

Human Resource Management Careers

A guide to preparing for career opportunities



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The information in this publication is correct as of 28 February 2026. Visit the Unisa Counselling and Career Development [downloads page](#) to check for updates.

Please check the Unisa qualifications webpage (<http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications>) regularly for updates related to available qualifications and the admission requirements to study.

How will this brochure help you?

- It will provide you with some insight into what studying human resource management involves.
- It will help you gain more information about the skills needed for a career related to human resource management.
- It will help you identify possible career fields related to human resource management.
- It will assist you in finding human resource management qualifications offered by Unisa.

What problems do you want to solve

“Don’t ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems they want to solve. This changes the conversation from who do I want to work for, to what do I need to learn to be able to do that.”

Jaime Casap, Google Global Education Evangelist

One way to think about your career is by focusing on the **problems you care about**, not only on job titles. This shifts the question from “*What do I want to become?*” to “*What do I want to contribute?*”

Activity

1. Write down some problems or challenges you care about: in your family, community, South Africa, Africa, or the world.
2. Think about how you might contribute to solving them.
3. Ask: *What skills or knowledge would I need to prepare myself for that role?*

You may want to address the challenge of improving employee well-being and productivity in organisations.

Think about the different individuals who can contribute to solving this challenge: human resource managers, organisational development practitioners, industrial psychologists, line

managers, training and development specialists, employee wellness practitioners, and executive leaders.

As a human resource professional, you may design fair recruitment and selection processes, develop performance management systems, and ensure compliance with labour legislation. An organisational development practitioner may help improve workplace culture and manage change processes. A training and development specialist can design learning programmes that strengthen employees' skills, while a wellness practitioner supports mental health and work–life balance. Line managers implement people policies in daily operations, and executives allocate resources and shape strategic direction.

Together, these roles demonstrate that building healthy, productive workplaces requires collaboration across multiple functions and that a background in human resource management positions you to contribute meaningfully to employee wellbeing, organisational performance, and sustainable business growth.

Understanding human resource management

Before you start: Why choose human resource management?

Before considering pursuing this field of study, here are some basic questions you can ask yourself:

- Why are you interested in studying human resource management?
- Where does your interest come from?
- Where are you hoping to be in five years? In ten years?
- What opportunities are you hoping to prepare for by completing a qualification in human resource management?
- Which career opportunities can I pursue with a human resource management background?

What is human resource management?

Human Resource Management (HRM) focuses on managing and developing an organisation's most valuable asset: its people.

- Human refers to the workforce within an organisation.
- Resource recognises that skilled talent is valuable and often scarce.
- Management refers to planning, organising, developing, and optimising these human resources to achieve organisational goals.

Human Resource Management is the strategic and operational process of recruiting, developing, supporting, and retaining employees while ensuring compliance with labour legislation and ethical standards.

In simple terms, HRM is about ensuring that organisations have the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles - and that employees are supported to perform and grow.

What do human resource professionals do?

HR professionals work across multiple functional areas. In smaller organisations, one HR practitioner may perform several roles, while in larger organisations, professionals may specialise in a specific discipline.

Key HR functions include:

Workforce Planning and Job Design

- Human resource planning (analysing current and future staffing needs)
- Job analysis and job description development

Recruitment and Selection

- Advertising vacancies
- Sourcing and screening candidates
- Conducting interviews
- Advising on final appointments

Employee Relations and Labour Relations

- Strengthening employer–employee relationships
- Managing disciplinary processes
- Negotiating with trade unions
- Advising on employment contracts and labour law

Training and Development

- Designing and coordinating training programmes
- Skills development planning
- Supporting employee growth and career progression

Performance Management

- Administering performance management systems
- Advising managers on performance evaluation

Compensation and Benefits

- Designing salary structures
- Managing payroll systems
- Overseeing benefits administration

Compliance and Governance

- Ensuring compliance with labour legislation
- Promoting ethical workplace practices

Employee Wellbeing and Safety

- Supporting employee wellness initiatives
- Ensuring compliance with Occupational Health and Safety legislation

HR Administration and Systems

- Maintaining employee records
- Managing HR information systems
- Supporting onboarding and orientation processes

What skills and qualities are needed for this career field?

HR professionals need a combination of strategic thinking, people skills, and business understanding.

- Key competencies include:
- Strong communication skills (written and verbal)

- Interpersonal and relationship-building skills
- Negotiation and conflict management
- Organisational and planning skills
- Problem-solving and decision-making ability
- Emotional intelligence
- Ethical judgement and integrity
- Leadership and influence
- Ability to work with data and HR systems
- Change management skills

Learn more about the skills required:

- [South African Board for Personnel Practice Competency and HR Standards](#)

Possible job title related to human resource management

Human resource management is not only about hiring and firing. It is about building ethical, productive, and inclusive workplaces where people and organisations can grow together.

Depending on experience and specialisation, HR-related roles may include:

Generalist and Advisory Roles

- HR Practitioner
- HR Officer
- HR Advisor
- HR Generalist
- HR Business Partner
- HR Manager

Recruitment and Talent

- Recruitment Consultant
- Talent Acquisition Manager
- HR Consultant

Learning and Development

- Training and Development Practitioner

- Learning and Development Coordinator
- Skills Development Practitioner
- Human Resource Development (HRD) Manager

Organisational Development and Performance

- Organisational Development Specialist
- Performance Management Specialist
- Executive Coach
- Transformation Manager

Compensation, Systems and Administration

- Compensation and Benefits Specialist
- HR Systems Specialist
- HR Systems Administrator
- Payroll or HR Administration Officer

Employee Wellbeing

- Wellness Coordinator

Future trends in human resource management

The field of Human Resource Management is evolving rapidly in response to technological, social, and economic changes. HR professionals today are expected to think strategically and adapt to new workplace realities. The HR professional of the future combines people skills with digital literacy, ethical leadership, and strategic thinking to help organisations remain competitive, responsible, and resilient.

Some important trends shaping the future of HR include:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in HR

AI and data analytics are increasingly used in recruitment, performance management, workforce planning, and employee engagement. HR professionals must understand how to use digital tools ethically and effectively, while ensuring fairness, privacy, and human-centred decision-making.

Remote and hybrid workforce management

Flexible and hybrid work models are becoming more common. HR professionals play a key role in developing policies, supporting virtual teams, maintaining organisational culture, and ensuring employee wellbeing in remote environments.

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and HR

Organisations are increasingly held accountable for ethical, social, and environmental responsibility. HR contributes by promoting sustainable workplace practices, fair labour standards, community engagement, and responsible leadership.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Building inclusive workplaces is a strategic priority. HR professionals design policies and practices that promote equal opportunity, reduce bias in recruitment and promotion, and create environments where employees from diverse backgrounds feel valued and supported.

Exploring and researching careers

Making informed career decisions means going beyond what you already know. Career research helps you explore opportunities in human resource management, understand what employers are looking for, and identify the steps you can take to prepare yourself.

Try this:

Here are some simple activities to help you explore opportunities in human resource management. Choose 2–3 to start with:

- 1. Online search**

Search “career in human resource management South Africa” or “entry-level jobs related to human resource management” and make a list of the qualifications and skills mentioned.

- 2. Occupational information websites**

Visit the South African Department of Higher Education and Training’s [National Career Advice Portal](#). Search for specific job titles and read about work activities, skills, and job outlook.

3. **Job search portals**

Check portals like [Indeed](#), [Career Junction](#) or [PNet](#). Type in specific job titles to see which employers are currently hiring and the requirements.

4. **LinkedIn**

[Search for Unisa alumni](#) who studied human resource management to see where they work. What career paths do they follow?

5. **AI tools**

Use ChatGPT or Google Gemini to ask: “What are emerging careers in human resource management in South Africa?” Compare the results with what you see on job portals.

6. **Talk to others**

Set up an informal chat with someone working in the field or at an organisation you are interested in to learn more about their career journey and daily work.

7. **Attend a careers fair**

When Unisa or professional organisations host career fairs, look for employers related to human resource management. Prepare 2–3 questions to ask them about entry routes into the profession.

8. **Join a professional organisation or network**

- [South African Board for People Practices](#)

9. **Volunteering**

Look for volunteering or vacation work opportunities. Note the skills you develop through these experiences.

For more detailed steps and extra activities, see our [Career Research brochure](#).

Preparing while you study

Many students believe that a degree will lead directly to a specific job. In reality, your career path is shaped by more than your major. It is also about the **skills you build, the experiences you gain, and how you prepare along the way**. While you study, there are many things you can do to get ready for opportunities.

Your degree is one part of your career journey. By building skills, gaining experience, keeping a portfolio, and investing in your confidence, you'll be better prepared for opportunities during and after your studies.

Develop your transferable skills

Your studies give you subject knowledge and valuable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, working independently, and adapting to new situations. Reflect on what you're learning and practise explaining these skills in ways that employers will understand.

Activity

- List three skills you've strengthened this year and one example of how you've used each.
- List three skills you intend to strengthen and how you plan on doing so.

Build a career portfolio

A portfolio helps you keep track of your achievements, experiences, and goals. Include your skills, certificates, volunteering, work experience, and career ideas. Over time, this will become a powerful tool for applications and interviews.

Useful resource

- [Unisa Career Portfolio](#)

Gain experience (volunteering or part-time work)

Getting experience outside your coursework helps you explore fields of interest, build networks, and develop workplace skills. Volunteering is especially valuable when done responsibly and with respect for the community.

Think about

- Which organisations could benefit from your skills?
- What could you gain in return (skills, networks, insights)?
- How will this experience link to your career goals?

Enhance your employability

Employability means your ability to get, keep, and grow in fulfilling work. Today's careers are flexible: people change jobs and industries often, and success can mean many different things. You can boost your employability by:

- Managing your personal brand (how others see your professionalism).
- Developing job search skills (CVs, cover letters, interviews, networking).
- Exploring flexible career paths and lifelong learning opportunities.

Useful resources

- [Unisa Prepare for Job Opportunities](#)
- [Counselling and Career Development YouTube channel](#)
- [PNet Grad Pack](#)
- [GradNext](#)

Grow your self-confidence

Believing in your ability to succeed is just as important as skills and knowledge. Low self-confidence can hold you back from studying effectively, applying for opportunities, or connecting with others.

Ways to strengthen your confidence

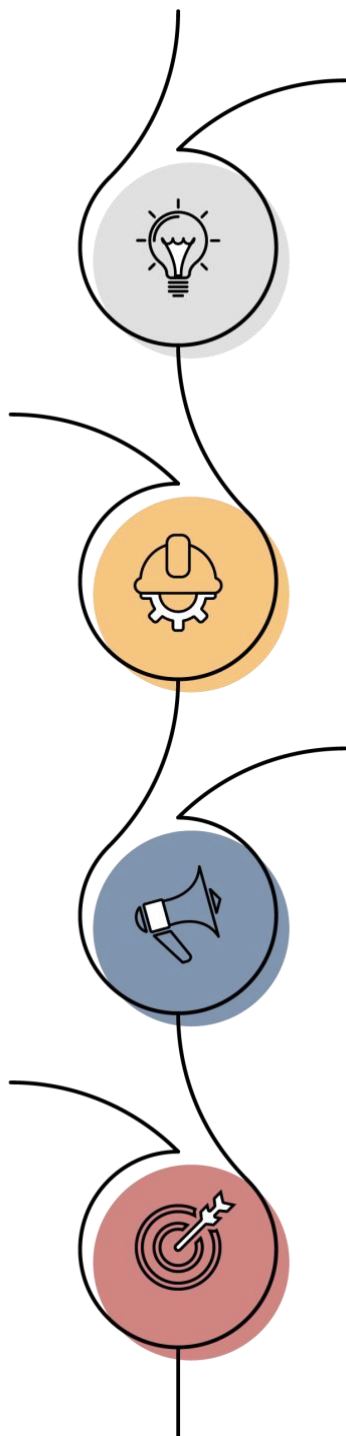
- Focus on your strengths and successes.
- Ask for help when needed: it's a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Practise self-talk that encourages growth instead of fear.

Remember: confidence grows with action. The more you try, the more you'll believe in yourself.

Your roadmap to success

Embarking on a career journey while studying can feel exciting and overwhelming. This roadmap will guide you year by year, helping you to stay intentional, informed, and adaptable.

Careers are rarely straight lines. Think of this roadmap as a flexible guide: you can move between stages depending on your opportunities and goals.



Year 1: Explore and build foundations

- Reflect on your interests, strengths, and career goals.
- Research career paths linked to your qualification.
- Plan your modules and think about postgraduate options.
- Identify key employability skills to develop.
- Create a basic CV and LinkedIn profile.
- Join a student or professional organisation.

Year 2: Grow and gain experience

- Focus on excelling in your studies.
- Apply for internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work.
- Attend workshops, webinars, or conferences.
- Gain certifications (if relevant).
- Expand your professional network.
- Update your CV and portfolio with new experiences.

Year 3: Refine and specialise

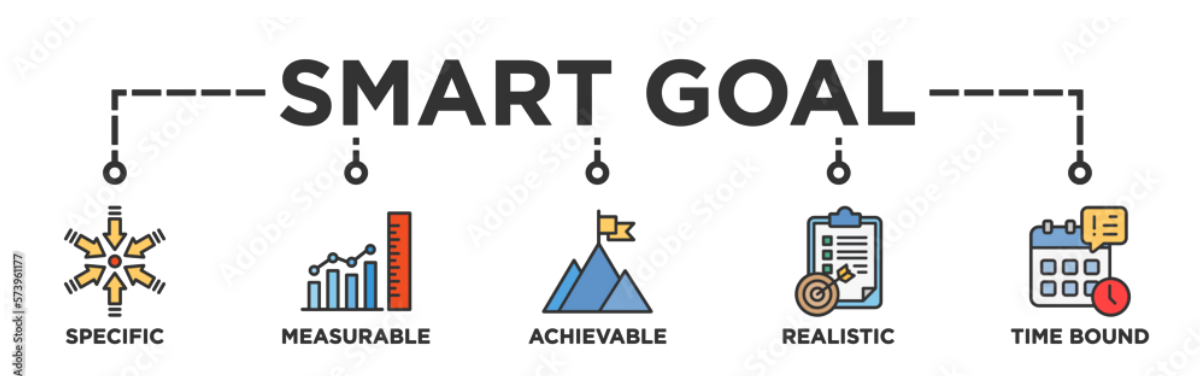
- Revisit your career goals and explore specialisations.
- Connect with alumni and seek mentorship.
- Strengthen your professional presence (LinkedIn, portfolio, personal website).
- Practise with mock interviews and improve communication skills.
- Contribute to professional discussions online or at events.

Final Year: Launch your career

- Start an intentional job search (LinkedIn, job boards, company websites).
- Tailor your CV and cover letters for each application.
- Practise interviews and refine your elevator pitch.
- Attend career fairs and networking events.
- Evaluate and negotiate job offers with guidance from mentors.
- Commit to lifelong learning and professional development.

My career learning plan: Next steps

Your next step is to plan how you will get the information that you still need to make optimal career decisions. Use SMART goals to help you plan your career research.



S – Specific: What exactly do I want to find out?

M – Measurable: How will I know I've done it?

A – Achievable: Can I realistically do this step?

R – Relevant: Does this help me make better career decisions?

T – Time-bound: By when will I do it?

What career questions do I still need answers to?

My career question	What steps will I take?	By when?	Who/what can help me?	Done?	What's next?
E.g. What jobs can I do with a degree in human resource management?	Search LinkedIn profiles of Unisa human resource management graduates	15 Oct	LinkedIn, Alumni page	Yes	Connect with 3 alumni

Career planning is not about having all the answers right now. It is about staying curious, setting small goals, and building momentum.

Study opportunities at Unisa

Undergraduate qualifications

- [Bachelor of Administration \(98315 - BAD\)](#)
- [Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resource Management \(98307 - HRM\)](#)
- [Diploma in Human Resource Management \(98211\)](#)

If you do not meet the admission requirements for a Bachelor's degree, then you will need to explore the option of applying for a [relevant Higher Certificate](#). Completing a relevant Higher Certificate programme will enable you to meet the requirements for a diploma or degree.

Visit the Unisa website at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/qualifications> for more information about the admission requirements for these degrees.

Postgraduate qualifications

Postgraduate diplomas

- [Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Development \(98227\)](#)
- [Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management \(98228\)](#)
- [Postgraduate Diploma in Labour Relations Management \(98209\)](#)
- [Postgraduate Diploma in Organisational Development \(98212\)](#)

Honours degrees

- [Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Business Management \(98452 - N22\)](#)

Master's and PhD

- [Master of Commerce in Business Management \(Human Resource Management\) \(98582 - HRM\)](#)
- [Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies \(Human Resource Management\) \(90021 - HRM\)](#)

Read more about the Research Focus Areas [here](#).

Counselling and career development services at Unisa

The Unisa Directorate for Counselling and Career Development offers career, academic, and personal counselling services to Unisa students and the broader community. You can talk to a counsellor about:

- **Career decisions.** I am not sure which career path to follow; I don't know which qualification would be best; I want to change my career direction...
- **Career information.** How can I find out more about a career in ...
- **Employability.** How do I market myself to employers? How can I look for work? How can I compile an effective CV? How do I go about networking with others? How do I put together my career portfolio? How can I meet potential employers? How can I improve my interview skills?)
- **My studies at Unisa.** How can I get started with my studies? How do I plan my studies? How can I study more effectively? I don't feel motivated to continue with my studies... I feel worried about preparing for/ writing the exams. I failed my exams – what now? I need to improve my reading/ writing/ numeracy skills
- **Personal issues and mental health.** How can I have better relationships with others? How can I cope more effectively with issues that impact my studies?

Contact us

- Send an email to counselling@unisa.ac.za.
- Make an appointment to see a counsellor:
 - [In-person at a Unisa Centre](#)
 - [Online \(on MS Teams\)](#)

Further self-help resources for career, academic and personal development

Our website: www.unisa.ac.za/counselling

Our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/unisacareers