6.6   Module 6   Professional Services Management

6.6.1   Headline information about the module

Module title	Professional Services Management
Module NFQ level (only if an NFQ level can be demonstrated)	9
Module number/reference	MIBL-PSM
Parent programme(s) the plural arises if there are embedded programmes to be validated.	MSc in International Business and Law
Stage of parent programme	1
Semester (semester1/semester2 if applicable)	2 (core)
Module credit units (FET/HET/ECTS)	ECTS
Module credit number of units	5
List the teaching and learning modes	Full-time, part-time
Entry requirements (statement of knowledge, skill and competence)	Learners must hold an honours degree of at least a H22 standard in business or law or an equivalent qualification from an approved tertiary or professional institution.
Pre-requisite module titles	Not Applicable
Co-requisite module titles	Not Applicable
Is this a capstone module? (Yes or No)	No
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff (staff includes workplace personnel who are responsible for learners such as apprentices, trainees and learners in clinical placements)	Qualified to at least masters level in business or law. Preferably with a third level teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate in Training and Education).
Maximum number of learners per centre (or instance of the module)	60
Duration of the module	12 weeks
Average (over the duration of the module) of the contact hours per week (see * below)	3
Module-specific physical resources and support required per centre (or instance of the module)	Normal lecture room with internet access and good-quality audio-visual equipment.

Analysis of required learning effort		
Effort while in contact with staff	**Minimum ratio teacher / learner**	**Hours**
Classroom and demonstrations	1:60	36
Monitoring and small-group teaching		
Other		
Independent Learning		
Directed e-learning (hours)		
Independent Learning (hours)		89
Other hours (group project)		
Work-based learning hours of learning effort		
Total Effort (hours)		125

Allocation of marks (within the module)					
	Continuous assessment	**Supervised project**	**Proctored practical examination**	**Proctored written examination**	**Total**
Percentage contribution	100				100%

6.6.2 Module aims and objectives

This module aims to introduce and improve learners' knowledge and understanding of human resource management within the context of a professional services firm (PSF). Within this module, important aspects of people management are assessed, from understanding the theoretical principles underpinning HR practice, to critically analysing concepts, approaches, frameworks and practice models in HRM. From a business development and strategy perspective, the impact of globalisation and technological developments in the field of professional services are also explored. Overall, the emphasis in this module is on exploring the particular characteristics of management of employees and other resources in PSFs.

6.6.3 Minimum intended module learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module, learners are able to:

  (i)   to analyse and critique the theory and practice of Strategic HRM in the differentiated context of professional services firms
  (ii) to gauge and evaluate the impact of globalisation, and cognitive technology and machine learning on the delivery of professional services and the effect of wider economic or political changes, within professional service firms
  (iii) to examine the particular challenges professional service firms encounter in areas such as recruitment and selection, performance management and reward systems, professional learning and development and to develop a wide range of skills and competencies required to function effectively when managing expert/knowledge workers and professionals
  (iv) to identify and critique the features of partnership governance under which many professional service firms operate, and to compare and differentiate alternative governance regimes
  (v)   to enhance learners' understanding of the changing demographics of the professional labour market and their awareness of the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion in the professional services workplace.

6.6.4 Rationale for inclusion of the module in the programme and its contribution to the overall MIPLOs

Management in a PSF requires a careful balancing of the demands of the client, the availability of highly qualified "expert" employees, and the ability to motivate and manage them, as well as the economic and regulatory context within which the firm operates. For these reasons, managing in a PSF is differentiated from managing in many other types of business or organisation. This module enhances learners' understanding of the demands and particular challenges associated with working in PSFs, whether as lawyers, accountants or in other professional roles.

6.6.5 Information provided to learners about the module

The Programme Handbook contains the module descriptor and assessment details. Extensive use of the VLE, Moodle, provides detailed notes and additional resources. In class, learners are provided with a PowerPoint pack and extensive reading list, incorporating professional and academic sources.

6.6.6 Module content, organisation and structure

Introduction and overview
- An introduction to the Professional Services Firm ("PSF")
- Theoretical perspectives on the professions

Client relationships
- The role of the client
- Importance of client relationships in PSFs

Business development and marketing in PSFs
- Services Marketing, including marketing to existing clients
- Practice development

Strategy, structure and governance in PSFs
- Leadership in PSFs: the role of the managing partner
- Partnerships, internationalisation and the managed professional business

People management in PSFs
- Recruitment & selection in PSFs
- HRM challenges in PSFs
- Expert labour
- Performance management
- Learning & development
- Promotion and partnership
- Motivation and retention in PSFs
- Teamwork and collaboration in PSFs
- Diversity and inclusion in PSFs

Artificial intelligence and technological change, innovation and entrepreneurship in PSFs
- Routinisation and automation of tasks and management of legal processes
- Delivery of legal services online and computerised web-based, innovation in practice
- Artificial intelligence and big data analysis: how these might redefine the premium role for lawyers' expertise.

6.6.7   Module teaching and learning (including formative assessment) strategy

A range of delivery methods are adopted, including lectures, tutorials, case studies and online resources. These are designed to engage the learner in the module content, and associated competencies that the programme team wishes the learner to develop over the course of the module. Learners' guided independent reading and research is supported by use of Moodle to help prepare learners for their classes in addition to developing autonomous self-directed learners.

6.6.8   Work-based learning and practice-placement

There is no work-based learning or practice-placement within this module.

6.6.9   E-learning

Moodle, the college VLE, is used to disseminate notes, advice, and online resources to support the learners.

6.6.10 Module physical resource requirements

Normal lecture room with internet access and good-quality audio-visual equipment.

6.6.11 Reading lists and other information resources

Primary Reading
Maister, D. (2003) Managing the Professional Service Firm. London: Simon & Schuster.

Secondary Reading
Empson, L., Muzio, D., Broschak, J., Hinings. B. (2015) The Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms Oxford, Oxford University Press
Gunnigle, Heraty, and Morley (2017) Human Resource Management in Ireland. Dublin: IPA
Susskind, Richard (2017) Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future. 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press
Torrington, D., Hall, L., Taylor, S., and Atkinson, C. (2017) Human Resource Management, 10th Ed., Pearson, London
Wilton, Nick (2019) An Introduction to Human Resource Management 4th edition SAGE Publications Ltd., London.

Journals
Learners are advised to consult with peer-reviewed academic journals for sources and additional reading materials. The following list, while not exhaustive, suggests some reputable peer-reviewed journals which are useful for additional reading, and where learners will access specified articles and materials indicated during lectures:

Work, Employment and Society
Human Relations
Organization
Organization Science
Organization Studies
Work and Occupations
New Technology Work and Employment
British Journal of Industrial Relations
Employee Relations
HR Magazine/Journal
Industrial & Labor Relations Review
Industrial Relations

Journal of European Industrial Relations
Journal of Industrial Relations
Journal of Organization Change
Management
People Management (previously Personnel Management)

6.6.12 Specifications for module staffing requirements
Lecturer(s) qualified to at least masters level in business or law. Preferably with a third level teaching qualification (e.g. Certificate in Training and Education).

6.6.13 Module summative assessment strategy
This module utilises a variety of assessment strategies to prompt learners to engage in different forms of learning both individually and in groups. Initially, learners will outline a strategic plan for a PSF. Learners will present their strategic plan during class, in small groups of their peers. In groups, their peers will award a mark for each learner's presentation and learners in turn will evaluate the content of their peers' presentations and reflect on their own work. The final assessment comprises major essay on a topic of their choice from a range of essay titles provided.

The assessed work breakdown can be seen in the table below.

No.	Description	MIMLOs	Weighting
1	Strategic Plan	(iii) (iv) (v)	30%
2	Presentation & Peer Evaluation	(v)	10%
3	Major Essay (3000 words)	(i)-(iv)	60%

6.6.14 Sample assessment materials
Please see Sample Assessment Handbook.