

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT 2007

Program: **Masters of Labor Relations and Human Resources**
Department: Management & Labor Relations
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Introduction

The principal objective of the Masters in Labor Relations and Human Resources (MLRHR) degree is to help graduates begin a career or advance a career in human resources and labor relations.

The program attracts three categories of students: 1) those with undergraduate labor relations or human resource coursework who are continuing their education to obtain a masters degree while they seek experience in the field, 2) students who currently have a human resource or labor relations position and are seeking to enhance their promotion potential, and 3) students with no previous academic coursework in the field, and who are in the midst of a career change.

All aspects of the assessment of learning described in this report were designed and implemented in close consultation with the MLRHR faculty.

Goals

MLRHR students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate and apply their knowledge of labor relations and human resources.
2. Demonstrate quantitative skills related to the practice of labor relations and human resource management.

Outcomes

1. Students demonstrate knowledge by taking either the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) or Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) field practice exam administered through the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) in their graduating semester. Our target is that three-fourths of the students taking the practice exam will score at or above the set pass rate (HRCI sets the rate at 67% correct answers for an individual to pass).
2. Students demonstrate quantitative skills through the completion of assignments in three core courses: MLR 602 Wage and Employment Theory, MLR 640 Compensation and Benefits, and MLR 641 Employment Planning, Selection and Training. We report the percentage exceeding, meeting, and below minimum competence levels.

Methods

Direct evidence was gathered through results of the PHR/SPHR standardized test, and faculty judgments using established rubrics on assignments in MLR 602, MLR 640 and MLR641.

The PHR and SPHR online assessment exam is professionally developed and administered by the Human Resource Certification Institute (see www.hrci.org). The test consists of 75 multiple choice questions similar to those on the professional certification exams. The exam covers six areas of knowledge in the field as listed below. The PHR exam is more focused on the technical/operational aspects while the SPHR exam is more focused on strategic and policy issues. The relative emphasis of each area is listed below for the PHR and SPHR exam. The practice exam percentages reflect those used in the corresponding certification exam and are periodically readjusted by HRCI to reflect changes in the profession.

	PHR exam	SPHR exam
Strategic Management	12%	29%
Workforce Planning and Employment	26%	17%
Human Resource Development	17%	17%
Total Rewards - formerly Compensation and Benefits	16%	12%
Employee and Labor Relations	22%	18%
Risk Management – formerly Health, Safety and Security	7%	7%

Students choose either the PHR or SPHR test based on their background and years of experience in the field. The PHR exam is taken by those with two years of exempt experience or those students who do not yet have experience in the field; the SPHR exam is for professionals with at least ten years of experience. The majority of our students take the PHR exam.

Upon completing the practice exam, students receive an overall score as well as the percentage correctly answered in each of the six functional areas. This information is provided to the department and added to our assessment database.

Indirect evidence is provided through informal interviews with a sample of graduating students, contacts with alumni, and feedback from internship supervisors. Additional information is collected during advising sessions with current students.

Findings

Assessment Exam

All MLRHR students admitted after Summer 2004 are required to take the HRCI practice exam in their last semester of study. This requirement may be waived by the MLRHR Program Committee for those students who have previously passed the actual certification exam. This year's report combines data from graduates of Summer 2006, Fall 2006, and Spring 2007, and represents the first year all students are accounted for under the assessment exam requirement.

Listed below are the exam results for students graduating this academic year compared to results of previous years.

Average Percentage of Correct Answers on Practice Exam

	<u>2007 (n=28)</u>		<u>2006</u>		<u>2005</u>
	<u>Ave%</u>	<u>score range</u>	<u>Ave%</u>	<u>score range</u>	<u>Ave%</u>
Overall	66	46-87	68	58-74	64
Strategic Management	67	22-100	72	56-89	57
Planning & Employment	69	42-89	70	58-74	58
HRD	70	36-100	72	55-82	80
Total Rewards - Comp & Ben.	67	47-100	72	53-93	69
Employee & Labor Relations	60	25-94	63	50-81	64
Risk Management - Safety	50	0-100	53	20-100	42
<i>% passing</i>	<i>50%</i>		<i>73%</i>		<i>39%</i>

Key differences between this year and previous years include: (1) Average percentages of correct scores are lower this year in all categories, (2) The 2007 pass rate of 50% does not meet our program goal of 75% passing, and (3) There is considerable variance in performance across all areas; top students scored higher than students graduating last year and students scoring the lowest, scored lower than last year's lowest score. We note that the 2007 overall mean score of 66% is close to the 67% cutoff for a pass, reflecting that a number of the 14 students who "failed" were close to the cutoff. Also, 2007 data account for all students required to take the exam whereas 2006 is a sample. Further investigation is underway to indicate underlying causes of low minimum scores (e.g., a few students who scored poorly on the exam? Students who have no real-world experience in HR/LR? Students with low motivation on the exam since results do not impact graduation?). We

also note that a few of our better students were waived from taking the assessment exam because they had previously passed the certification exam.

Assessment of Quantitative Skills:

Instructors teaching MLR-602, MLR-640 and MLR-641 identified key quantitative skills or competencies that they felt were critical to student success in the classroom (and back at work). For each skill identified, faculty judged the students' work as either meeting, exceeding, or below the minimum levels of competence for that skill.

**Comparison of Quantitative Skills in Core Courses
Percentages for 2007 (2006 results in parentheses)**

MLR-641:

	<u>% Exceeding</u>	<u>% Meeting</u>	<u>% Below</u>
Ratio and Percentage Comparisons (Adverse impact analysis) not measured in 2007	(50)	(50)	(00)
Probability Tables (Markov analysis – HR planning)	60	40	00
Correlation Analysis (Calculating reliability)	50 (40)	50 (57)	00 (03)
Correlation and Simple Regression (Calculating validity coefficients)	90 (94)	10 (03)	00 (03)
Costing and utility analysis (Training evaluation, cost benefit and utility)	75	25	00

MLR-640:

	<u>% Exceeding</u>	<u>% Meeting</u>	<u>% Below</u>
FLSA Overtime Calculation	50 (70)	50 (20)	00 (10)
Pay Structure Design: (pay lines; regression)	50 (50)	50 (40)	00 (10)
Compa-Ratios and Pay Admin: (ratios and percentages)	60 (60)	40 (40)	00 (00)

MLR-602:

	<u>% Exceeding</u>	<u>% Meeting</u>	<u>% Below</u>
Statistical Analysis (Use of instrumental variables)	13 (30)	60 (60)	27 (10)
Mathematical Concepts (Elasticity of demand for labor)	14 (16)	50 (68)	36 (16)
Graphical Skills (Impact of alternative welfare systems on supply of labor)	11 (18)	39 (60)	50 (22)

Progress continues and faculty discussed student prerequisite skill levels and the need to provide a review of basic quantitative information in class. Although students must satisfy program prerequisites in economics and statistics, it may have been up to ten years since they completed coursework. Sample rubrics from MLR 641 are included as an attachment.

Review

The MLRHR Faculty met numerous times throughout the year informally as well as in formal MLRHR Committee meetings. These meetings included discussions and decisions concerning the clarification of goal #2, a proposed a change in admissions formula that was approved, and discussions about curriculum, internships, jobs, program assessment, and alumni contacts.

Faculty continue to review the outline of the professional exam for comparison to the core content of the program. Investigation of low scores on the assessment exam and quantitative skills areas indicating below competence will be undertaken.

Actions Taken

- 1) Following analysis of admissions and assessment data, and comparison with area programs, the MLRHR Faculty proposed an increase from 950 to 1000 total points for the admissions formula which was approved by the Program Faculty, the MLR Department, College of Business, and accepted by the Graduate College. This admissions change will be implemented with students admitted for Fall 2007 and brings our program in alignment with area masters programs. Current graduates who would not have made the new admissions formula had lower scores on the assessment exam.
- 2) Plan to offer a course in strategic human resources and labor relations Spring 2008 that would respond to lower scores on strategic portion of assessment exam

and input from recent graduates expressing need for more coverage of strategic concepts. While open to all students, this course should be especially helpful to those students without a previous undergraduate degree in business.

- 3) We continue to strictly enforce the prerequisite requirements for the program and for individual courses so that fundamental courses are taken prior to advanced coursework. Faculty discussion included the fact that the program prerequisite for statistics and economics is waived if students passed courses covering the corresponding content (correlation and regression for statistics; macro and micro economics) within the past ten years. Instructors currently have to provide a refresher review of basic statistical and economic concepts in MLR 602, 640 and 641. Statistics and economic courses were originally part of the masters program but were moved into the prerequisite category when programs were shortened to remain competitive. Faculty currently use informal diagnostics during lecture to assess entering level of knowledge.
- 4) Faculty continue to review the outline of the professional exam for comparison to the core content of the program and have discussed the advantages/disadvantages of requiring a pre and post learning assessment. The primary barrier to requiring the online practice exam as a pre as well as a post test is cost. Students currently pay \$45 each to take the assessment exam in their last semester of study.

Future Actions

- 1) Refine rubrics assessing key quantitative skills in MLR-602, MLR-640 and MLR-641.
- 2) Complete additional analyses to determine if lower assessment scores are related to lack previous experience in the field, lack of previous undergraduate coursework, or differences in cognitive ability – each suggesting different potential directions for action plans.
- 3) Include more indirect measures of assessment including a formal survey of alumni perceptions and establishment of an advisory committee.

MLRHR SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Semester _____ Year _____

MLR 641 – Employment Planning, Selection and Training

EXCEEDS competency level

Recognizes when 4/5ths rule data is influenced by small numbers of employees in job

Integrates employee retention data with mobility information to predict positions with gaps for future planning

Identifies when reliability and validity coefficients are influenced by sample size, range restriction, number of items, intercorrelation, etc.

Able to recommend multiple plausible training evaluation designs to control for threats and increase explanatory power of results

Able to include estimates of training effect and discounting in utility estimates

MEETS competency level

Correctly identifies positions which have evidence of adverse impact
(not meeting 4/5ths rule)

Able to use transition probability matrix to calculate number of employees in supply for next planning period; Correctly interprets mobility paths in Markov analysis

Correctly uses EXCEL or SPSS to calculate reliability and validity estimates; correctly interprets statistical and practical significance of estimates, identifying key predictors

Using case information, correctly calculates utility estimate

Recommends appropriate training evaluation design to minimize threats to internal validity (matched equivalent groups, pre-post assessments, etc.)

BELOW competency level

Incorrectly calculates or interprets adverse impact data
(e.g., misses forming ratios for comparison; uses incorrect group for comparison)

Incorrectly estimates number of employees in supply (e.g., does not add column of moves from other positions using mobility data); Incorrectly calculates increase in demand from estimates

Identifies correlation coefficients incorrectly – assuming that negative has less strength rather than looking at strength of coefficient

Misinterprets validation data concerning predictors and criterion – strength and significance

Evaluation design lacks detail description of what is being measured, how to control for competing explanations; utility estimate incorrect