Unit Outline*

IREL8501/IREL7519/IREL8819

Strategic Workplace Relations

Semester 2, 2011

Crawley

Dr Jacquie Hutchinson

Business School

www.business.uwa.edu.au

* This Unit Outline should be read in conjunction with the Business School Unit Outline Supplement available on the Current Students web site http://www.business.uwa.edu.au/students
UNIT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

Welcome to Strategic Workplace Relations. Strategic Workplace Relations is a capstone unit, building upon the material which has been presented in other units, particularly in industrial relations. You will be provided with opportunities to apply your theoretical knowledge to practical workplace problems.

Unit content

Students will be provided with a number of theoretical frameworks that explain the different factors and conditions that influence the choices and actions taken by employers in the management of the workforce. The content will be delivered in various ways including guest speakers from government, industry and unions; academic articles; government and business policies and audio-visual materials. Through considering case studies and undertaking a practical project, students will be able to explore the transition from strategic workplace relations theory to organisational planning, processes and practice.

The goal of the unit

The goal of this unit is to equip students to examine and develop a strategic perspective with regard to industrial relations issues both in the public policy arena and at the workplace. The unit will also provide students with an opportunity to explore how public policy influences and interacts with workplace relations within all industry sectors in both strategic and practical ways.

Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

• take a strategic approach in the analysis of workplace issues
• develop effective practical responses to workplace challenges and problems
• understand the different interest groups and their respective perspectives applied to the management of the workforce
• identify the contextual, political and other factors that need to be considered when adopting a strategic approach to workplace relations

Finally, you will be developing effective analytical and communication skills through your weekly preparation work, participation in group discussions and, in particular, the completion and presentation of your major group project.

Educational principles and graduate attributes

Students are encouraged to think about the employment context in contemporary Australian workplaces and the issues that arise for employers, workers, unions and governments. This unit provides you with the opportunity to integrate theory with real-world experience in order to recognise and understand how strategic workplace relations contribute to an overall organisational/business strategy. While delivered within an Australian framework, international research, and the diverse multi-national experience of students is welcome.

In this unit, you will be provided with the opportunity to

• Demonstrate theoretical understanding of the literature in relation to strategic workplace relations
• Critically analyse a workforce problem and develop practical solutions
• Develop more effective verbal communication skills through:
  • Preparing a workplace policy research paper
  • Presenting an oral presentation to an industry panel
  • Working with workplace relations practitioners as mentors
• Develop competencies to work more effectively in diverse teams through the preparation of a group project
• Apply independent learning skills through the completion of the prescribed activities
• Develop ethical and cultural awareness in an organisational context through completion of various case studies

In this unit, you will be encouraged and facilitated to develop the ability and desire to:

• Apply a range of theoretical models to workplace relations problem solving
• Approach workplace issues from a variety of perspectives
• Develop the knowledge and skills to integrate workplace relations with the overall organisational/business strategy.

TEACHING AND LEARNING RESPONSIBILITIES

Teaching and learning strategies
There will be one three-hour seminar each week. The seminars will be a combination of lecturing and group discussion. Students will be expected to do preparatory work for each seminar. The focus of this unit is how organisations strategically manage the workforce in order to achieve organisational outcomes. The program will be structured around real life case studies and examples. During some seminars students will be expected to work either with the lecturer, with their mentor or independently with their project group.

Teaching and learning evaluation
You may be asked to complete two evaluations during this unit. The Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) and the Students’ Unit Reflective Feedback (SURF). The SPOT is optional and is an evaluation of the lecturer and the unit. The SURF is completed online and is a university wide survey and deals only with the unit. You will receive an email from the SURF office inviting you to complete the SURF when it is activated. We encourage you to complete the forms as your feedback is extremely important and can be used to make changes to the unit or lecturing style when appropriate.

Attendance
Participation in class, whether it be listening to a lecture or getting involved in other activities, is an important part of the learning process, therefore it is important that you attend classes. More formally, the University regulations state that ‘to complete a course or unit students shall attend prescribed classes, lectures, seminars and tutorials’. Where a student, due to exceptional circumstances, is unable to attend a scheduled class, they are required to obtain prior approval of the unit coordinator to be absent from that class. Any student absent from class without having had such absence approved by the unit coordinator may be referred to the faculty for advice and may be required to withdraw from the unit.
CONTACT DETAILS

We strongly advise students to regularly access their student email accounts. Important information regarding the unit is often communicated by email and will not be automatically forwarded to private email addresses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit coordinator/lecturer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>Dr Jacquie Hutchinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email:</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jacquie.hutchinson@uwa.edu.au">Jacquie.hutchinson@uwa.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phone:</strong></td>
<td>08 6488 1434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultation hours:</strong></td>
<td>Room 1.214 – Please email to arrange a time when necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lecture times:</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday, 5.00pm – 8.00pm</td>
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</table>
| **Lecture venue:**       | Business School: 1.64  
Professor Phillip Brown Tutorial Room |

Your Lecturer

Dr Jacquie Hutchinson has extensive industry experience as a senior manager in the industrial relations and human resource management fields. In addition to her professional experience, Jacquie has maintained an ongoing interest in research focussed on employment and leadership, with a particular emphasis on workforce diversity and workplace relations.

TEXTBOOK(S) AND RESOURCES

Unit website

http://www.webct.uwa.edu.au

Recommended/required text(s)

There is no prescribed textbook. Students are advised to purchase the Book of Readings from the University Co-operative Bookshop. Also there will be materials distributed throughout the semester.

Additional resources and reading material

These resources will provide you with extra background to the key topics covered in the unit. They are only a selection and students are encouraged to do their own literature review.


Bacon, N. and Storey, J. (1993) 'Individualization of the Employment Relationship and the Implications for Trade Unions' Employee Relations 15, 1, 5-17


Unitarism, Unilaterism and Utilitarianism' Department of Management Working Paper 10, University of Melbourne.


Lawler, J. (1990) Unionization and Deunionization Columbia, University of South Carolina – ch.6


Reed, T. (1992) 'Incidence and Patterns of Representation Campaign Tactics Relations Industrielles 47, 203-217


Walton, R. (1985) 'From control to commitment in the workplace' Harvard Business Review March-April, 76-84


Some books which provide useful material, particularly pertinent to the Australian workplace relations context, include:


Teicher, J., Lambert, R. and O'Rourke, A. (eds) Workchoices: The New Industrial Relations Agenda, Pearson Education Australia


Electronic resources

• The WA Department of Commerce website has a comprehensive list of links to employers' associations, unions, government departments and various research sites; see [http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/) links

• Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry [http://www.acci.asn.au/](http://www.acci.asn.au/)


• Australian Council of Trade Unions [http://www.actu.asn.au](http://www.actu.asn.au)

• Workers Online: [www.labor.net.au/workers](http://www.labor.net.au/workers)

• Association of Industrial Relations Academics of Australia and New Zealand (AIRAANZ) [http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/airaanz/](http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/airaanz/) (check conference proceedings link for many useful articles)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 August</td>
<td>Seminar 1: A Framework for Workplace Relations Strategy and the Concept of Employee Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 August</td>
<td>Seminar 2: Strategic Management Choices - Management Strategy of Individualization Role of Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>17 August</td>
<td>Seminar 3: The Management Strategy of Management-Union Cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 August</td>
<td>Industrial Relations Society Seminar, Team Meeting and Proposal Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>31 August</td>
<td>Seminar 4: The Strategy of Union Revitalisation and Workplace Re-entry Practical Case Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7 September</td>
<td>Practical Case Studies Presentation of Proposal: Oral &amp; Written</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>14 September</td>
<td>Group Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>21 September</td>
<td>Mid-Semester Test</td>
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Week Beginning Monday 26 September – Teaching Break

| 9      | 5 October  | Group Project |
| 10     | 12 October | Group Project |
| 11     | 19 October | Group Project |
| 12     | 26 October | Group Project |
| 13     | 2 November | Project presentation |
Seminar Topics and Readings

Note: the readings for each topic are only a sample of the available literature; they have been chosen to reflect the breadth of perspectives on the issue. Students are expected to regard this list of readings as only a starting point.

3 August: Seminar 1: A Framework for Workplace Relations Strategy and the Concept of Employee Voice


10 August: Seminar 2: Strategic Management Choices - Management Strategy of Individualization


17 August: Seminar 3: The Management Strategy of Management-Union Cooperation

Bartram, T, Stanton, P. & Fraser, B (2005) Conflict or cooperation: Industrial relations practice in the Victorian public health sector. AIIRANZ.


31 August: Seminar 4: The Strategy of Union Revitalisation and Workplace Re-entry


Pyman, Amanda. & Holland, Peter. & Teicher, Julian. 2004, Trade union strategies in a sophisticated human resource management environment, Faculty of Business & Economics, Caulfield East, Vic
ASSESSMENT MECHANISM

The purpose of assessment

There are a number of reasons for having assessable tasks as part of an academic program. The assessable tasks are designed to encourage you to explore and understand the subject more fully. The fact that we grade your work provides you an indication of how much you have achieved. Providing feedback on your work also serves as part of the learning process.

Assessment mechanism summary

IREL8501/IREL7519/IREL8819

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Submission</th>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Project Proposal (Written &amp; Oral)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Wednesday 7 September (Week 6)</td>
<td>Submitted in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Semester Test</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Wednesday 22 September (Week 8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Case Study</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5pm Monday 10 October (Week 10)</td>
<td>Uniprint by 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Development Project Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Wednesday 3 November (Week 13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Project Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5pm Monday 7 November (Week 14)</td>
<td>Uniprint by 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td></td>
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Note 1: Results may be subject to scaling and standardisation under faculty policy and are not necessarily the sum of the component parts.

Note 2: The grade FC indicates failure to complete an identified essential assessment component and means failure of the unit.

Note 3: Your assessed work may also be used for quality assurance purposes, such as to assess the level of achievement of learning outcomes as required for accreditation and audit purposes. The findings may be used to inform changes aimed at improving the quality of Business School programs. All material used for such processes will be treated as confidential, and the outcome will not affect your grade for the unit.

Assessment components

Mid Semester Test (Individual) 40%
A mid-semester test will be held to test material covered in the readings and seminars. If you have done the readings and attended class you should do well in the test.

Case Study Strategy (Individual) 15% (1500 (minimum) – 2000 (maximum) words plus references)
Students will prepare a written workplace strategy proposal based on a case study provided by the lecturer. The report should contain a clear strategic analysis of the case study issues together with a specific and practical action plan. A critical review of the relevant literature that identifies the main conceptual and practical themes and ideas that support their choice of strategy will also be required.

1 Note the word count for IREL8819 students will be (2000 (minimum) – 2500 (maximum) words plus references)
The Policy Development Project (Group) (2000 (minimum) – 2500 (maximum) words plus references)
The WA Department of Commerce (Labour Relations) will identify a number of policy research topics which will be presented to you in class along with a more detail outline of the assignment’s requirements. There are three assessed elements to the project: a project proposal (10%), an oral presentation (10%) of the project’s findings and a written project report (20%).

Overall, the quality of the project will depend on:
• Extent of relevant research
• Analysis of the issue under consideration, from an industrial relations perspective but also taking account of broader considerations
• Range and practicality of the options proposed
• Overall impact of the report as a policy recommendation

Unless there are good reasons to the contrary, marks will be awarded on a group basis with all group members receiving an equal mark. In terms of participation, group members will be asked to comment on other group members’ contribution.

More details of this project will be distributed and discussed in class.

Attendance and Participation: 5%
Given the intensive nature of the delivery of this unit, attendance at all workshops is essential. In addition, participation will be assessed on the ways in which students interact with others, contribute to the discussion, listen to alternative points of view, encourage others to participate and engage with our guests. An indicative guide to this assessment is provided below:

Attendance @ less than 5 workshops 0
Regular attendance 2
Productive contributions plus regular attendance 3
Insightful, analytical contributions plus regular attendance 4
Outstanding contributions plus regular attendance 5

Submission of assignments
Submit your individual case study assignment and the group project report assignment in an electronic format by going to the Uniprint web site www.uniprint.uwa.edu.au then click on “Student Assignments” and follow the instructions.

Student Guild
Phone: (+61 8) 6488 2295
Facsimile: (+61 8) 6488 1041
E-mail: enquiries@guild.uwa.edu.au
Website: http://www.guild.uwa.edu.au

Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities

Appeals against academic assessment
The University provides the opportunity for students to lodge an appeal against assessment results and/or progress status (refer http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/appeals).