



Office of the Provost &
Vice-President (Academic)

4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada
T1K 3M4

Phone (403) 329-2202
Fax (403) 329-2097

TO: Mike Mahon
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: May 11, 2020

FROM: Alan Siaroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Human Resources Management and Labour Relations Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Human Resources Management and Labour Relations area at its April 24th, 2020 meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review comprised: Kelly Williams-Whitt, Jim Wishloff, and Adam Letourneau.

The review produced four documents¹:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee and received August 14, 2019.
2. External Review Report. Written by Lisa Keeping (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Terry H. Wagar (Saint Mary's University) based on a site visit on October 21-22, 2019 and received January 24, 2020.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee and received February 19, 2019.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Kerry Godfrey, Dean of the Dhillon School of Business and received March 30, 2020.

The Program Review Committee was given the opportunity to respond to the Dean's Response and they indicated that they did not feel the need to do so.

1. Self Study Report

The body of the report noted several **strengths** of the Human Resources Management and Labour Relations area:

- Significant changes to HRMLR requirements in the previous year, though not yet reflected in the data, have resulted in significant improvements that better reflect the learning objectives for the HRMLR major.
- Good alignment between the University and Dhillon School of Business (DSB) strategies and the HRMLR learning goals and program design, including the reflection of the UofL's liberal education focus in foundational HRMLR course.
- The consistent demand for HRMLR practitioners in Canada suggests demand for the program provides some opportunity for growth.
- Program flexibility ensures multiple degree options for students at varying educational stages, multiple experiential learning opportunities, and the offering of the program on both the Lethbridge and Calgary campuses.
- The faculty has been re-energized with many recent new hires who have expertise in one of the core disciplines of human resources and organizational behaviour. Scholarly contributions to research, teaching and service are healthy.

¹ All documents are available upon request.

- Students are satisfied with the program and most move into positions in the HRMLR field after graduation.
- Retention rates have improved since the changes to the curriculum were implemented, which suggests the program has moved in the right direction.

The following **weaknesses and challenges** were mentioned in the body of the report:

- The business school landscape in Alberta is competitive, contributing to challenges in maintaining enrolment growth. Limited resources affect recruitment and awareness efforts, particularly for the Calgary campus.
- Resources also affect the ability to hire permanent faculty to teach core and required courses in the area, resulting in a reliance on sessional instructors and limitations in the offering of multiple sections of required courses.
- There's a lack of labour relations expertise on the Lethbridge campus.
- While basic HRMLR knowledge is assessed for all B. Mgt. students, a weakness in the evaluation of HRMLR program-specific learning means the higher-level learning expected of graduates moving into professional practice is not systematically assessed.
- In spite of a commitment to indigenize HRMLR courses, no progress has been made on this issue.
- Navigating HRMLR degree options can be very complex, particularly for post-diploma and second-degree students. Required courses are not easy to find online, so students may not understand what they will need to graduate, and they may not be clear about the opportunities they have after they graduate

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer **feedback** in several areas:

- How can we ensure our program provides students with the knowledge to meet professional competency requirements and still be distinct in the current competitive and homogenous HRMLR program environment?
- Where is the world of people management going and how can we best address emerging issues, such as technological change (e.g. artificial intelligence and block chain), and the evolving structure of work (e.g. the gig economy)?
- How could we increase experiential learning opportunities in HRMLR for the increasing number of students who work while attending school?
- Are there other undergraduate program options we should consider such as HR diplomas, or multiple HRMLR streams?
- What activities could the area undertake to increase interest in the HRMLR field and enrollments in our program?

The self-study report identified **key priorities** for the area in the next two years:

- Renew the CPHR accreditation and refinement to reduce the number of courses students are required to take in order to receive the National Knowledge Exam waiver.
- Maintain AACSB accreditation by meeting all quality assurance standards and adding new HRMLR learning goals as part of the continuous improvement process.
- Educate faculty members to support indigenization of HRMLR offerings, determining indigenization objectives and measures.
- Improve the HRMLR portion of the DSB website to make degree requirements clearer.
- Add faculty with labour relations expertise to the Lethbridge campus.
- Collaborate with student professional development and co-op program co-ordinators to identify opportunities to increase student participation in these programs.

2. External Review Report

The External Reviewers' Report noted several **strengths**:

- The culture among students and staff was very positive and collegial, with a strong dedication to the program and to students. Faculty and staff seem very committed and open to making improvements to their program.
- The quality of the faculty is quite impressive, particularly for a relatively small program and one where the primary location is outside a major city.
- The administration within the Dhillon School seems very supportive of the program. Although increased financial resources would be difficult to provide, it is clear that this is a genuine constraint and not a reflection of perceived program quality.
- Despite operating fairly leanly, the area is able to offer an impressive array of courses.
- Based on the small sample we observed, students seem very enthusiastic about the program and interested in avenues for increased involvement.
- The variety of professional development activities, the financial support from the Dhillon School associated with them, and the willingness to be responsible to students' needs was very impressive.

The External Reviewers' Report also discussed challenges in the report:

- The U of L was formerly known for its expertise in labour relations but at the present time, labour relations courses are taught by well-qualified instructors rather than by tenure-track faculty.
- Among senior administrators and faculty, there was a strong perception that the HRMLR area was lacking key expertise in terms of labour relations.
- Faculty commented on the weakness of students when it comes to working with data in an HRM context and the challenge of taking course work in statistics without specific HR applications.
- The HRMLR area does not offer sufficient training to students in using data analytic techniques.
- Experiential learning opportunities including case competitions and co-op work terms are not as available or attractive to students as they could be.
- The area offers a large number of courses meaning some courses are offered infrequently making it difficult for some students to access them and resulting in some overlap in course content.
- There is very little blended learning offered and none of the HRMLR courses is available online.
- The HRMLR area lacks faculty involvement in student development events and in involving students in faculty research projects.

The External Reviewers' Report contained 21 **recommendations** for improving the Human Resources Management and Labour Relations area:

1. The next hire in HRMLR needs to be someone with labour relations expertise.
2. The HRMLR area should leverage their strength in organizational behaviour.
3. The HRMLR program should develop at least one course addressing HR analytics with software applications relevant to human resource management.
4. A faculty member could be sent to an applied conference or workshop to obtain training in data analytics and bring this knowledge back to the area.
5. The HRMLR program should increase the HR analytics content by encouraging faculty to integrate analytics and software with HR applications, where relevant, in their current courses.
6. Incorporate a required major applied project into the curriculum.
7. Develop an in-house case competition.
8. Increase the use of academic cases.

9. Incorporate scenarios and/or simulations into the curriculum.
10. Provide course credit for participation in the HRC West competition.
11. Survey students to determine why students do not perceive co-op to be of value.
12. Enhance students' understanding of co-op.
13. Investigate and minimize the barriers to participation in co-op.
14. Comprehensively examine course offerings to streamline the number of courses and offer some courses more frequently.
15. Offer a certificate or diploma in HRMLR that would appeal to undergraduates in other disciplines or students who have completed an undergraduate degree but would like to work in the human resource field and obtain their CPHR certification.
16. Offer a minor concentration in HRMLR for students in other faculties such as the Faculty of Arts and Science.
17. Be more creative in the delivery of course offerings.
18. Offer professional development opportunities to community members.
19. Increase faculty involvement in student events and provide more opportunities to work with faculty on research projects.
20. Emphasize the HRMLR program as preparing students for the CPHR designation rather than writing the national knowledge exam.
21. Sell the HRMLR program as an entree into career paths other than HR generalist.

3. Program Response

In their Program Response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. <i>The next hire made in HRMLR needs to be someone with labour relations expertise.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Labour relations is a specialized academic field that requires training distinct from what is provided in graduate programs in organizational behavior or human resources management. Undergraduate students wishing to achieve the CPHR designation are required to have knowledge of this field. We agree that this may be a unique market niche for the Dhillon School of Business since other Alberta institutions have limited depth in this area.</p>
2. <i>The HRMLR area should leverage their strength in organizational behaviour.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Leveraging our current expertise is important but this can be accomplished while also achieving the necessary expertise in labour relations. We encourage the area to consider developing a certificate in an organizational behaviour area of strength such as leadership or workplace health.</p>
3. <i>The HRMLR program should develop at least one course addressing HR analytics with software applications relevant to human resource management.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The School is revising the core of the degree to increase the quantitative skills of students. Several approaches include an assessment at the start of the program to indicate whether students require remedial work through a University mathematics course, the inclusion of a data analytics course in the core, and making Excel</p>

	workshops available to students online so that they can refresh and increase their knowledge as they progress through the program.
4. <i>A faculty member could be sent to an applied conference or workshop to obtain training in data analytics and bring this knowledge back to the area.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We support sending a current faculty member to a conference or to receive other training to bring back to help area members as they consider how they might integrate analytics into their existing courses. It may actually be helpful (and more cost effective) to set aside a training day and bring in expertise to support all faculty members in DSB considering ways to integrate analytics throughout the curriculum.</p>
5. <i>The HRMLR program should increase the HR analytics content by encouraging faculty to integrate analytics and software with HR applications, where relevant, in their current courses.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Recommendation 3 addresses the need for a general data analytics course but does not incorporate HR specific applications. Some integration with current curriculum is appropriate once faculty have received any additional training/support they feel they require. The area could also offer a lab that runs parallel to the core data analytics course, or a professional development micro-credit course offered to students as well as members of the public interested in advancing their knowledge of HR software/data applications.</p>
6. <i>Incorporate a required major applied project into the curriculum.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>A required major applied project is an important component of a well-rounded HRLR curriculum. Currently, students only have access to this in the Integrated Management Experience option open to all majors but with limited enrolment and with projects not necessarily HRMLR specific. The area should consider a capstone project course as a requirement of the major or determine which of their existing courses may be suitably adapted to include an applied project.</p>
7. <i>Develop an in-house case competition.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Existing case competitions held within DSB are available to HRMLR majors, though they do not necessarily focus on HRMLR topics. A separate case-based course may be an effective way to integrate an HRMLR case-competition. If the area does not pursue a case-based required course, a case competition could be integrated into at least one existing course. The area may also want to consider providing academic credit for students who do participate in case competitions.</p> <p>A requirement that students participate in a case competition in order to graduate has resource implications and is challenging for students who may have to work to support themselves while attending school, particularly for students on the Calgary campus.</p>
8. <i>Increase the use of academic cases.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The area could work with the Teaching Centre to create a workshop on case-based teaching methods that would be beneficial for HRMLR as well as other instructors within DSB. It may also be helpful to maintain an inventory of cases that are being used, to identify gaps and prevent repetition across courses.</p>
9. <i>Incorporate scenarios and/or simulations into the curriculum.</i>	<p>Agreed</p>

	<p>This is another piece of the overall experiential learning toolkit that may be used in a thoughtful and targeted way by the area. It might be beneficial for the area to conduct a review to determine if there are any gaps in coverage in any current use of scenarios in courses. The area could investigate HRMLR simulations and their associated costs to determine their viability for ongoing use.</p>
10. <i>Provide course credit for participation in the HRC West competition.</i>	<p>Student interest in these case competitions is waning and they are also time-consuming for faculty who coach the student teams. Offering this as a directed study or as part of a case based HRMLR course has merit and should be considered in conjunction with the responses to Recommendation 7.</p>
11. <i>Survey students to determine why students do not perceive co-op to be of value.</i>	<p>The perception that our existing co-op program does not provide a competitive advantage for DSB students is very valuable information. Co-op opportunities are highly competitive and coveted at other Universities and a reason why students may choose one University over another. The DSB leadership team has taken this seriously and is moving to address issues. A survey of students is one of several different approaches being taken to ensure we thoroughly understand the issues and to provide evidence for decision-making.</p>
12. <i>Enhance students' understanding of co-op.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Once information about students' perceptions has been gathered, the DSB communications team should work with co-op and student clubs to develop a targeted and consistent marketing plan for the DSB co-op program.</p>
13. <i>Investigate and minimize the barriers to participation in co-op.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Issues with co-op relocation and realistic alternatives to support students so they can undertake co-op work terms in Lethbridge, Calgary or other centres will be investigated. Questions will be included in surveys and focus groups to explore this issue.</p> <p>The DSB leadership team, co-op staff, and DSB faculty should investigate alternatives and develop a more structured format that integrates work terms with specific learning and preparation.</p>
14. <i>Comprehensively examine course offerings to streamline the number of courses and offer some courses more frequently.</i>	<p>Agree in part</p> <p>There is significant overlap among some courses, e.g., MGT 1000 and MGT 3080 are being significantly revised to reduce duplication. The Program and Curriculum Committee is also looking at other points of overlap within core courses.</p> <p>We do not agree that the area should consider offering courses more frequently or consolidating other courses. Existing resource constraints make it impossible to offer courses more than once each year. Reducing the number of courses would make it difficult to cover fundamental HRMLR knowledge required to meet CPHR accreditation requirements.</p> <p>Each term faculty members should encourage students to meet with their academic advisors early in their programs.</p>

15. <i>Offer a certificate or diploma in HRMLR that would appeal to undergraduates in other disciplines or students who have completed an undergraduate degree but would like to work in the human resource field and obtain their CPHR certification</i>	<p>An HRMLR certificate is already offered by DSB, however, the required courses are not currently sufficient to meet CPHR competency requirements. The area should consider developing a CPHR bridging program that would be sufficient to meet the competency requirements.</p> <p>A high school entry diploma is currently under development. Once a general management diploma has been approved by the Government of Alberta, the area should develop an HRMLR diploma to complement existing course offerings.</p>
16. <i>Offer a minor concentration in HRMLR for students in other faculties such as Arts and Science.</i>	Agreed
17. <i>Be more creative in the delivery of course offerings.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We encourage faculty to engage in alternative delivery methods, including blended and compressed learning (e.g. block week courses). DSB and/or the Teaching Centre could provide training and support to faculty who are willing to revise their courses for alternative delivery methods.</p>
18. <i>Offer professional development opportunities to community members.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We are currently developing an experiential learning and community engagement centre, DSB Link, to act as a coordinating body for a broad range of initiatives, including professional development opportunities for the Lethbridge and Calgary business communities. This will include micro-credit courses students can take alongside professionals seeking to update and maintain their qualifications.</p>
19. <i>Increase faculty involvement in student events and provide more opportunities to work with faculty on research projects.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>We need to develop more opportunities for faculty and students to engage outside of the classroom, particularly for Calgary campus students and faculty.</p>
20. <i>Emphasize the HRMLR program as preparing students for the CPHR designation rather than writing the national knowledge exam.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>The area should work with marketing and communications to highlight how the program prepares students for their professional designation and a career in HRMLR.</p>
21. <i>Sell the HRMLR program as an entree into career paths other than HR generalist.</i>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Marketing and communications for the HRMLR degree should be revised to better reflect the career opportunities the degree provides to graduates. The area should meet with the DSB marketing and communications team to develop new and fresh messaging for the website and other materials used to promote the program with proposed new messages tested with students before being finalized.</p>

4. Dean's Response

The Dean of Dhillon School of Business responded to the 21 recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. <i>The next hire made in HRMLR needs to be someone with labour relations expertise.</i>	Agreed If the specific focus on Labour Relations is to be a differentiating factor for the program, then this will need to be considered at the next recruiting opportunity. Given the severity of near-term budget constraints, however, there may well need to be trade-offs within the program if an LR specialist is to be secured in the future.
2. <i>The HRMLR area should leverage their strength in organizational behaviour.</i>	Agreed The creation of micro-credentials and other sub-major learning opportunities would allow us to generate additional enrolments using existing resources. The HRMLR Area Group will be encouraged to look at these complementary learning opportunities during the 2020 Summer, with recommendations brought forward in the Fall 2020 semester.
3. <i>The HRMLR program should develop at least one course addressing HR analytics with software applications relevant to human resource management.</i>	Agreed Learning opportunities in data analytics will be developed collectively and comprehensively across the School, rather than separately across each program area. A working group is in the process of being established for the whole of the DSB.
4. <i>A faculty member could be sent to an applied conference or workshop to obtain training in data analytics and bring this knowledge back to the area.</i>	Agree in principle We are actively exploring bringing a specialist to campus to help all areas, rather than send individuals away to conferences given the resource cost of doing so. In the current global circumstance, however, providing access to on-line training for faculty in this and other subject areas is the most likely route forward to develop knowledge and expertise within the faculty.
5. <i>The HRMLR program should increase the HR analytics content by encouraging faculty to integrate analytics and software with HR applications, where relevant, in their current courses.</i>	Agreed We are actively exploring how to most effectively introduce and enhance the teaching of data analytics in the program. One option is to offer generic introductory and advanced courses in the subject with lab sections which then specialise in the application to the different functional areas of business (i.e. HR, Finance, Marketing, Accounting). This is to be considered by our nascent data analytics interest group.
6. <i>Incorporate a required major applied project into the curriculum.</i>	Agreed Developing an applied project for the major fits very well with the School's vision and mission. The program team will explore this in Summer/Fall 2020, with a recommended course of action proposed by the end of the Fall 2020 semester.
7. <i>Develop an in-house case competition.</i>	Agree in part Development of an in-house case competition is challenging given the two campuses and very different student demographics. We will explore different ways to enhance existing case-competitions to bring an HRMLR component to them, and how we might build a specific HRMLR case-competition to support team participation in external competitions. Focus will remain, however, on the broader and more

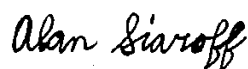
	encompassing experiential learning approach, as case-competitions are only one form of experiential learning.
8. <i>Increase the use of academic cases.</i>	Agreed A planned case-writing and case-teaching workshop this spring was postponed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Workshops will reconvene when it is safe to do so and the facilitators are available.
9. <i>Incorporate scenarios and/or simulations into the curriculum.</i>	Agreed Using scenarios and simulations as another form of adding experiential learning to the curriculum will be looked at in more detail when the opportunity to run workshops on their development is appropriate. Additional resources may be necessary to create additional computer-based scenarios
10. <i>Provide course credit for participation in the HRC West competition.</i>	Agree in part We will look at opportunities to create independent learning opportunities associated with external case competitions. Each competition, however, and the effort required by both students and faculty to make these successful and deep learning experiences can sometimes be difficult to justify in both human and financial resources required. We will need to be selective in which case competitions we choose to participate, and how often.
11. <i>Survey students to determine why students do not perceive co-op to be of value.</i>	Agreed DSB is reviewing Co-op to consider how students are attracted to co-op and its benefits. At most other universities, co-op is considered a highly competitive program, and first choice in terms of program applications. It is offered as a direct-entry program and often over-subscribed. Why co-op plays '2 nd fiddle' to the non-co-op stream at Lethbridge is somewhat of a mystery. This will change as we explore the future of co-op programming in DSB.
12. <i>Enhance students' understanding of co-op.</i>	Agreed See response to Recommendation 11
13. <i>Investigate and minimize the barriers to participation in co-op.</i>	Agreed See response to Recommendation 11
14. <i>Comprehensively examine course offerings to streamline the number of courses and offer some courses more frequently.</i>	Agree in part We are currently examining how to streamline some course offerings, to reduce duplication of content, and to create micro-courses or modules that can be used to build new skills and courses. This is part of a wider review of the B. Mgt degree program. Work in this area is ongoing and cannot be looked at in isolation. The major will need to maintain the delivery of its core approved curriculum with regards to external accreditation.
15. <i>Offer a certificate or diploma in HRMLR that would appeal to undergraduates in other disciplines or students who have completed an undergraduate degree but would like to work in</i>	The School already offers a diploma, but we are currently exploring the creation of additional credentialed opportunities which will allow non-business graduates to meet the educational requirements of the CPHR. The possibility of a direct entry diploma is being considered alongside other direct entry diplomas which will be ladderred into the full degree program.

*the human resource field and
obtain their CPHR certification*

16. <i>Offer a minor concentration in HRMLR for students in other faculties such as the Faculty of Arts and Science.</i>	Agreed A minor in HRMLR is being considered.
17. <i>Be more creative in the delivery of course offerings.</i>	Agreed The DSB is actively looking at and experimenting with alternative delivery methods and models for our curriculum.
18. <i>Offer professional development opportunities to community members.</i>	Agreed Skills development modules possibly offered in a blended learning format both for students and the general public/practitioners are under active consideration and development.
19. <i>Increase faculty involvement in student events and provide more opportunities to work with faculty on research projects.</i>	Agree in principle The number of students and faculty on each campus has an impact on the availability of opportunity. That is not to say the recommendation is without merit, but the practicalities of location and student demographic are part of the consideration.
20. <i>Emphasize the HRMLR program as preparing students for the CPHR designation rather than writing the national knowledge exam.</i>	Agreed The program area will review its marketing and communications profile with the School's communications officer to prepare a more student friendly and action oriented message and 'call to action.'
21. <i>Sell the HRMLR program as an entree into career paths other than HR generalist.</i>	Agreed Marketing and communications related to recruitment need to be become more student friendly and attractive to students.

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Human Resources Management and Labour Relations area Academic Quality Assurance Review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,



Dr. Alan Sioroff
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee
Professor, Department of Political Science

cc Erasmus Okine, PhD., PAS, FICN
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)