

# THE MASTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES & LABOR RELATIONS CURRICULUM

The MSU Master of Human Resources & Labor Relations program is based on a 12-course, 36 credit-hour curriculum. To ensure graduates receive a comprehensive professional education, students take one or more courses across each of 7 core ‘knowledge areas’. In addition to completing 5 required courses, students have the flexibility to develop expertise in selected subjects by choosing 7 elective courses. Described next are the 7 core knowledge areas comprising our master’s degree, along with the courses included under each area. (Courses marked by an \* are required courses.)

## Human Resources Management

**\*HR Practices & Decisions:** The primary objective of this course is to provide students with a comprehensive overview of the role and functions of human resources at the strategic, managerial and operational levels of organizations. This course provides an analytical and practical understanding of HR functions and how effective HR systems optimize employee capabilities, motivation, and opportunities that yield superior performance in today’s global economy.

**Talent Acquisition & Deployment:** One set of important HR and LR decisions organizations make is in talent acquisition and deployment of employees. These activities include recruitment, selection, placement, and turnover management. In this course, students learn how to design and carry out these various staffing activities and how to do so effectively within labor market and legal constraints.

**Training & Development:** In today’s ever-changing global marketplace, marked by continual advancements in technologies and associated management processes, HR and LR professionals are faced with demands to successfully create learning environments and to build the knowledge-based capacities of organizations. In this course, students learn how to conduct needs assessments, to design effective training and development programs to meet those needs, and to evaluate the returns to investments in training and development in light of organizational goals.

**Compensation:** Compensation systems are critical to attracting, motivating, and rewarding high-talent employees. In this course, students learn about the basic tools and diagnostic approaches used in effective compensation planning and administration, about legal requirements, and how to achieve balance between external equity (what other employers offer), internal equity (what others in the organization receive), and individual equity (self-perceptions of worth and relative contribution).

**HR Information Systems:** This course provides students with a foundation in the managerial, technical, and functional aspects of HR information systems. Students learn the fundamentals of database management, the basics of HR information system planning and implementation, project management, Web-based information systems, and query and decision support tools. In addition, students are provided with end-user instruction in how to apply various HR information systems programs.

**Foundations of Employee Benefits:** This course provides students with expertise in employee benefits, focusing primarily on health care and retirement/financial planning. Students gain exposure to the operation of benefit systems from a public policy, organizational, and employee perspective. In addition, the health care and retirement approaches taken in different countries are compared and the implications for HR managers in multinational companies are assessed.

## **Labor-Management Relations**

**\*Collective Bargaining:** This course provides students with an overview of the broader role and history of unions and union-management relations in society and an understanding of collective bargaining strategies and day-to-day union-management relations. Students learn how to develop and align collective bargaining strategies with HR and business strategies, to apply interest-based and traditional approaches to negotiations, to create joint union-management relationships, and to resolve disputes and build trustworthy relationships.

**Grievance Administration & Arbitration:** This course provides a comprehensive treatment of administration of grievance procedures in union-management agreements and the arbitration of unresolved disputes. Students learn how to investigate grievances, apply due process, critically evaluate merit, participate in hearings as advocates, and prepare briefs for arbitration. Issues examined include discipline and discharge, management rights, compensation and benefits, seniority, past practices, and subcontracting out work.

## **Organizational Change**

**\*Organizational Behavior for HR & LR:** The success of organizations depends on the skills and talents of employees to advance business strategies and to enable group and organizational processes that allow organizations to grow and change in healthy ways. In this course, students learn the managerial and organizational behavior skills required to manage people and resources effectively across organizational contexts, to use organizational processes to enhance firm performance, and to take the lead as change agents.

**Organizational Development & Change Management:** Organizational change projects are complex and difficult to manage. In this course, students learn how organizational change can occur at individual, group, and organization-wide levels and why even carefully planned change has many unintended consequences. Students analyze organizational change case studies, evaluate causes of failure and factors of success in organizational development projects, and design optimal change interventions.

**High Performance Work Systems:** The focus of this course is on high performance workplace systems and related management processes (e.g., the 'Toyota Production System' and Six Sigma) designed to achieve exceptional performance and the delivery of innovative products and services. Students learn not only the management principles, diagnostic tools, and processes underpinning these systems, they learn about the high-involvement, commitment-based HR and LR policies and practices essential to the effective application of these systems and processes.

**Leadership in HR:** The purpose of this course is to provide students with an understanding of leadership theories and how to apply these models in organizations to develop effective HR leaders. Topics include analyses of leadership traits, skills, styles, authenticity and ethics; and leadership as a dynamic, transformative, and influence process. Special topics include leadership in teams, the promotion of diversity and inclusion, and gender and cross-cultural differences influencing leadership.

**Negotiations & Conflict Resolution:** The ability to negotiate effectively and to resolve conflicts constructively is valuable for HR and LR professionals. In this course, students learn how to apply alternative strategies, tactics, and processes to negotiations and to manage the key factors that determine success; including planning, communication and persuasion, power, interdependence, resistance, commitment, trust, and third-party interventions.

## Strategy and Firm Performance

**HR & Firm Performance:** The purpose of this course is to provide students with the financial analysis tools necessary to function effectively as HR professionals and business leaders. Applying foundational and basic practices in finance and accounting, students learn the basics of project and firm valuation with a heavy emphasis on HR responsibilities.

**HR Strategy:** The purpose of this course is to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of how firms can and do manage HR as a source of competitive advantage. Students develop a deeper understanding of the concepts and processes inherent in strategy formulation and implementation, the alignment of HR and business strategies, the role of workforce attributes and HR systems in these decisions, and the transformation of HR from an administrative to a strategic function.

## International Human Resources & Labor Relations

**Comparative Employment Relations:** Increasing global integration and the extraordinary expansion of multinational operations around the world raises a host of challenging HR and LR issues. In this course, students learn about diverse industrial relations and business systems, marked by wide-ranging differences in labor market institutions, workplace cultures and norms, employment regulations, and collective bargaining. Within this international context, students learn about key emerging global HR and LR issues and about transnational strategies pursued by companies and unions.

**International Human Resources:** The primary objective of this course is to provide an overview of the role and functions of international HR in today's global organizations. The course provides a comprehensive analytical and practical understanding of international HR strategies and related decisions used to enhance recruitment, selection, retention, talent development, diversity management, task and organizational performance, and leadership systems in organizations operating internationally and in multicultural environments.

**Study Abroad:** Study abroad courses provide students with unique and enriching experiences through the study of HR and LR in selected host countries. Coursework includes pre-visit preparation, two weeks in a host country, and post-visit analyses. During the two-week visit abroad, students receive instruction from host-country nationals and engage in direct dialogue with HR and LR professionals in both domestic and multinational organizations.

## Workplace Law

**Employment Law:** The objective of this course is to enable students to evaluate HR policies against principles of employment law. Students learn about laws and policies designed to protect equal employment opportunities (covering civil rights, disabilities, and family leave) and to compensate employees for occupational injuries and illnesses. Students also learn legal principles affecting employee rights to privacy, employment-at-will policies, and an organization's right to screen employees for drugs and alcohol.

**Labor Law:** This course provides students with a working knowledge of the legal rights and obligations of employers, employees, and unions regarding union representation, organizing, the negotiation of agreements, and the administration of contracts. Students learn about the process of adjudication of unfair labor practice charges, the roles of presidential appointments, administrative decisions and judicial

rulings; and how to assess the implications of labor law on HR and collective bargaining strategies and practices.

***International Employment Law:*** In this course, students learn about employment laws in various countries in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa, with focus on the individual employment contract, labor relations, terms of employment, discrimination, and privacy. In addition, students learn about international standards influencing the employment relationship, including International Labor Organization conventions and bilateral treaties.

### **Business Analytics**

**\**Economics of HR:*** This course provides an understanding of the economic factors that influence labor market and firm level human resource behavior. Students learn how to conduct HR and labor market analyses important to organizational strategies and decision making about hiring, selection and staffing, compensation and benefit plans, training and development, outsourcing and off-shoring, collective bargaining, and policies governing layoffs and retirement.

**\**Quantitative Methods for HR & LR:*** This course equips students with the statistical tools needed to make well-informed, evidence-based decisions. Students learn how to conceptualize cause-effect relationships and apply univariate and multivariate techniques to assessments of the effects of HR and LR practices on measurable outcomes of interest.

***HR Metrics & Analytics:*** Like their counterparts in all other functional areas of an enterprise, HR and LR professionals need to apply business metrics and analytics to the decisions they make. This course prepares students to improve and apply information system data to quantitative analyses of key HR and LR issues (e.g., with respect to performance, returns to training and development, evaluation of change interventions over time). Students learn how to use visualization to describe and analyze data, present data analytic results and write analytic reports in nontechnical terms.