

Unit 31: Employee Relations

Unit code	R/618/5118
Unit level	5
Credit value	15

Introduction

For an organisation to function effectively and if high performance is to be achieved and conflict avoided, the relationship between management and employees or employee representatives needs to be harmonious and constructive. HR practitioners and managers need to understand the nature of the employment relationship and the issues that can arise in developing and maintaining positive employee relations. In an increasingly competitive and globalised world, where management and employee contractual relationships, needs, expectations and interests are constantly changing and evolving, understanding the nature of the employment relationship becomes essential. It is therefore crucial for line managers and those who are responsible for developing and implementing employee relations strategy and policy to have insight and knowledge of the area of employee relations.

The aim of this unit is to develop students' understanding of the wider external context that influences the employment relationship and priorities in the employee relations system. Students will recognise that good employee relations have implications beyond the employment contract. Aspects such as communication mechanisms and conflict management are important in building and maintaining positive employee experiences, effective relationships and higher levels of performance.

On successful completion of the unit, students will have demonstrated a range of cognitive skills, in particular critical thinking, information handling and problem-solving abilities, as well as recognised professional capabilities. These include the ability to make evidence-based judgements on people-management issues generated through insight and evaluation of the employee relations specialist area.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit a student will be able to:

- LO1 Analyse how changes and developments in society, the work context and employment have influenced the employment relationship
- LO2 Devise mechanisms of employee communication and consultation for different types of organisations
- LO3 Apply negotiation skills to workplace disputes for effective conflict management approaches
- LO4 Develop HR solutions for an organisation's employee relations approach and practices in order to improve performance.

Essential Content

LO1 Analyse how changes and developments in society, the work context and employment have influenced the employment relationship

External influences on the employment relationship:

The role and influence of globalisation, government, international bodies, employer and employee representative groups, advances in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and increased competition.

Changes in the societal context, diversity in the workplace and employee expectations.

The law and employment legislation:

Contractual relationships, terms and conditions of employment, the rights and obligations of employers and employees.

Collective employment law.

Contractual arrangements in different types of organisations, including those that operate in the gig and sharing economy.

The changing nature of work and the employment relationship:

Workforce diversity, changing employer and employee expectations and ethical behaviours.

The impact of agile working, remote working practices, flexible contracts and portfolio careers.

Individualisation of the employment relationship and contractual arrangements in different types of firms, e.g. small family businesses, multinational corporations (MNCs), firms in the gig and sharing economy.

Managerial legitimacy and authority, power relationships and the right to manage.

LO2 **Devise mechanisms of employee communication and consultation for different types of organisations**

Perspectives of the employment relationship:

Unitarist and pluralist perspectives of the employment relationship.

Strategic choice in managing with or without collective employee representation, e.g. trade unions, works councils, joint consultative committees. Benefits and drawbacks of collective representation.

Employee involvement and employee participation:

The concept of employee voice and its significance.

Employee participation via collective bargaining, works councils and joint consultative committees.

Employee involvement approaches and mechanisms.

The role of communication and consultation in influencing employee engagement and performance.

LO3 **Apply negotiation skills to workplace disputes for effective conflict management approaches**

Understanding conflict:

Sources of conflict in the workplace, individual and collective forms of conflict.

The psychological contract and relational forms of conflict within employee relation systems.

Breach of contractual terms and collective agreements.

Positive and negative impacts of conflict, including productivity, job satisfaction, employee engagement.

Managing conflict and resolving disputes:

Mediation and negotiation as mechanisms for resolving conflict. Negotiation skills, e.g. communication skills, interpreting and utilising verbal and non-verbal language.

Information handling skills such as presenting arguments and justifying position.

Discretionary judgement skills, knowing when to change position, when to ask for adjournments.

Collective conflict resolution via collective bargaining, joint consultative committees, negotiation and partnership working.

Individual conflict resolution via grievance and disciplinary policy and procedures. Good practice in these areas.

LO4 Develop HR solutions for an organisation's employee relations approach and practices in order to improve performance.

Analysing the employee relations approach:

Unitarist and pluralist perspectives influencing managerial style and employee relations preferences.

Business strategy and employee relations strategy, implications for strategic choice in employee relations

Ways in which employee relations practices support business performance and growth.

Benefits of positive employee relations as opposed to negative employee relations.

Measuring performance using key performance indicators, e.g. job satisfaction, levels of employee engagement, incidents of conflict, absenteeism and staff turnover.

Employee relations practices and areas of potential conflict:

Managerial ideology and management style.

Issues arising out of the psychological contract, trust and expectations.

Employees not being valued nor seen as partners in the organisation.

Issues relating to employee involvement and participation, communication and consultation.

Individual grievances and collective disputes.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

Pass	Merit	Distinction
LO1 Analyse how changes and developments in society, the work context and employment have influenced the employment relationship		D1 Draw valid conclusions on the extent to which the creation of a positive employment relationship has been affected by developments in society and the work context.
<p>P1 Analyse how employment relationships in specific types of organisations have been affected by developments in society and the work context.</p> <p>P2 Examine the fundamentals of employment law applied to specific organisational examples.</p>	<p>M1 Critically analyse the impact of developments in society and the work context on the employment relationship.</p>	
LO2 Devise mechanisms of employee communication and consultation for different types of organisations		D2 Justify effectiveness of communication and consulting mechanisms for enhancing employee voice and levels of engagement.
<p>P3 Design appropriate mechanisms for communicating and consulting with employees for different organisations.</p>	<p>M2 Design a range of appropriate communication and consultation mechanisms to facilitate employee voice and levels of engagement.</p>	
LO3 Apply negotiation skills to workplace disputes for effective conflict management approaches		D3 Evaluate personal performance to identify strengths and areas for further development.
<p>P4 Utilise negotiation skills to resolve workplace disputes and conflicts.</p> <p>P5 Reflect on the utilisation of negotiation skills for effective conflict management approaches.</p>	<p>M3 Utilise negotiation skills to resolve both individual and collective disputes and conflicts effectively.</p>	

Pass	Merit	Distinction
<p>LO4 Develop HR solutions for an organisation's employee relations approach and practices in order to improve performance.</p>		
<p>P6 Assess the employee relations approach and practices in an organisation to develop HR solutions in order to improve performance.</p>	<p>M4 Devise valid HR solutions that address issues and challenges to improve performance.</p>	<p>D4 Provide justified HR solutions and recommendations for improving an organisation's employee relations strategy and practices in order to improve performance.</p>

Recommended Resources

Textbooks

AYLOTT, E. (2018) *Employee Relations*. 2nd Ed. London: Kogan Page.

BENNETT, T., SAUNDRY, R. and FISHER, V. (2020) *Managing Employment Relations*. 7th Ed. London: Kogan Page.

BRIDGER, E. (2018) *Employee Engagement*. 2nd Ed. London: Kogan Page.

GENNARD, J. and JUDGE, G. (2016) *Managing Employment Relations*. 6th Ed. London: Kogan Page.

WILLIAMS, S. (2017) *Introducing Employment Relations: A Critical Approach*. 4th Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Websites

www.acs.org.uk	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (General reference)
www.employmentlaws.co.uk	Employment law in the UK (General reference)
www.shrm.org	Strategic Human Resources Management Resources and tools Employee relations (Articles)

Links

This unit links to the following related units:

Unit 3: Human Resource Management

Unit 7: Business Law

Unit 20: Organisational Behaviour

Unit 24: Understanding and Leading Change