermeulen (1995), Basson and De Beer (both in 1996), received the University's long-service award for 25 years of uninterrupted service. Almost ten years after, they are still with us at the Department.

Departmental research mainly concentrates on studies concerning the utilisation of human resources, as well as labour relations, but staff members specialise in more than 30 fields of expertise.

The Department is part of an extensive collegial network of academics in South Africa and abroad. Cooperation agreements exist with institutions abroad, including the University of Western Australia, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the University of Southern Queensland in Australia, as well as the University of Mauritius. In 1999, Prof HE Brand was nominated external examiner and extraordinary lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Namibia.

Domestically there is cooperation with bodies such as the South African Board for Personnel Practice ([SABPP](#)), the South African Institute for Personnel Management and the Health Professions Council of South Africa ([HPCSA](#)). Students are empowered by practical involvement with publications and relevant research. Annual awards for achievement serve as further encouragement of students, as well as being proof of the private sector's appreciation of the quality education offered by the Department. Examples are the Safair award for the best BComHons (Human Resource Management) student, the Murray & Roberts award for the best Industrial and Organisational Psychology III student, the Institute for Personnel Management (Gauteng North) award to the BComHons student who presented the best research report and the South African Board for Personnel Practice award for the best academic achievement in MCom (Human Resource Management). The Department itself sponsors two awards, namely the Human Resource Management Undergraduate award for the best student in the BCom field of study with specialisation in Human Resource Management over the three years of study, as well as the Mof Lemmer award for the best BComHons (Labour Relations) student.

Community service, such as the presentation of short courses, is a major goal of the University. In 1988, the Department introduced a short course in Labour Relations which is still presented at present.