

A FUTURE IN
**HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT &
EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS**





WHAT IS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS (HRM/ER)?

People gainfully employed and working happily to their full ability are core to our economy and society. The role of human resources and employment relations managers is to look after the people and culture, and deal with tricky real-world staffing challenges.

Human resources (HR) professionals have a key role in creating positive workplace relationships and experiences. HR professionals sit at the interface of employers and employees, working across a range of different levels and contexts within an organisation. They focus on the performance of the organisation, from recruitment and training and development to health and safety within the organisation. They foster co-operative workplace relationships and implement effective people management systems that are agile, flexible, performance-oriented, productive and engaged.

HR roles include managing through change, planning for organisational changes such as sustainability and AI, and ensuring employees are engaged, and encouraged to upskill and grow with the organisation. At senior level, HR will be involved in strategic workforce planning.

Employment relations (ER) professionals look at the 'big picture' of the workforce, such as the labour market, how laws and policy support workers or businesses, and the influence and power of stakeholders. They may do this in

policy advisor roles for a range of organisations, including government ministries or unions. ER professionals may also work as specialists who guide their organisation through management/union and employee relations, and advise their organisation on collective bargaining and other employee processes, such as personal grievances and restructuring. Often ER and HRM professionals work closely together.

HRM/ER opens up a range of career opportunities, including generalist roles, specialist roles such as diversity, equality and inclusion, or policy advisory roles in business, unions and government. Each of these pathways can lead to senior executive positions.

Do you want to bring change? Are you keen to create policy that advocates for your industry and workforce needs? Do you want to create workplace cultures where employees thrive? How about a role managing people in your own business or community group? Perhaps you want to design workplace health and safety training that keep employees safe? Are you keen to create policy that advocates for your industry and workforce needs, or to work on encouraging diversity, equality and inclusion? If any of these aspects of human resources or employment relations excites you, then a career in human resources and employment relations could be for you!

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Technology's reach – Technology and AI are now common tools within human resources teams, impacting in five significant ways:

1. Technological advances have resulted in HR professionals increasingly having to develop policy that supports both on-site and remote working employees.
2. A sophisticated social media presence is required for organisations that includes AI tools and social media, such as LinkedIn, when screening new hires.
3. Internal digital platforms eg Yammer, Workplace and Slack are other important internal tools.
4. HR professionals need to strategically manage both external and internal partners to introduce new digital platforms which can manage all the HR functions.
5. There is also the need to be on top of cybersecurity, particularly keeping personal employee data secure.

Diversity, equity and inclusion – Social and population change mean HRM/ERM leaders need to be ahead of the game in creating inclusive workplaces to ensure a high performing workforce. New approaches are required for this diversity.

The post-pandemic mobility of the global workforce is continuing, making it vital that organisations meet the needs of new migrant workers. As well, more and more leading employers in Aotearoa-New Zealand are becoming te Tiriti led organisations, ensuring their workplaces are inclusive of te Ao Māori.

Workplace health and safety – The role of HRM/ERM in creating workplace cultures that support healthy and thriving employees has never been more essential. While there is still a huge need to address the risk of physical work hazards, the issues of stress, fatigue and bullying are also coming to light. Several high-profile employers appearing in the media spotlight in recent years highlight an increasing awareness of harassment and bullying as key health and safety issues in the workplace. Aotearoa-New Zealand still trails behind Australia and other countries in workplace accidents, injuries and fatalities.

Sustainability – Climate change and environmental damage are core challenges for everyone, including employers. A sustainable workforce is becoming increasingly important, as is the challenge of carbon emissions. Many organisations are looking to the UN's 17 sustainable development goals to guide their business and HRM/ERM partners have a key role in this.

Climate change also poses logistical challenges for HR because climate disasters can impact employees' ability to work due to lack of access to internet, transport and even housing. At what point do employees start choosing employers according to location, and access to work through adverse weather events?

Change and flexibility – Adaptability is key in this era of adverse weather events and global pandemics. There is a need to be quickly responsive to urgent events, and to keep ahead of social and economic change that impacts the workforce. HRM/ERM has a strategic role to play in advising organisations on the impact of change to current and future employees, and the best ways for the employer to respond and be proactive.

WORK SETTINGS

Large or small, organisations need people to oversee the human resources, employment relations; health, safety and wellbeing; and learning and development of their staff. There are opportunities across private, public and not-for-profit sectors in New Zealand and internationally.

Most positions are office-based, and practitioners deal with all employees and managers through a variety of methods including face-to-face and electronically. Large organisations will have an HR team, while smaller organisations may have a single HR director or contract out to HRM/ER consultants. Often small business owners take charge of HR/ERM in their role as director.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

HRM/ER opens up a range of career opportunities, including generalist roles, specialist roles such as diversity, equality and inclusion, or policy advisory roles in business, unions and government. Each of these pathways can lead to senior executive positions.

HR advisor/people and culture advisor – Works across all human resource activity in an organisation – recruitment and selection, performance management, payroll and remuneration, and policy and strategy development. Graduates normally start in an advisor role and, with three to five years' experience, may progress to senior advisor and consultant roles, or other HR specialisations.

Risk advisor/manager – Responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing function of an organisation at a operational or strategic leadership level. May or may not have staff accountability, but are responsible for the overall function of workplace safety. Would provide advice to management and staff on all matters relating to workplace health and safety legislation.

Learning and development talent advisor/manager – Provides an effective learning and development service to support business development and change objectives. Designs, develops and implements appropriate learning and development interventions and solutions. Often required to deal with internal clients and a variety of external providers.

A manager normally deals with the strategic end of learning and development, managing suppliers, leading a team and consulting to business leaders.

Employment relations advisor or union organiser – Focuses on the employment relations issues between employees and employer/management. Works strategically alongside unions and management. May be involved in collective bargaining, policy development, legislative compliance, and employment processes. Involved in employment disputes and resolutions. Union careers focus on research/policy or organising union members.

Change manager – Involved in introducing new programmes and managing any change impacting on people in the organisation, including restructuring.

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

General skill requirements

- Ability to be flexible and comfortable dealing with complex situations
- Highly skilled at teamwork and collaboration
- Good analytical skills, ability to interpret and communicate information related to the workforce and labour market
- Good at problem-solving and decision-making
- Skilled written and verbal communicator, and networker
- Ability to negotiate and deal with conflict effectively

HRM and ER specialist knowledge of:

- Employment legislation, eg the Employment Relations Act, wage and holiday regulations
- Stakeholder inclusion and management, eg role of government, unions and other employers diversity and inclusion
- Recruitment and selection processes and onboarding
- HRM planning, including skill and career development to meet changing organisational needs
- Collective bargaining
- Current economic and political context and its impact on workers and employers
- Te Ao Māori

Work, health and safety (WHS) specialist knowledge of:

- Health and safety legislation, Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) procedures
- WHS policy and practice, eg hazard identification, risk assessment etc
- Social workplace health and safety issues, eg bullying and harassment
- Creating a workplace health and safety culture

Learning and development specialist knowledge of:

- Learning theories and transfer of training
- Development of learning programmes for on-site and remote employees
- Understanding and presenting complex information simply and accurately
- AI and technology in learning and teaching

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Trustworthy with a high level of integrity
- Able to relate to people from all backgrounds
- Approachable and empathetic
- Resourceful, creative and innovative

SALARY GUIDE

Starting salaries in this field vary hugely depending on the sector and the exact role requirements.

	Salary (per year)
Graduate salary range	\$55,000-\$70,000 (excluding overtime)
With at least 5 years+ experience	\$110,000-\$200,000 (depending on role and experience)

This information was accurate at the time of publication (mid 2024) and should only be used as a guideline.

Keep up to date with salary data by visiting websites or signing up to salary guides, including:

Prosple Graduate Salary Guide

<https://nz.prosple.com/on-the-job/whats-the-average-graduate-salary-in-new-zealand>

Careers NZ

careers.govt.nz/jobs-database/

Hays Salary Guide

hays.net.nz/salary-guide

Robert Half Talent Solutions

roberthalf.co.nz/salary-guide

THE AUT APPROACH

AUT offers a major in Human Resource Management and Employment Relations (HRM/ERM) within the Bachelor of Business. HRM is also taught within the Bachelor of International Hospitality Management. Both include industry work placements. HRM/ERM students can also do minors and conjoint degrees across other AUT disciplines.

There is a strong focus on developing the analytical and practical skills you need in a changing world and a strong grounding in the social and cultural context of Aotearoa-New Zealand, including te Ao Māori.

FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

HRM/ERM postgraduate options include the Bachelor of Business (Honours) and postgraduate certificates, diplomas, master's and PhD. Postgraduate research areas include inclusive workplaces and careers, critical perspectives on wellbeing, impact of societal change and systemic discrimination on work, workers and organisations, digitalisation of work for a sustainable world and actions for change.

Hospitality HR research focuses on hospitality and sustainability, including career experiences of Māori in hotels and managing stress resilience in hospitality organisations.

A portrait of Matthew McCreanor, a young man with dark hair and a light blue shirt, smiling slightly. He is positioned in front of a white metal shelving unit filled with various green and pink plants.

MATTHEW MCCREANOR

HR Coordinator, Integrated Control Technology

Bachelor of Business in Human Resource Management
and Employment Relations

"I've been at Integrated Control Technology for three years now. When I started, I was mainly facilitating our core administrative functions, such as onboarding new staff and assisting with the payroll function, as well as carrying out annual reviews etc.

Then I moved onto more complex projects, including setting up payroll and HR structures for new overseas offices, running our remuneration benchmarking program and orchestrating the structure for our annual intern recruitment program. I also do regular data and analytics reporting on HR data for our department as well as for operations, executive and finance.

I really enjoy how varied the work is. Within a day I can go from looking into issues holding teams back to designing financial models in Excel for our remuneration benchmarking. It's really hard to get bored in a role like this!

In generalist HR you need a high degree of people skills as well as logical thinking to solve issues as they arise. Given New Zealand has a very diverse workforce I'd say good people skills are easily the most critical skill for a HR role.

I've specifically been tasked with a lot of maths and data projects so I've had to become very proficient in Excel. If you're a younger person you are typically considered the "go-to" person for anything technical/design related, so having the tools of Excel and PowerPoint in your back pocket is invaluable.

Studying HR doesn't mean you are limited to working within internal HR. There are other pathways such as learning and development, organisation development, rewards and remuneration etc. Some of these pathways do require initial experience in generalist HR, so having a career plan means you will be prepared for the next 3-5 years after you graduate."

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"An HR coordinator needs attention to detail and a structured work style. They also need flexibility to manage situations as they arise, such as conflict or interpersonal issues that may require a diplomatic approach and escalation.

Matthew is very self-motivated, keen to learn and take on additional responsibility. He is great at taking on new projects, often bringing a unique view to the way information is presented. He has a particular talent for data analysis and has really improved the analytics within our team.

Do not downplay part-time or casual work that might seem irrelevant on the surface. People skills remain the single most important attribute needed in an HR environment and one of the toughest to teach or mentor. Anyone who has dealt with the public in roles such as at McDonald's or supermarket checkouts will have great examples of EQ that can demonstrate a people-focused mindset."

Erin Kernohan

HR Director, Integrated Control Technology

USEFUL WEBSITES

Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRNZ)

hrnz.org.nz

New Zealand Occupational Health and Safety

nzohs.co.nz

NZ Institute of Safety Management

nzism.co.nz


FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on studying human resource management and employment relations, visit aut.ac.nz/hrm

For other Future Career Sheets visit: aut.ac.nz/careersheets

EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through elab.aut.ac.nz

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: aut.ac.nz/enquire

futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

 @FutureStudentsofAUT

CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

aut.ac.nz/enquire | studenthub@aut.ac.nz

CITY CAMPUS

55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland Central

Connect with us now:



The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, mid 2024.

