

HR Education

# SHRM<sup>®</sup> Graduate HR Curriculum Study



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# Graduate HR Curriculum Study

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# Graduate HR Curriculum Study

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# Introduction

Forces affecting global competition, demographic changes impacting the workforce and the shift to a knowledge-based economy are rapidly changing the business landscape as executives seek better ways to acquire, grow and retain talent in the workplace. Not only has executive attention created an interest in learning how HR practices can improve organizational performance, but it has also galvanized academics and HR professionals to understand how to best educate students for a career in human resources.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the SHRM Foundation have undertaken many initiatives in HR education over the last several years. In 2004, SHRM sponsored a symposium on the future of HR education, which brought together HR academics, experienced practitioners and students to discuss the goals and relevance of HR education. The SHRM Foundation also developed directories for graduate and undergraduate programs in HR to assist students who might have an interest in the formal study of human resources. In 2003, a study of undergraduate HR curriculum was also conducted by SHRM to solicit perceptions of how well the curriculum prepared students for an HR career. In addition, an internship toolkit was developed by SHRM to assist employers in structuring HR internship opportunities at their organizations. The Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) granted more than 73,000 HR professionals PHR, SPHR and GPHR certifications that attested to their specific HR knowledge.

The *SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study* reflects the Society's continuing efforts to advance the

profession—and specifically that of HR education. While the traditional technical HR roles of selection, staffing and compensation still exist, the fundamental role of HR in creating the workforce of the future is becoming more strategic. In their research of more than 24,000 HR professionals, Brockbank and Ulrich noted that strategic contribution, business knowledge, HR delivery, HR technology and personal credibility were the competencies required for the “New HR.”<sup>1</sup>

With the onset of the changing business environment and the changing role of HR, this study reviews the graduate human resource curriculum from the view points of four stakeholder groups: academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals. The purpose is to learn how well they believe the curriculum that is currently offered to graduate students in HR prepares them for a career in human resources. The results of this study are reflective of current practice and are not necessarily indicative of where HR education needs to head in the future. While each group received a survey that contained some questions unique to the group, questions common to all groups were also asked so that comparisons could be made. In each section of this report, four broad areas of HR education are addressed:

- Education and skills.
- Business versus nonbusiness-oriented HR degrees.
- Internships.
- Qualifications for an exempt-level HR position.

The education and skills section reviews the relative value of specific graduate courses and skills for a career in HR. Questions were asked about the value of a business versus nonbusiness-oriented HR degree because this topic was initially discussed at the 2004 SHRM Symposium on the Future of HR Education. The importance of students having internships as part of an HR graduate curriculum and the minimum qualifications required for an exempt-level HR position are also reviewed in this report.

This study may be used as a companion document to the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*. Although many of the questions are similar so that comparisons can be made between undergraduate and graduate levels of study, differences also exist. For example, in the graduate study, questions about knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) were expanded to identify their relative importance for a specific career level in HR. In addition, a section was also included in the *SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study* that directly compared the results among the four groups of respondents—academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals.

The topic of HR education is both broad and complex. Together, academics and HR executives are exploring ways to enhance the relevance and science of HR education for the 21st century. While each group brings specific expertise to the HR profession, the powerful impact that arises when academics and practitioners work together and learn from each other cannot be underestimated.

<sup>1</sup> Brockbank, W., & Ulrich, D. (2003). *Competencies for the New HR*. University of Michigan Business School, Society for Human Resource Management and Global Consulting Alliance.

# Methodology

**T**he *SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study* was sent to four different groups: senior HR professionals, HR professionals, graduate students in HR-related programs and academics teaching HR-related programs. All participants had to have a valid e-mail address and had to be residents of the United States.

For the student survey, an e-mail invitation that contained a link to participate in the study was sent to all student members of SHRM. Of these, 1,881 e-mails were successfully delivered, and 577 HR students responded, yielding a response rate of 31%.

For the HR professional survey, an e-mail invitation that contained a link to the study was sent to 2,500 randomly selected SHRM members who were managers, supervisors, specialists, administrators, representatives, librarians or consultants. Only members who had not been selected to participate in an SHRM survey within the past six months were invited to respond to this study. Of the members identified, 2,030 e-mails were successfully delivered, and 424 nonsenior HR professionals responded, yielding a response rate of 21%.

For the senior HR professional survey, an e-mail invitation that contained a link to the study was sent to 2,500 randomly selected SHRM members who were directors, assistant or associate directors, vice presidents or presidents, or assistant or associate vice presidents. Only members who had not been selected to participate in an SHRM survey within the past six months were invited to respond to this

study. Of those selected, 1,990 e-mails were successfully delivered, and 346 senior HR professionals responded, yielding a response rate of 17%.

The academic survey was comprised of respondents from two sources. All 870 SHRM members who were identified as academics were sent an e-mail invitation that contained a link to the study. Of these, 843 e-mails were successfully delivered. In addition, the survey was posted to HRDIVNET, the listserv for the HR Division of the Academy of Management. At the time, approximately 585 individuals were registered with the listserv. Between the two sources, a total of 359 HR academics responded, yielding an approximate response rate of 25%.

At the completion of the surveys, the data were checked for duplicate responses. On the uncommon occurrence that a respondent submitted a survey more than once, the survey with the latest time was retained and all prior submissions were deleted.

The number of respondents, indicated by “n,” varies from table to table because some respondents did not answer all of the questions. Where relevant, data depicted in tables and figures may not add to exactly 100% due to rounding. In some cases, respondents included “other” as a response to a question. Efforts were made to examine the verbatim content of the “other” responses and, when possible, recategorize them into the categories listed.

# Comparisons of Responses Among Groups

This section compares responses provided by academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals. The remaining sections of the study contain descriptions of the full results for each group of respondents, along with responses to questions that were only asked of some but not of all groups.

## Education and Skills

Academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals were asked for their input regarding the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) that were most critical for success at early, middle and senior career levels in HR. In the study, early career level HR professionals were defined as either exempt or nonexempt individuals with up to five years of experience who performed in a functional capacity such as compensation analysts, recruiters, etc. This level also included individuals with titles such as benefits specialist or HR coordinator. Mid-career level HR professionals were defined as HR professionals with six to 10 years of experience who managed a function (e.g., compensation programs) and may have supervised other employees. This category also included HR managers who delivered a broad range of HR services in support of one or more business units. Finally, senior career level represented HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience who provided overall strategic HR leadership to their companies. These individuals oversaw

the development and implementation of human resource policies, programs and services. While these positions generally had direct reports, it could be possible that senior career level HR professionals were individual contributors at a senior level. Detailed responses regarding critical KSAs for each career level are found in Tables 1-6.

### Key Findings:

- As the HR career level progressed from early to middle to senior, more KSAs were rated as being most critical by all four groups. It appears that as HR professionals progress through their career, they are expected to master a broad range of KSAs.
- The top three KSAs thought to be most critical at the early career level were identified by all respondents as written communication skills, interpersonal communication skills and staffing and selection techniques.
- Across all groups, managing employees was the KSA most often selected as critical at the mid-career level, while performance management was the second most critical KSA at this level.
- At the senior career level, there was a consensus among groups about KSAs most often identified as critical. They were strategic human resource management, strategic planning and HR impact on mergers and acquisitions. This indicates that at the senior career level many senior HR professionals are expected to possess skills that impact organization-wide goals.

**Table 1** Most critical KSAs for success at a specific HR level (all respondents):

	Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level	Not Critical at Any Level
Accounting	32%	48%	48%	17%
Business ethics	73%	70%	67%	3%
Business law	40%	66%	59%	5%
Change management	25%	69%	70%	2%
Compensation	62%	73%	59%	2%
Employee benefits	69%	67%	42%	3%
Employment law	66%	75%	63%	2%
Financial management	16%	58%	70%	6%
General negotiation skills (not labor contracts)	41%	75%	66%	3%
Global business	11%	38%	76%	8%
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	10%	42%	81%	4%
HR measurement and metrics	42%	74%	63%	3%
Information systems/information technology	64%	66%	47%	5%
Interpersonal communication skills	86%	72%	69%	2%
Leadership	36%	75%	75%	2%
Management of diversity	50%	75%	65%	3%
Management of employees	40%	80%	65%	2%
Marketing	22%	42%	52%	21%
Organizational development	26%	67%	72%	3%
Performance management	45%	78%	64%	2%
Presentation skills	67%	73%	68%	2%
Safety and security	65%	60%	46%	6%
Staffing and selection techniques	77%	69%	47%	2%
Statistics	45%	57%	54%	9%
Strategic business management and planning	16%	57%	80%	3%
Strategic human resource management	24%	64%	79%	2%
Written communication skills	84%	72%	68%	2%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that the specific KSA was critical at that level. A higher percentage indicates more respondents thought the KSA was critical.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 2** Top three KSAs at the early career level:

Academics	Students	HR Professionals	Senior HR Professionals
Written communication skills	Interpersonal communication skills	Interpersonal communication skills	Interpersonal communication skills
Interpersonal communication skills	Written communication skills	Written communication skills	Written communication skills
Staffing and selection techniques	Business ethics/Staffing and selection techniques	Staffing and selection techniques	Staffing and selection techniques

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 3** Top three KSAs at the mid-career level:

Academics	Students	HR Professionals	Senior HR Professionals
Management of employees	Management of employees	Management of employees	Management of employees
Performance management	Performance management	Performance management	Performance management
Employment law	HR measurement and metrics	Compensation	Leadership/General negotiation skills

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 4** Top three KSAs at the senior career level:

Academics	Students	HR Professionals	Senior HR Professionals
Strategic human resource management	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Strategic business management and planning	Strategic business management and planning	Strategic business management and planning
Strategic business management and planning	Strategic human resource management	Strategic human resource management	Strategic human resource management

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 5** Top three KSAs for each career level (all respondents):

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Interpersonal communication skills	Management of employees	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
Written communication skills	Performance management	Strategic business management and planning
Staffing and selection techniques	Leadership	Strategic human resource management

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 6** Bottom three KSAs for each career level (all respondents):

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Global business	Employee benefits
Global business	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Safety and security
Financial management	Marketing	Information systems/information technology

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

### Comparisons of Group Responses for Individual Courses

Academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals were asked to determine the perceived value of 25 graduate-level courses. A complete listing of the courses, along with the results that identify each group’s average course value, can be found in Table 7. In addition, the top three courses and the bottom three courses can be found in Tables 8 and 9. By and large, there was consistent agreement in the highest and lowest rated courses. For example, all groups rated strategic HR management and employment

law in the top three courses. Accounting and marketing courses were in the bottom three courses for all four groups. Compared with the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*, the results for the highest and lowest rated courses for all groups revealed some similarities and a few differences. While employment law was highly rated in both studies, strategic HR and strategic planning were only highly rated in the graduate study. This may be because all groups had higher expectations that graduate HR students should be able to address HR concepts from a strategic perspective, more so than undergraduate students.

### Key Findings

- Relatively speaking, students perceived most courses as having higher values than the other three groups, as indicated by the fact that students gave overall higher ratings to courses in comparison with academics, HR professionals and senior HR professionals.
- All groups rated the value of accounting and financial management lower than other courses. However, students valued these two courses less than HR professionals and senior HR professionals.
- Academics placed a higher value on courses in HR measurement and metrics and in strategic human resource management, compared with HR professionals and senior HR professionals.
- While academics and students placed a higher value on a course in strategic human resource management, compared with HR professionals and senior HR professionals, both students and senior HR professionals placed a higher value on a course in strategic planning than did academics.
- Academics placed a lower value on a course in persuasive communication/negotiations, compared with students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals.
- Students valued a course in training more than academics, HR professionals and senior HR professionals. Academics valued the same course more than HR professionals and senior HR professionals.
- Academics and students valued a course in workforce planning and staffing more than HR professionals and senior HR professionals.

### Comparisons of Group Responses for Similar Courses

Additional analysis was conducted to organize similar courses into categories and identify patterns of responses that existed among academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals.<sup>2</sup> The four categories were traditional HR courses, business courses, psychology courses and strategic HR courses. A listing of the courses within each category can be found in Table 10. The average perceived value for each of the four categories is listed in Table 11.

### Key Findings

- In general, business courses were given the lowest values, and both traditional and strategic HR courses were given higher values.
- Academics placed a higher value on traditional HR courses, compared with senior HR professionals. Students placed even higher values on traditional HR courses than did academics, HR professionals and senior HR professionals. Senior HR professionals perceived business courses to have higher value than did all other groups.
- Academics and students placed a higher value on strategic HR courses, compared with HR professionals and senior HR professionals.

### A Course in Strategic Human Resource Management

Global competition, the switch to a knowledge economy and changing workforce demographics require organizations to take an integrated, more strategic approach to preparing a workforce that can meet the business demands of the future. Therefore, academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals were asked whether a graduate HR student who had completed coursework in strategic human resource management, which teaches how to align HR practices to business strategy, is better qualified for a career in HR than a graduate who had not completed such coursework. Compared with students and HR professionals, academics more strongly agreed with that premise. Senior HR professionals agreed with this statement more than HR professionals. This is also consistent with the finding that academics placed a higher value on courses in HR measurement and metrics and strategic human resource management, compared with HR professionals and senior HR professionals. These data are depicted in Table 12.

<sup>2</sup> A factor analysis was conducted to analyze responses to the 25 original courses and to identify relationships between these responses. Results of the factor analysis revealed the following four factors or categories which revealed a common course emphasis or theme.

**Table 7** What value do you place on graduate HR students taking courses in the following?

	Academics (n = 304)	Students (n = 562)	HR Professionals (n = 418)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 342)
Accounting	3.43	3.17	3.42	3.56
Benefits	4.09	4.20	4.06	4.11
Business	4.08	4.15	4.09	4.22
Compensation	4.38	4.34	4.24	4.24
Diversity	3.89	4.23	3.95	3.76
Employee relations	4.29	4.52	4.40	4.34
Employment law	4.63	4.60	4.53	4.47
Financial management	3.69	3.64	3.80	3.90
Global/international HR	3.91	3.99	3.58	3.47
HR measurement and metrics	4.34	4.28	4.19	4.14
HR information systems	3.96	4.12	3.84	3.84
Industrial/organizational psychology	3.82	3.94	3.80	3.80
Job analysis and performance measurement	4.16	4.37	4.10	4.01
Labor relations	3.89	4.16	4.01	3.81
Managerial economics	3.17	3.52	3.57	3.66
Marketing	3.11	3.24	3.13	3.23
Motivation and work attitudes	4.12	4.29	4.07	3.98
Organizational behavior	4.20	4.33	4.16	4.20
Performance management	4.35	4.39	4.29	4.25
Personnel psychology	3.82	3.95	3.81	3.74
Persuasive communication/negotiations	4.07	4.19	4.24	4.26
Strategic human resource management	4.63	4.62	4.50	4.51
Strategic planning	4.15	4.39	4.26	4.36
Training and development	4.25	4.46	4.12	4.04
Workforce planning and staffing	4.36	4.47	4.19	4.14

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher number means more value is placed on the course).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 8** The most valued graduate HR courses:

Academics	Students	HR Professionals	Senior HR Professionals
Strategic HR management	Strategic HR management	Employment law	Strategic HR management
Employment law	Employment law	Strategic HR management	Employment law
Compensation	Employee relations	Employee relations	Strategic planning

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 9** The least valued graduate HR courses:

Academics	Students	HR Professionals	Senior HR Professionals
Accounting	Managerial economics	Managerial economics	Accounting
Managerial economics	Marketing	Accounting	Global/international HR
Marketing	Accounting	Marketing	Marketing

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 10** Four major categories of courses:

Traditional HR	Strategic HR	Psychology	Business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Benefits</li> <li>▪ Compensation</li> <li>▪ Diversity</li> <li>▪ Employee relations</li> <li>▪ Employment law</li> <li>▪ Human resource information systems</li> <li>▪ Job analysis and performance measurement</li> <li>▪ Labor relations</li> <li>▪ Training and development</li> <li>▪ Workforce planning and staffing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Global/international HR</li> <li>▪ HR measurement and metrics</li> <li>▪ Strategic human resource management</li> <li>▪ Strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Industrial/organizational psychology</li> <li>▪ Motivation and work attitudes</li> <li>▪ Organizational behavior</li> <li>▪ Performance management</li> <li>▪ Personnel psychology</li> <li>▪ Persuasive communication/negotiations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accounting</li> <li>▪ Business</li> <li>▪ Financial management</li> <li>▪ Managerial economics</li> <li>▪ Marketing</li> </ul>

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 11** The average value of each category of courses:

	Academics (n = 320)	Students (n = 599)	HR Professionals (n = 436)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 357)
Traditional HR	4.19	4.34	4.15	4.08
Strategic HR	4.26	4.32	4.13	4.12
Psychology	4.06	4.18	4.06	4.04
Business	3.50	3.54	3.60	3.71

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on the courses within that category).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 12**

All things being equal, a graduate HR student who has completed coursework in strategic human resource management is better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework.

Rating	Academics (n = 305)	Students (n = 563)	HR Professionals (n = 417)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 342)
Average	4.24	3.92	3.79	4.08
Strongly disagree	3%	4%	2%	1%
Disagree	3%	8%	10%	5%
Neither agree nor disagree	10%	15%	17%	10%
Agree	34%	37%	47%	52%
Strongly agree	50%	36%	23%	32%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree (a higher average means the respondents agreed more with the statement provided).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

### The Value of Graduate HR Students Learning Theoretical Concepts and Practical Applications in HR

Academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals were asked two questions about the value of learning practical HR applications and the value of learning theoretical HR knowledge. While all groups valued learning practical HR applications more

than learning theoretical HR knowledge, academics and students were more likely to give higher ratings to acquiring theoretical HR knowledge than were HR professionals and senior HR professionals. Tables 13 and 14 list a breakdown of responses to these questions.

**Table 13** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning practical applications/scenarios in HR?

Rating	Academics (n = 303)	Students (n = 565)	HR Professionals (n = 419)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 340)
Average	4.46	4.50	4.21	4.29
No value	*	*	*	*
Low value	*	*	*	*
Neither low nor high value	2%	4%	11%	7%
High value	49%	40%	56%	55%
Extremely high value	49%	55%	33%	37%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on graduate students learning practical HR applications/scenarios).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 14** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning theoretical HR knowledge and concepts?

Rating	Academics (n = 305)	Students (n = 565)	HR Professionals (n = 420)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 342)
Average	4.15	3.90	3.56	3.56
No value	*	*	*	*
Low value	2%	7%	9%	9%
Neither low nor high value	11%	17%	33%	33%
High value	55%	54%	50%	51%
Extremely high value	31%	21%	7%	7%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on graduate students learning theoretical HR knowledge and concepts).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Business Versus Nonbusiness-Oriented HR Degree

Academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals responded to several questions concerning the relative value that graduate HR and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees had in assisting students in their HR careers. Tables 15 and 16 indicate that all groups gave high ratings

to the value of graduate HR and MBA degrees when the value of each degree was asked independently of the other. Yet, when all groups were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that an MBA degree with a concentration in HR would assist graduate students in their career more than a graduate degree in HR, the results indicated that students and academics (37% and 45% respectively) were less likely to agree with this statement than were HR professionals and senior HR professionals (48% and 54% respectively). A detailed breakdown of the results is provided in Table 17.

**Table 15** How valuable do you think a graduate degree in HR is for a career in HR?

Rating	Academics (n = 307)	Students (n = 571)	HR Professionals (n = 420)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 342)
Average	4.23	4.25	3.84	3.86
Not at all valuable	*	*	*	1%
Not very valuable	3%	3%	5%	7%
Neither valuable nor not valuable	6%	7%	21%	18%
Valuable	54%	51%	56%	57%
Extremely valuable	36%	39%	17%	18%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = not at all valuable, 2 = not very valuable, 3 = neither valuable nor not valuable, 4 = valuable and 5 = extremely valuable (a higher average means more value was placed on a degree in HR).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 16** How valuable do you think an MBA with a concentration in HR is for a career in HR?

Rating	Academics (n = 306)	Students (n = 567)	HR Professionals (n = 418)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 343)
Average	4.17	4.07	3.98	4.08
Not at all valuable	1%	*	*	*
Not very valuable	3%	3%	4%	3%
Neither valuable nor not valuable	8%	14%	16%	13%
Valuable	55%	56%	58%	55%
Extremely valuable	34%	27%	22%	29%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = not at all valuable, 2 = not very valuable, 3 = neither valuable nor not valuable, 4 = valuable and 5 = extremely valuable (a higher average means more value was placed on an MBA degree).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 17** Relatively speaking, an MBA with a concentration in HR will assist graduate students in their career more than a graduate degree in HR.

Rating	Academics (n = 305)	Students (n = 568)	HR Professionals (n = 418)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 342)
Average	3.32	3.19	3.40	3.50
Strongly disagree	6%	6%	6%	6%
Disagree	20%	20%	13%	15%
Neither agree nor disagree	30%	37%	33%	25%
Agree	27%	23%	31%	31%
Strongly agree	18%	14%	17%	23%

Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree (a higher average means the respondents agreed more with the statement provided).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Internships

Internships are important learning vehicles for students to gain practical HR experience. An employer may offer paid or unpaid internships to provide the intern with valuable experience, exposure to the business environment and networking contacts in the HR field. University-approved internships may also allow students to earn educational credits for working with an employer for a specified period of time.

Responses to questions about internships are found in Tables 18 and 19. HR professionals (54%) and senior HR professionals (57%) were more likely to believe that internships should be mandatory only if a student had not had HR experience, compared with students (45%) and academics (33%). Academics were more likely to believe that internships should be neither mandatory nor recommended (7%), compared with students (1%), HR professionals (2%) and senior HR professionals (2%). Although only

a very small percentage of respondents from the four groups perceive internships to be neither mandatory nor recommended, academics were more likely than students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals to believe that internships should only be recommended and not be mandatory (47%).

HR professionals and senior HR professionals (19% and 17% respectively) expected interns to spend more time on administrative and clerical tasks than did students (5%). Specifically, 14% of students reported that they wanted to spend their time on workforce analytics and HR metrics, while HR professionals and senior HR professionals anticipated that interns would spend less time on these tasks (7% and 5% of respondents respectively). Such different expectations in internship responsibilities between students and HR professionals suggest an opportunity for both groups to come to a middle ground in order for internships to be viewed as more valuable for both sides.

**Table 18** A graduate internship that allows students to gain practical experience in human resources should be:

	Academics (n = 288)	Students (n = 561)	HR Professionals (n = 419)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 341)
Neither mandatory nor recommended	7%	1%	2%	2%
Only recommended, not mandatory	47%	37%	33%	28%
Mandatory only if the student has not had HR experience	33%	45%	54%	57%
Mandatory regardless of HR experience	13%	17%	11%	14%

*Note: Percentages are column percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 19** What percentage of the time do graduate interns spend or expect to spend on the following activities?

Task	Students (n = 507)	HR Professionals (n = 62)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 52)
Administrative/clerical duties	5%	19%	17%
Overall assistance to functional areas of HR	27%	22%	26%
Project management	24%	24%	27%
Research	11%	13%	9%
Shadowing	16%	11%	12%
Workforce analytics/HR metrics	14%	7%	5%
Other duties	3%	5%	3%

Note: Academics are not included because they were not asked this question. Percentages are column percentages.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Qualifications for Exempt-Level HR Position

All groups were asked about the minimum years of experience that an individual with a graduate degree in HR realistically needed to possess in order to be hired for an exempt-level HR role. An exempt-level HR position offers greater autonomy and decision-making authority than a nonexempt HR position where job tasks may be more administrative or clerical. Both HR professionals and senior HR professionals (2.6 years and 2.5 years respectively) expected indi-

**Table 20** To be hired for an exempt-level HR role, what are the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree should realistically possess?

	Academics (n = 290)	Students (n = 552)	HR Professionals (n = 405)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 337)
Average minimum years	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.5

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Academic Respondents

The tables and figures in this section reflect the detailed breakdown of academics' responses to all questions in the study. For many questions in this section, comparisons of responses among academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals are provided in a section titled "Comparison of Responses Among Groups."

## Education and Skills

Academics' responses to KSAs and graduate HR coursework are depicted in Tables 21-29. In the study, early career level HR professionals were defined as either exempt or nonexempt individuals with up to five years of experience who performed in a functional capacity such as compensation analysts, recruiters, etc. This level also included individuals with titles such as benefits specialist or HR coordinator. Mid-career level HR professionals were defined as HR professionals with six to 10 years of experience who managed a function (e.g., compensation programs) and may have supervised other employees. This category also included HR managers who delivered a broad range of HR services in support of one or more business units. Finally, senior career level represented HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience who provided overall strategic HR leadership to their companies. These individuals oversaw the development and implementation of human resource policies, programs and services. While these positions generally had direct reports, it could be possible that senior career level HR professionals were individual contributors at a senior level.

In terms of the value of various graduate HR courses, academics listed the top three courses as strategic HR management, employment law and compensation, while the bottom three courses were accounting, managerial economics and marketing. Similar to this study, employment law was also listed as a highly rated course in the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*. However, the least valuable courses were different and included conflict management, global/international HR and safety and security.

Tables 26-29 provide academic viewpoints on class content and structure. Academics placed a high value on learning both practical applications (98%) and theoretical knowledge of HR (86%) for HR graduate students. They indicated that they spent 72% of their time teaching undergraduate and graduate HR classes. The data in Table 28 also suggest that academics and students were consistent in their views as to how much time was spent on various activities in class. Eighty-four percent of academics agreed that a graduate HR student who took a class in strategic HR was better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework.

**Table 21** Most critical KSAs for success at a specific HR level (academic respondents):

(n = 307)	Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level	Not Critical at Any Level
Accounting	33%	52%	51%	18%
Business ethics	78%	74%	76%	3%
Business law	47%	63%	58%	7%
Change management	20%	63%	79%	4%
Compensation	70%	75%	53%	2%
Employee benefits	72%	66%	35%	3%
Employment law	77%	81%	64%	2%
Financial management	20%	59%	74%	10%
General negotiation skills (not labor contracts)	47%	78%	72%	4%
Global business	17%	50%	81%	6%
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	10%	38%	85%	5%
HR measurement and metrics	54%	76%	62%	3%
Information systems/information technology	67%	65%	41%	6%
Interpersonal communication skills	86%	80%	79%	2%
Leadership	33%	75%	81%	3%
Management of diversity	61%	76%	68%	5%
Management of employees	53%	82%	71%	2%
Marketing	20%	38%	53%	26%
Organizational development	25%	66%	77%	3%
Performance management	57%	81%	64%	3%
Presentation skills	70%	78%	76%	3%
Safety and security	70%	60%	37%	6%
Staffing and selection techniques	84%	71%	43%	2%
Statistics	63%	60%	52%	8%
Strategic business management and planning	17%	61%	85%	3%
Strategic human resource management	34%	70%	86%	2%
Written communication skills	87%	80%	74%	2%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that the specific KSA was critical at that level. A higher percentage indicates more respondents thought the KSA was critical.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 22** Top three KSAs for each career level (academic respondents):

(n = 307)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Written communication skills	Management of employees	Strategic human resource management
Interpersonal communication skills	Performance management	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
Staffing and selection techniques	Employment law	Strategic business management and planning

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 23** Bottom three KSAs for each career level (academic respondents):

(n = 307)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Global business	Global business	Information systems/ information technology
Strategic business management and planning	Marketing	Safety and security
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Employee benefits

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 24** What value do you place on graduate HR students taking courses in the following? (academic respondents)

	n	Average	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Accounting	316	3.41	2%	18%	27%	43%	10%
Benefits	310	4.09	1%	4%	15%	45%	35%
Business	315	4.09	1%	2%	16%	50%	31%
Compensation	319	4.36	*	1%	7%	47%	45%
Diversity	318	3.90	2%	6%	21%	41%	30%
Employee relations	319	4.28	*	2%	8%	49%	41%
Employment law	318	4.62	*	*	4%	28%	68%
Financial management	318	3.67	*	9%	30%	45%	15%
Global/international HR	320	3.91	1%	5%	21%	48%	25%
Human resource measurement and metrics	320	4.43	1%	1%	9%	42%	47%
Human resource information systems	318	3.97	1%	3%	22%	48%	26%
Industrial/organizational psychology	319	3.79	*	8%	27%	43%	23%
Job analysis and performance measurement	318	4.16	1%	4%	13%	45%	38%
Labor relations	314	3.68	*	5%	22%	50%	23%
Managerial economics	311	3.17	5%	20%	32%	39%	4%
Marketing	317	3.09	4%	22%	40%	30%	4%
Motivation and work attitudes	320	4.10	1%	4%	13%	49%	33%
Organizational behavior	319	4.18	*	4%	13%	43%	40%
Performance management	317	4.34	*	1%	7%	47%	44%
Personnel psychology	317	3.82	1%	8%	24%	42%	25%
Persuasive communication/negotiations	319	4.05	*	4%	17%	48%	30%
Strategic human resource management	320	4.64	1%	*	4%	23%	72%
Strategic planning	319	4.14	1%	3%	16%	42%	38%
Training and development	318	4.26	*	1%	12%	46%	41%
Workforce planning and staffing	320	4.37	*	1%	7%	47%	45%

\* Less than 1%

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value.

**Table 25** The most and the least valued graduate HR courses (academic respondents):

(n = 320)

Top Three Courses	Bottom Three Courses
1 Strategic HR management	23 Accounting
2 Employment law	24 Managerial economics
3 Compensation	25 Marketing

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 26** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning practical applications/scenarios and theoretical knowledge and concepts in HR? (academic respondents)

	n	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Practical HR applications	303	*	1%	2%	49%	49%
Theoretical HR knowledge	305	*	2%	11%	55%	31%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 27** What percentage of your time is spent teaching graduate HR courses related to a graduate HR program, compared with time spent teaching other disciplines (undergraduate, non-HR disciplines, etc.)? (academic respondents)

(n = 289)	Average
Percentage of the time spent teaching graduate HR courses	34%
Percentage of the time spent teaching undergraduate HR courses	38%
Percentage of the time spent teaching all other courses	28%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 28**

How much time do you spend on the following activities when teaching your graduate HR program? (academic and student respondents)

Time Spent in Class	Academics (n = 235)	Students (n = 525)
Discussion of legislative changes that impact HR	14%	12%
Real-world scenarios in HR	27%	26%
Strategic HR management (how HR practices relate to business strategies)	19%	24%
Theory and concepts in HR	26%	25%
Use of guest speakers to discuss current issues in HR	7%	7%
Other topics	7%	6%

Note: Percentages are column percentages.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 29**

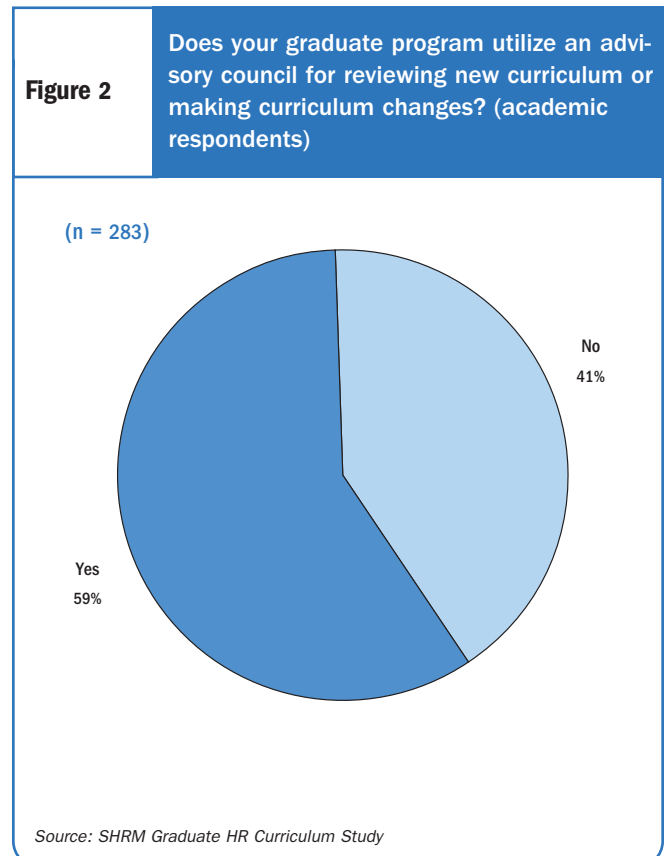
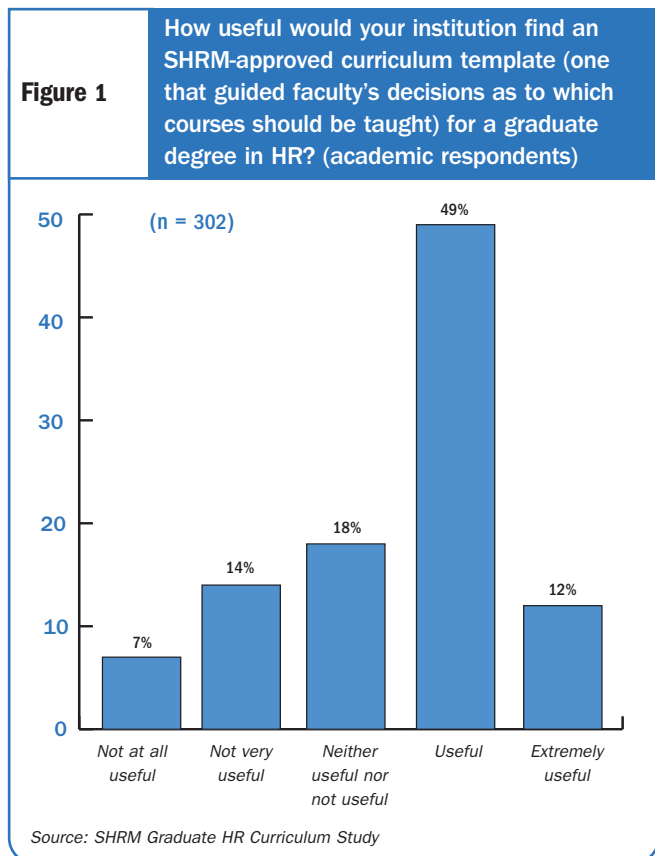
All things being equal, a graduate HR student who has completed coursework in strategic HR management is better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework (academic respondents).

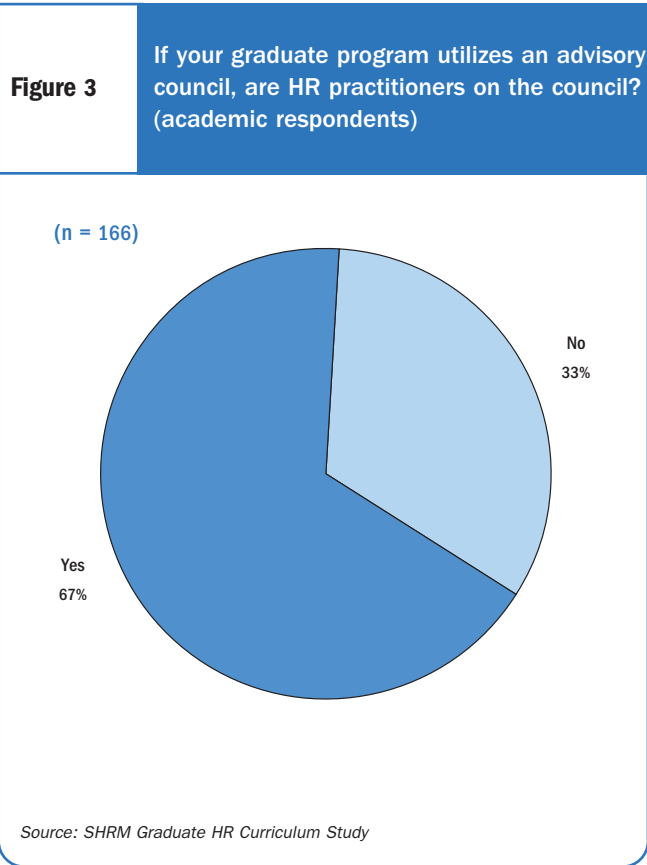
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3%	3%	10%	34%	50%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

Figures 1-3 and Table 30 in this section illustrate responses to questions related to curriculum development. The results indicate that many academics proactively sought input from others when developing graduate HR curriculum. Almost two-thirds (61%) of the academics thought that a graduate curriculum template approved through a professional society such as SHRM would be useful in terms of guiding faculty’s decisions as to which courses should be taught. Results from the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study* indicated that 91% of academics thought that an undergraduate curriculum template

or recommended classes would be useful. Nearly half of the academics (49%) in the graduate study reported that they consulted with HR practitioners when creating or updating their graduate curriculum. The majority of academics (59%) also reported that they used an advisory council when creating or updating their graduate curriculum. When advisory councils were used for reviewing new graduate curriculum or making changes to the graduate curriculum, more than two-thirds of the academics (67%) reported that practitioners were involved in the council.





**Table 30** Please indicate who your academic institution consults with when creating or updating your curriculum for graduate students studying HR (academic respondents):

(n = 317)

University professors and colleagues	69%
HR practitioners	49%
General business professionals	40%
Students	26%
Other groups	15%
HR consultants	15%
Little input is sought	13%
Local SHRM chapters	12%
SHRM headquarters	11%
Other HR associations	5%
No one is consulted	3%

Note: Percentages do not total 100% as multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Business Versus Nonbusiness-Oriented HR Degree

The following two tables (Tables 31 and 32) show academics' views of the value of a graduate degree in HR (e.g., MA, MHRD, MOD) or MBA with a concentration in HR. Academics believed that these degrees were valuable for a career in HR (90% and 89% respectively). However, only 45% agreed that an MBA with a concentration in HR was relatively more valuable than a graduate degree in HR.

**Table 31** How valuable do you think a graduate degree in HR and an MBA with a concentration in HR are for a career in HR? (academic respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Not Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of a graduate degree in HR	307	*	3%	6%	54%	36%
Value of an MBA with a concentration in HR	306	1%	3%	8%	55%	34%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 32**

Relatively speaking, an MBA with a concentration in HR will assist graduate students in their careers more than a graduate degree in HR (academics).

(n = 305)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6%	20%	30%	27%	18%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

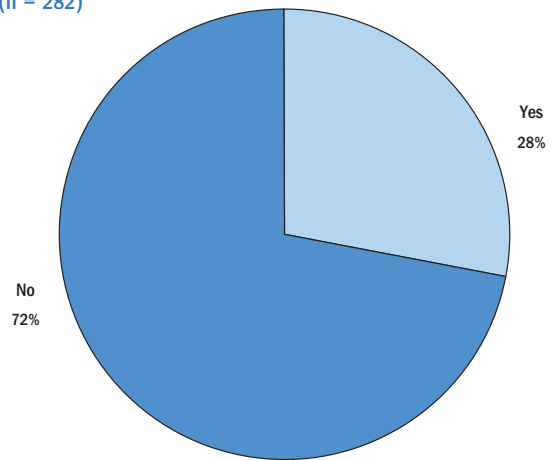
## Internships

Responses from academics to questions about internships are found in Figure 4 and Table 33. While only 28% of the academics indicated that students had to complete an internship as a requirement for their graduate HR program, 45% believed that internships should be recommended but not mandatory for graduation.

**Figure 4**

Is there an internship requirement for graduate students in an HR or HR-related program? (academic respondents)

(n = 282)



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 33**

A graduate internship that allows students to gain practical experience in human resources should be (academic respondents):

(n = 299)

Neither Mandatory Nor Recommended	Only Recommended, Not Mandatory	Mandatory Only if a Student Does Not Have HR Experience	Mandatory Regardless of HR Experience
7%	45%	34%	13%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Qualifications for an Exempt-Level HR Position

An exempt-level HR position offers greater autonomy and decision-making authority than a nonexempt HR

position, the job tasks of which may be more administrative or clerical. All groups were asked a question about the minimum years of experience that an individual with a graduate degree in HR realistically needed to possess in order to be hired for an exempt-level HR position. The average minimum number of years of HR experience that academics expected graduate HR students to have was 1.6 years.

<b>Table 34</b> To be hired for an exempt-level HR role, what are the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree should realistically possess?				
	Academics (n = 290)	Students (n = 552)	HR Professionals (n = 405)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 337)
Average minimum years	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.5

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

# Demographics: Academic Respondents

**Table 35** What position within your institution do you hold?

(n = 298)

Professor	29%
Assistant professor	25%
Associate professor	23%
Adjunct professor	9%
Instructor	6%
Visiting professor	1%
Other	7%

Note: "Other" responses include Dean, Director and Department Chair, among others.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 36** What is the highest degree level you have attained?

(n = 302)

Ph.D. or other doctorate	76%
Master's degree (other than MBA)	15%
MBA	7%
Undergraduate degree	1%
Law degree	1%
Other	*

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 37** In what field of study is your highest degree?

(n = 302)

Business	39%
Human resources	29%
Psychology	9%
Social sciences (not previously listed)	7%
Education	4%
Humanities	4%
Industrial relations	4%
Law	1%
More than one	1%
Natural sciences	1%
Information systems	*
Mathematics or statistics	*
None	*
Other	1%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 38** How would you describe yourself?

(n = 301)

Full-time academic	62%
Full-time academic/part-time consultant	20%
Full-time academic/part-time practitioner	7%
Full-time practitioner/part-time academic	3%
Full-time consultant/part-time academic	2%
Other	7%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 39** Do you have tenure?

(n = 297)

Yes	48%
No	52%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 40** Geographic region

(n = 280)

Pacific West (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming)	9%
Southwest Central (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah)	19%
North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)	29%
Southeast (Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)	20%
Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)	22%
Puerto Rico	1%

Note: The above regions are based on the SHRM member regions.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 41** Is your university/college public or private?

(n = 302)

Public	65%
Private	35%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Student Respondents

Students were asked for their input regarding the value of KSAs, graduate coursework and internships for a career in HR. While comparisons of the responses among academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals are provided in the section titled “Comparison of Responses Among Groups,” below are the student responses to these topics.

## Education and Skills

Tables 42-50 review student responses to KSAs and graduate coursework. The top and bottom three KSAs for early, mid- and senior career levels are listed in Tables 43 and 44. In the study, early career level HR professionals were defined as either exempt or nonexempt individuals with up to five years of experience who performed in a functional capacity such as compensation analysts, recruiters, etc. This level also included individuals with titles such as benefits specialist or HR coordinator. Mid-career level HR professionals were defined as HR professionals with six to 10 years of experience who managed a function (e.g., compensation programs) and may have supervised other employees. This category also included HR managers who delivered a broad range of HR services in support of one or more business units. Finally, senior career level represented HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience who provided overall strategic HR leadership to their companies. These individuals oversaw the development and implementation of human resource policies, programs and services. While these positions generally had direct reports, it could be possible that senior career level HR professionals were individual contributors at a senior level.

For graduate courses, students listed the top three as strategic HR management, employment law and employee relations, and the bottom three were managerial economics, marketing and accounting. While employment law was also listed as a highly rated course in the *Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*, the differences between the two studies are in the lowest-rated courses, which were negotiations, safety and security and global/international HR in the undergraduate study.

Tables 47-50 report student viewpoints on class content, structure and faculty experience. Students placed a high value on learning practical HR applications (95%) and theoretical knowledge of HR (75%). This is similar to undergraduate student responses in the undergraduate study where students in HR also placed a high value on learning practical applications (97%) and theoretical knowledge (54%). The data also suggest that academics and students were consistent in their views as to how much time was spent on various teaching activities in class. Seventy-three percent of students agreed that a graduate HR student who took a class in strategic HR was better qualified for a career in HR than one who had not completed such coursework. The majority of students (86%) also indicated that faculty should have experience working in HR in order to bring real-life experience into the classroom.

**Table 42** Most critical KSAs for success at a specific HR level (student respondents):

(n = 607)	Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level	Not Critical at Any Level
Accounting	34%	41%	44%	18%
Business ethics	76%	66%	63%	2%
Business law	47%	65%	60%	3%
Change management	32%	70%	63%	2%
Compensation	69%	67%	57%	2%
Employee benefits	68%	66%	45%	2%
Employment law	63%	70%	61%	2%
Financial management	20%	55%	63%	7%
General negotiation skills (not labor contracts)	44%	70%	60%	3%
Global business	17%	45%	71%	6%
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	18%	48%	75%	3%
HR measurements and metrics	45%	74%	59%	3%
Information systems/information technology	68%	62%	46%	6%
Interpersonal communication skills	86%	69%	64%	2%
Leadership	45%	73%	70%	3%
Management of diversity	52%	73%	62%	3%
Management of employees	43%	76%	61%	2%
Marketing	29%	42%	45%	19%
Organizational development	37%	66%	66%	3%
Performance management	46%	74%	60%	2%
Presentation skills	71%	70%	62%	2%
Safety and security	66%	59%	49%	5%
Staffing and selection techniques	76%	65%	49%	2%
Statistics	45%	55%	52%	10%
Strategic business management and planning	26%	58%	75%	3%
Strategic human resource management	33%	65%	74%	3%
Written communication skills	84%	67%	63%	2%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that the specific KSA was critical at that level. A higher percentage indicates more respondents thought the KSA was critical.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 43** Top three KSAs for each career level (student respondents):

(n = 607)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Interpersonal communication skills	Management of employees	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
Written communication skills	Performance management	Strategic business management and planning
Business ethics	HR measurement and metrics	Strategic human resource management

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 44** Bottom three KSAs for each career level (student respondents):

(n = 607)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Global business	Accounting	Accounting
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Marketing	Marketing
Financial management	Global business	Employee benefits

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 45** What value do you place on graduate HR students taking courses in the following? (student respondents)

	n	Average	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Accounting	596	3.19	4%	21%	35%	34%	7%
Benefits	592	4.21	*	2%	12%	46%	39%
Business	587	4.16	*	2%	13%	52%	33%
Compensation	594	4.35	*	1%	8%	46%	45%
Diversity	596	4.23	*	4%	9%	48%	40%
Managerial economics	596	3.52	1%	14%	32%	41%	13%
Employee relations	598	4.51	*	*	4%	41%	55%
Employment law	594	4.59	*	1%	3%	32%	64%
Financial management	596	3.65	1%	9%	30%	47%	14%
Global/international HR	598	3.98	1%	4%	21%	47%	28%
HR measurement and metrics	598	4.27	*	2%	11%	44%	43%
HR information systems	590	4.13	*	3%	14%	52%	32%
Industrial/organizational psychology	596	3.94	*	5%	22%	46%	27%
Job analysis and performance management	594	4.37	*	1%	5%	49%	44%
Labor relations	593	4.15	*	2%	15%	47%	35%
Marketing	595	3.27	1%	17%	42%	34%	6%
Motivation and work attitudes	599	4.29	*	1%	10%	47%	42%
Organizational behavior	596	4.32	1%	1%	9%	44%	45%
Performance management	598	4.38	*	1%	6%	46%	47%
Personnel psychology	596	3.95	1%	4%	22%	47%	27%
Persuasive communication/negotiations	588	4.20	*	1%	14%	49%	36%
Strategic HR management	594	4.61	*	*	1%	37%	62%
Strategic planning	598	4.38	*	1%	7%	46%	46%
Training and development	595	4.46	*	*	5%	43%	52%
Workforce planning and staffing	594	4.46	*	*	5%	42%	53%

\* Less than 1%

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither low nor high value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on the course).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 46** The most and the least valued graduate HR courses (student respondents):

(n = 598)

Top Three Courses	Bottom Three Courses
1 Strategic HR management	23 Managerial economics
2 Employment law	24 Marketing
3 Employee relations	25 Accounting

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 47** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning practical applications/scenarios and theoretical knowledge and concepts in HR? (student respondents)

	n	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Practical HR applications	565	*	*	4%	40%	55%
Theoretical HR knowledge	565	*	7%	17%	54%	21%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 48** What percentage of time does the following occur in your graduate HR coursework? (academic and student respondents)

	Academics (n = 235)	Students (n = 525)
Discussion of legislative changes that impact HR	14%	12%
Real-world scenarios in HR	27%	26%
Strategic HR management (how HR practices relate to business strategies)	19%	24%
Theory and concepts in HR	26%	25%
Use of guest speakers to discuss current issues in HR	7%	7%
Other topics	7%	6%

Note: Percentages are column percentages.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 49** All things being equal, a graduate HR student who has completed coursework in strategic HR management is better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework (student respondents).

(n = 563)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4%	8%	15%	37%	36%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 50** Faculty should have experience working in HR in order to bring real-life experiences into the classroom (student respondents).

(n = 561)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4%	2%	8%	34%	52%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Business Versus Nonbusiness-Oriented HR Degree

Student responses to the value of a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentration in HR are indi-

cated in the Tables 51 and 52. Students believed that a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentration in HR was valuable for a career in HR (90% and 83% respectively). However, only 37% agreed that an MBA with a concentration in HR was relatively more valuable than a graduate degree in HR.

**Table 51** How valuable do you think a graduate degree in HR and an MBA with a concentration in HR are for a career in HR? (student respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of a graduate degree in HR	571	*	3%	7%	39%
Value of an MBA with a concentration in HR	567	*	3%	14%	27%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 52** Relatively speaking, an MBA with a concentration in HR will assist graduate students in their career more than a graduate degree in HR (student respondents).

(n = 568)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6%	20%	37%	23%	14%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Internships

Students were asked eight questions concerning internships, and their responses are depicted in Tables 53-54 and in Figures 5-10. While 60% of students agreed that graduate students in an HR-related degree program should have experience working in HR in order to secure employment upon graduation, more than half (56%) did not plan to have an internship prior to completing their HR-related gradu-

ate degrees. Many students (48%) reported that they had tried to secure internships in HR, regardless of whether their attempts were successful or not. While 32% of students reported that their graduate programs had formal internship programs, only 21% reported that it was easy to secure internships and 58% reported that it was difficult to do so. It was also reported that 30% of graduate HR students had already completed an internship.

**Table 53** A graduate internship that allows students to gain practical experience in human resources should be (student respondents):

(n = 599)

Neither Mandatory Nor Recommended	Only Recommended, Not Mandatory	Mandatory Only if a Student Does Not Have HR Experience	Mandatory Regardless of HR Experience
1%	37%	46%	17%

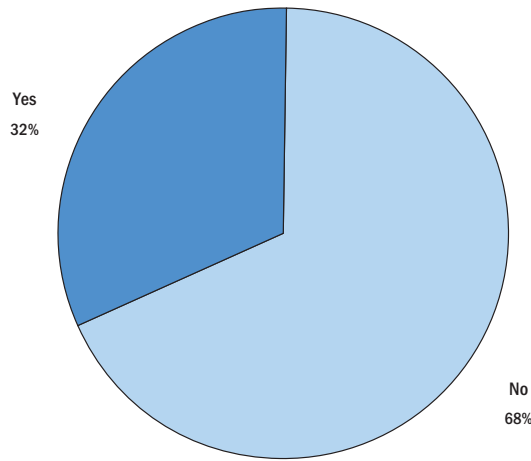
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 5**

Does your graduate HR program have a formal graduate internship program? (student respondents)

(n = 561)

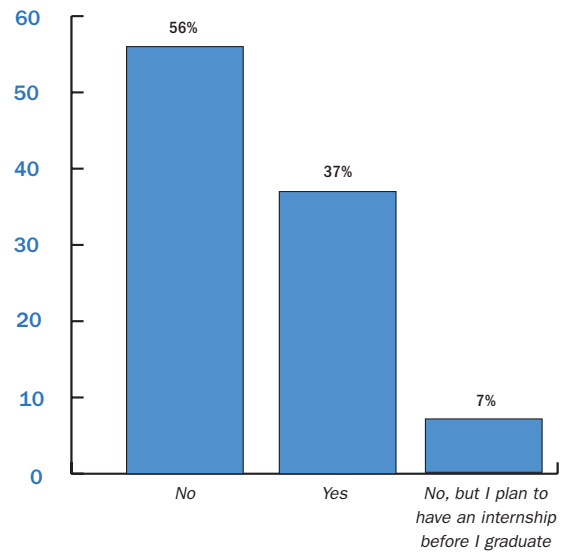


Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 6**

Have you had or do you plan to have a graduate-level internship in HR? (student respondents)

(n = 561)

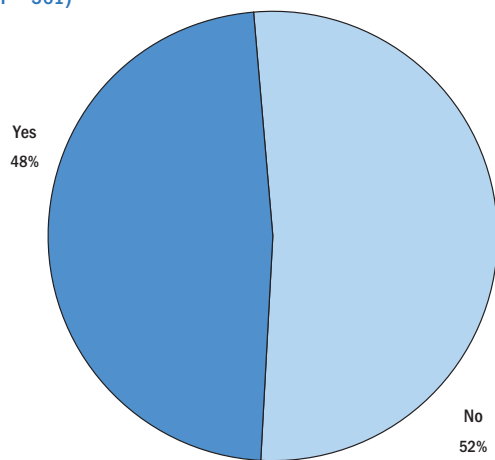


Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 7**

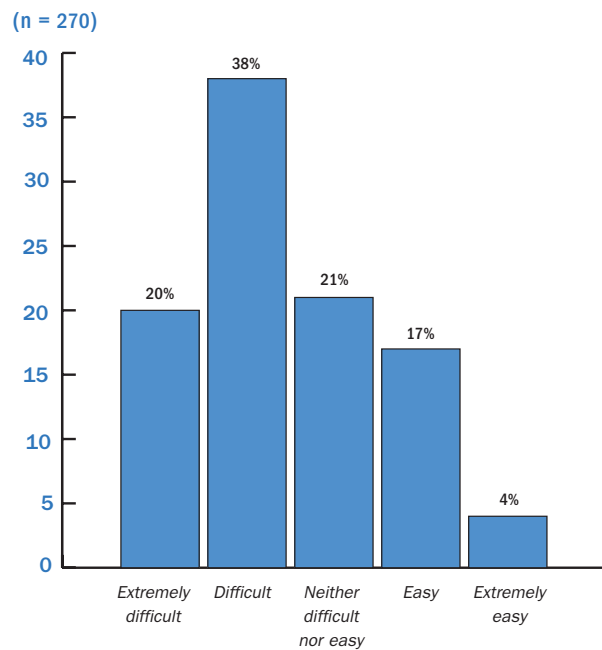
Have you attempted to secure an internship in HR? (student respondents)

(n = 561)



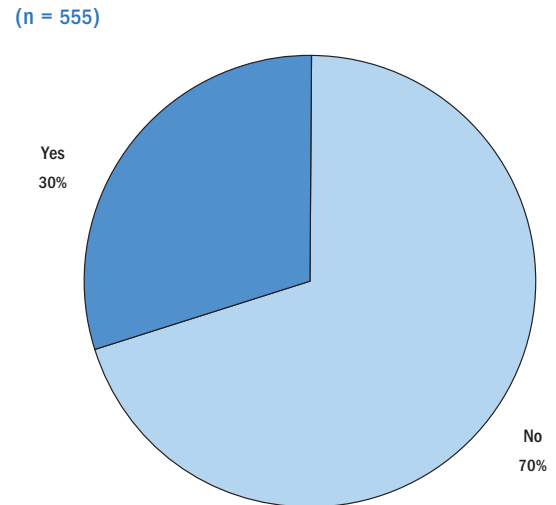
Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 8** If yes, how easy or difficult was it for you to find an internship? (student respondents)



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 9** Have you completed an HR internship? (student respondents)



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 54** What percentage of time would you want to spend on the following activities if you were able to intern at an organization? (student respondents)

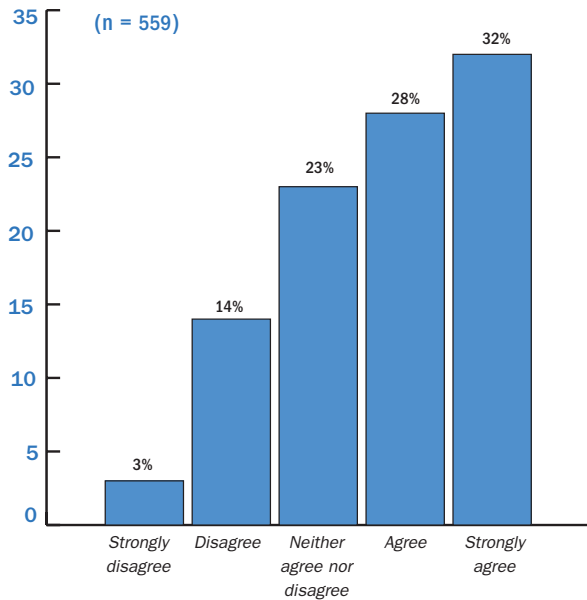
(n = 507)

Overall assistance to functional areas of HR	27%
Project management	24%
Shadowing	16%
Workforce analytics/HR metrics	14%
Research	11%
Administrative/clerical duties	5%
Other duties	3%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 10**

Graduate students should have experience working in HR (i.e., as an intern) in order to secure employment upon graduation (student respondents).



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Qualifications for an Exempt-Level HR Position

All groups were asked a question about the minimum years of experience that an individual with a graduate degree in HR realistically needed to possess to be hired for an exempt-level HR position. The average minimum number of years of HR experience that students expected graduate HR students to have was 1.7 years.

**Table 55**

To be hired for an exempt-level HR role, what are the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree should realistically possess? (all respondents)

	Academics (n = 290)	Students (n = 552)	HR Professionals (n = 405)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 337)
Average minimum years	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.5

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Demographics: Student Respondents

**Table 56** Are you currently enrolled in a graduate program for the study of HR?

<i>(n = 571)</i>	
Yes	77%
No	23%

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 59** Is your university/college public or private?

<i>(n = 556)</i>	
Public	57%
Private	43%

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 57** What percentage of your coursework have you completed?

<i>(n = 553)</i>	
Average	75%

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 60** How would you describe your academic status?

<i>(n = 559)</i>	
I am a full-time student, working full time	28%
I am a part-time student, working full time	28%
I am a full-time student, working part time	17%
Graduated	14%
I am a full-time student, currently not working	11%
I am a part-time student, working part time	2%
Other	1%

*Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 58** In what year do you expect to graduate?

<i>(n = 549)</i>	
2004	18%
2005	56%
2006	20%
2007	4%
2008	1%
2010	*

\* Less than 1%

*Note: The survey was sent to graduate students in January 2005. Many respondents indicated that they received their degrees in December 2004.*

*Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 61** At the time you enrolled in your graduate program, how much professional work experience did you have?

	<i>n</i>	<i>Median</i>
Years of experience in HR	521	1 year
Years of non-HR work experience	510	5 years

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 62** At the time you enrolled in your graduate program, were you working in the HR field?

<b>(n = 557)</b>	
No	62%
Yes	38%

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 64** Do you have any professional certifications in HR?

<b>(n = 555)</b>	
No	84%
Yes	16%

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 63** At the time of your enrollment, which best describes the HR position you held?

<b>(n = 517)</b>	
Not in HR at the time of enrollment	50%
Administrative coordinator	14%
Functional role (benefits, compensation, recruiting, training)	14%
HR generalist	11%
HR supervisor/manager	4%
Director	2%
Other	6%

*Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.*

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 65** Geographic region:

<b>(n = 521)</b>	
Southeast (Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)	25%
North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)	24%
Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)	23%
Southwest Central (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah)	19%
Pacific West (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming)	8%
Puerto Rico	1%

*Note: The above regions are based on the SHRM member regions.*

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

# HR Professional Respondents

Responses from HR professionals to all questions in the survey are reported in the following tables and figures. For many questions in this section, comparisons of responses between academics, students, HR professionals and senior HR professionals are provided in the section of this study titled “Comparison of Responses Among Groups.”

## Education and Skills

Tables 66-72 review HR professionals’ responses to KSAs and graduate coursework. Tables 67 and 68 list the top and bottom three KSAs for early, mid- and senior career levels. In the study, early career level HR professionals were defined as either exempt or nonexempt individuals with up to five years of experience who performed in a functional capacity such as compensation analysts, recruiters, etc. This level also included individuals with titles such as benefits specialist or HR coordinator. Mid-career level HR professionals were defined as HR professionals with six to 10 years of experience who managed a function (e.g., compensation programs) and may have supervised other employees. This category also included HR managers who delivered a broad range of HR services in support of one or more business units. Finally, senior career level represented HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience who provided overall strategic HR leadership to their companies. These individuals oversaw the development and implementation of human resource policies, programs and services. While these positions generally had direct reports, it could be possible that senior career level HR professionals were individual contributors at a senior level.

For graduate courses, HR professionals listed the top three as employment law, strategic HR management and employee relations. The lowest rated courses for graduate HR students were managerial economics, accounting and marketing, according to HR professionals. Although employee relations and employment law were also listed among the top three in the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*, the difference between the two studies is that HR professionals in the undergraduate study rated the bottom three courses as being human resource information systems, safety and security, and global/international HR.

Tables 71-72 provide HR professionals’ viewpoints to class content and class structure. HR professionals valued learning practical HR applications (89%) more highly than learning theoretical knowledge (57%). Seventy percent indicated that a graduate student who had completed a class in strategic human resource management was more qualified than a student who did not.

**Table 66** Most critical KSAs for success at a specific HR level (HR professional respondents):

(n = 422)	Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level	Not Critical at Any Level
Accounting	26%	51%	49%	15%
Business ethics	68%	72%	68%	3%
Business law	31%	67%	60%	5%
Change management	23%	70%	70%	2%
Compensation	56%	78%	61%	2%
Employee benefits	71%	65%	42%	3%
Employment law	63%	76%	64%	2%
Financial management	9%	57%	74%	4%
General negotiation skills (not labor contracts)	37%	76%	67%	2%
Global business	5%	29%	78%	9%
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	5%	38%	83%	5%
HR measurements and metrics	35%	74%	68%	3%
Information systems/information technology	62%	65%	49%	5%
Interpersonal communication skills	87%	70%	69%	2%
Leadership	32%	77%	75%	2%
Management of diversity	45%	77%	66%	3%
Management of employees	33%	81%	64%	2%
Marketing	21%	41%	57%	19%
Organizational development	19%	64%	73%	3%
Performance management	39%	78%	65%	2%
Presentation skills	65%	72%	70%	2%
Safety and security	62%	63%	48%	8%
Staffing and selection techniques	72%	70%	45%	2%
Statistics	35%	54%	57%	10%
Strategic business management and planning	7%	56%	81%	3%
Strategic human resource management	14%	64%	79%	2%
Written communication skills	84%	72%	69%	2%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that the specific KSA was critical at that level. A higher percentage indicates more respondents thought the KSA was critical.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 67** Top three KSAs for each career level (HR professional respondents):

(n = 422)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Interpersonal communication skills	Management of employees	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
Written communication skills	Performance management	Strategic business management and planning
Staffing and selection techniques	Compensation	Strategic human resource management

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 68** Bottom three KSAs for each career level (HR professional respondents):

(n = 422)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Global business	Employee benefits
Global business	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Staffing and selection techniques
Strategic business management and planning	Marketing	Safety and security

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 69**

What value do you place on graduate HR students taking courses in the following? (HR professional respondents)

	n	Average	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Accounting	433	3.41	2%	14%	31%	45%	7%
Benefits	434	4.06	*	3%	13%	59%	25%
Business	434	4.09	*	2%	12%	59%	26%
Compensation	432	4.24	*	*	7%	61%	32%
Diversity	432	3.95	*	4%	21%	50%	25%
Employee relations	434	4.40	*	0%	7%	44%	48%
Employment law	434	4.53	*	0%	5%	37%	58%
Financial management	435	3.80	*	6%	24%	54%	16%
Global/international HR	435	3.56	2%	8%	34%	43%	13%
HR measurement and metrics	436	4.19	*	2%	13%	50%	35%
HR information systems	432	3.83	*	5%	24%	53%	18%
Industrial/organizational psychology	435	3.79	*	5%	30%	46%	19%
Job analysis and performance management	433	4.10	*	1%	16%	53%	29%
Labor relations	435	4.01	*	3%	18%	53%	26%
Managerial economics	431	3.58	1%	9%	35%	42%	13%
Marketing	435	3.12	2%	21%	42%	30%	4%
Motivation and work attitudes	434	4.06	*	1%	15%	59%	25%
Organizational behavior	435	4.15	*	1%	11%	58%	29%
Performance management	436	4.29	*	*	9%	52%	39%
Personnel psychology	434	3.81	*	5%	27%	50%	18%
Persuasive communication/negotiations	434	4.25	*	1%	9%	51%	38%
Strategic HR management	434	4.49	*	*	6%	38%	55%
Strategic planning	433	4.24	*	2%	12%	47%	39%
Training and development	433	4.12	*	2%	12%	58%	28%
Workforce planning and staffing	434	4.20	*	1%	9%	58%	32%

\* Less than 1%

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither high nor low value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on the course).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 70** The most and the least valued graduate HR courses (HR professional respondents):

(n = 436)

Top Three Courses	Bottom Three Courses
1 Employment law	23 Managerial economics
2 Strategic HR management	24 Accounting
3 Employee relations	25 Marketing

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 71** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning practical applications/scenarios and theoretical knowledge and concepts in HR? (HR professional respondents)

	n	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Practical HR applications	419	*	*	11%	56%	33%
Theoretical HR knowledge	420	*	9%	33%	50%	7%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

Source:

**Table 72** All things being equal, a graduate HR student who has completed coursework in strategic HR management is better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework (HR professional respondents).

(n = 417)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2%	10%	17%	47%	23%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

Source:

# Business Versus Nonbusiness-Oriented HR Degree

HR professionals' responses to the value of a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentration in

HR are indicated in Tables 73-74. HR professionals believed that a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentration in HR was valuable for a career in HR (73% and 80% respectively). However, only 48% agreed that an MBA with a concentration in HR was relatively more valuable than a graduate degree in HR.

**Table 73** How valuable do you think a graduate degree in HR and an MBA with a concentration in HR are for a career in HR? (HR professional respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Not Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of a graduate degree in HR	420	*	5%	21%	56%	17%
Value of an MBA with a concentration in HR	418	*	4%	16%	58%	22%

\* Less than 1%  
 Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 74** Relatively speaking, an MBA with a concentration in HR will assist graduate students in their careers more than a graduate degree in HR (HR professional respondents)

(n = 418)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6%	13%	33%	31%	17%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Internships

The majority of HR professionals (55%) indicated that HR internships should be a mandatory requirement for graduation if a student did not have HR experience. However, 81% of HR professionals indicated that their organizations did not offer HR internships for students, and 44% felt that sponsoring an HR internship would neither be of high nor of low value to their organizations. These findings are

similar to those of the SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study where 81% of responding HR professionals did not offer HR internships and 46% felt that sponsoring an HR internship would neither be of high nor of low value. In both studies, HR professionals did respond more positively about the value of a professional society providing guidelines for operating a graduate and undergraduate HR internship programs (49% and 67% respectively). These data are depicted in Tables 75 through 78 and Figure 11.

**Table 75** A graduate internship that allows students to gain practical experience in human resources should be (HR professional respondents):

(n = 437)

Neither Mandatory Nor Recommended	Only Recommended, Not Mandatory	Mandatory Only if a Student Does Not Have HR Experience	Mandatory Regardless of HR Experience
2%	32%	55%	11%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 76** Does your organization currently have an internship program for students in HR? (HR professional respondents)

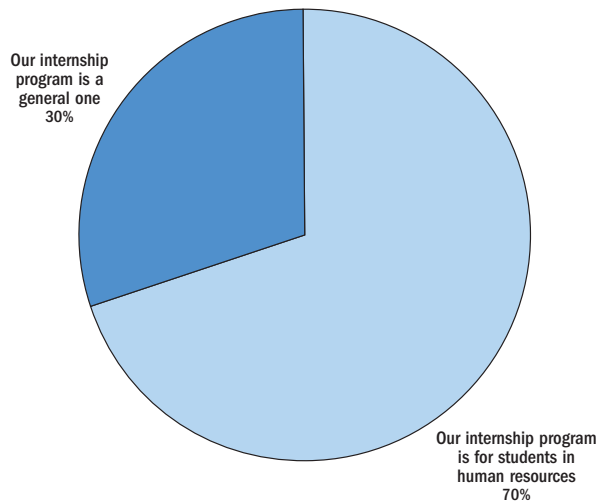
(n = 418)

No	Yes, Undergraduate Students Only	Yes, Graduate Students Only	Yes, Both Graduate and Undergraduate Students
81%	6%	3%	10%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 11** Is your internship program specific to HR? (HR professional respondents)

(n = 96)



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 77**

If your organization has an internship program, what percentage of the time do graduate interns spend on the following activities? (HR professional respondents)

(n = 62)

Project management	24%
Overall assistance to functional areas of HR	22%
Administrative/clerical duties	19%
Research	13%
Shadowing	11%
Workforce analytics/HR metrics	7%
Other duties	5%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 78**

How valuable would it be for your organization to sponsor a graduate HR internship opportunity and an HR professional society providing you with guidelines for operating a graduate internship program? (HR professional respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Not Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of sponsoring a graduate HR internship	394	9%	17%	44%	27%	3%
Value of a guide for internships	393	4%	10%	37%	43%	6%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Qualifications for an Exempt-Level HR Position

A question to find out the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree in HR realistically needed to possess to be hired for an exempt-level HR role was asked of all groups. The

average minimum number of years of HR experience that HR professionals expected graduate HR students to have to qualify for an exempt-level position was 2.6 years. HR professionals also indicated that they preferred to hire someone whose HR graduate program had a business orientation (58%) as opposed to an HR orientation (35%). Similarly, HR professionals thought that students would be more successful in HR if their programs had a business orientation (65%), as opposed to an HR orientation (27%).

**Table 79**

To be hired for an exempt-level HR role, what are the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree should realistically possess? (all respondents)

	Academics (n = 290)	Students (n = 552)	HR Professionals (n = 405)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 337)
Average minimum years	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.5

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 80**

Comparison of hiring preferences and expectations of success by degree orientation (HR professional respondents).

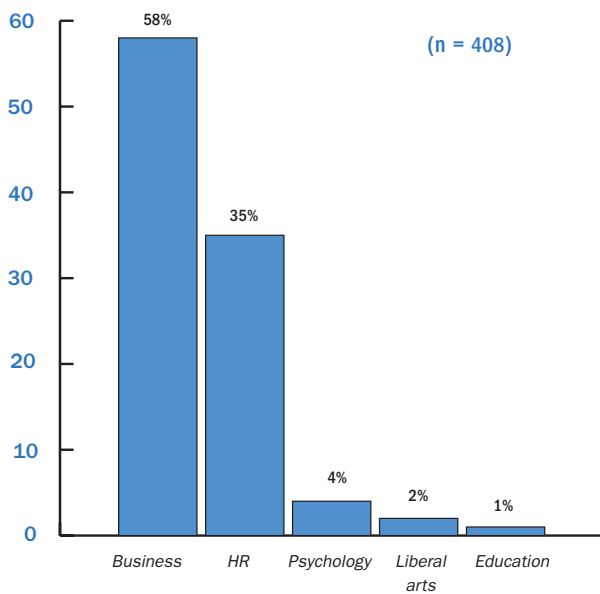
	n	Business	HR	Psychology	Education	Liberal Arts
Hiring preference in terms of educational program orientation	408	58%	35%	4%	1%	2%
Expected success based on educational program orientation	394	65%	27%	5%	1%	1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 12**

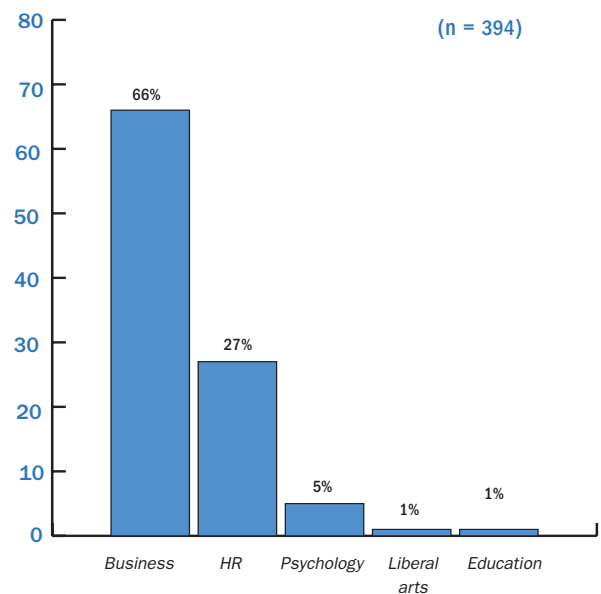
In general, do you prefer to hire someone with a graduate degree related to HR whose degree program has the following orientation (HR professional respondents):



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 13**

An HR professional will be most successful after completing a graduate degree related to HR if the degree program has the following orientation (HR professional respondents):



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Demographics: HR Professional Respondents

**Table 81** How many people are employed at your organization? How many people are in your HR department?

	n	Median
Total full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the organization	407	646
Total FTEs in HR in the organization	404	6

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 82** What is the highest degree level you have attained?

(n = 408)	
Undergraduate degree	52%
Master's degree (other than MBA)	25%
MBA	13%
Some college	2%
Associate's degree	2%
High school	1%
Ph.D. or other doctorate	*
Law degree	*
Other	3%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 83** In what field is your highest degree?

(n = 403)	
Business	39%
Human resources	28%
Social sciences (not previously listed)	9%
Psychology	7%
Humanities	5%
Industrial relations	3%
Education	2%
Natural sciences	1%
More than one	1%
Information systems	*
Law	*
Mathematics or statistics	*
Other	2%
No degree	1%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 84** How many years have you worked in the HR profession?

(n = 412)	Median
Number of years of HR experience	10 years

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 85** Geographic region:

(n = 411)

North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)	25%
Southeast (Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)	25%
Southwest Central (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah)	19%
Pacific West (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming)	16%
Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)	16%
Puerto Rico	*

\* Less than 1%

Note: The above regions are based on the SHRM member regions.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 86** Which industry best describes this location's main business?

(n = 411)

Manufacturing (durable goods)	12%
Services (profit)	12%
Health	8%
Wholesale/retail trade	8%
High-tech	8%
Government	6%
Finance	6%
Manufacturing (nondurable goods)	6%
Insurance	5%
Services (nonprofit)	5%
Educational services	5%
Utilities	4%
Telecommunications	4%
Transportation	3%
Consulting	2%
Construction and mining/oil and gas	2%
Other	5%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 87** Is your organization in the public/government or private sector?

(n = 408)

Public/government sector	25%
Private sector	75%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 88** Is your organization a for-profit or a nonprofit organization?

(n = 411)

For-profit organization	77%
Nonprofit organization	23%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Senior HR Professional Respondents

Senior HR professionals were asked for their input regarding the value of KSAs and graduate coursework for a career in HR. While comparisons of the responses among all four groups of respondents are provided in an earlier section titled “Comparison of Responses Among Groups,” below are detailed responses from senior HR professionals on these topics.

## Education and Skills

Tables 89-95 review senior HR professionals’ responses to KSAs and graduate coursework. The top and bottom three KSAs for early, mid- and senior career levels are listed in Tables 90 and 91. In the study, early career level HR professionals were defined as either exempt or nonexempt individuals with up to five years of experience who performed in a functional capacity such as compensation analysts, recruiters, etc. This level also included individuals with titles such as benefits specialist or HR coordinator. Mid-career level HR professionals were defined as HR professionals with six to 10 years of experience who managed a function (e.g., compensation programs) and may have supervised other employees. This category also included HR managers who delivered a broad range of HR services in support of one or more business units. Finally, senior career level represented HR professionals with more than 10 years of experience who provided overall strategic HR leadership to their companies. These individuals oversaw the development and implementation of human resource policies, programs and services. While these positions generally had direct reports, it could be possible that senior career level HR professionals were individual contributors at a senior level.

The top three graduate courses were strategic HR management, employment law and strategic planning, while the bottom three were identified as accounting, global/international HR and marketing. While in the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study* senior HR professionals also rated HR strategy and employment law highly and found global/international HR to be among the bottom three, the differences were observed in the other two lowest-rated courses—labor relations and safety and security.

Senior HR professionals’ viewpoints on class content and class structure are reported in Tables 94-95. Senior HR professionals valued learning practical HR applications (92%) more highly than learning theoretical knowledge (58%). Eighty-four percent indicated that a graduate student who had completed a class in strategic human resource management was more qualified for a career in HR than a student who did not.

**Table 89** Most critical KSAs for success at a specific HR level (senior HR professional respondents):

(n = 345)	Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level	Not Critical at Any Level
Accounting	33%	49%	50%	15%
Business ethics	70%	71%	67%	3%
Business law	31%	68%	60%	4%
Change management	20%	72%	72%	1%
Compensation	54%	77%	63%	2%
Employee benefits	65%	71%	44%	2%
Employment law	63%	77%	62%	2%
Financial management	12%	61%	76%	3%
General negotiation skills (not labor contracts)	37%	77%	69%	2%
Global business	5%	29%	76%	11%
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	5%	38%	83%	4%
HR measurements and metrics	33%	72%	67%	2%
Information systems/information technology	59%	74%	50%	3%
Interpersonal communication skills	86%	73%	70%	2%
Leadership	28%	77%	77%	1%
Management of diversity	46%	75%	66%	2%
Management of employees	30%	83%	69%	1%
Marketing	14%	46%	55%	21%
Organizational development	16%	71%	76%	1%
Performance management	37%	83%	67%	1%
Presentation skills	59%	75%	69%	1%
Safety and security	62%	60%	45%	8%
Staffing and selection techniques	79%	71%	48%	1%
Statistics	39%	63%	57%	8%
Strategic business management and planning	8%	53%	83%	1%
Strategic human resource management	12%	59%	81%	1%
Written communication skills	80%	74%	69%	2%

Note: Percentages reflect the percentage of respondents who indicated that the specific KSA was critical at that level. A higher percentage indicates more respondents thought the KSA was critical.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 90** Top three KSAs for each career level (senior HR professional respondents):

(n = 345)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Interpersonal communication skills	Management of employees	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions
Written communication skills	Performance management	Strategic business management and planning
Staffing and selection techniques	Leadership	Strategic human resource management

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 91** Bottom three KSAs for each career level (senior HR professional respondents):

(n = 345)

Early Career Level	Mid-Career Level	Senior Career Level
Global business	Global business	Employee benefits
HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	HR impact on mergers and acquisitions	Safety and security
Strategic business management and planning	Marketing	Staffing and selection techniques

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 92**
**What value do you place on graduate HR students taking courses in the following?  
(senior HR professional respondents)**

	n	Average	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Accounting	353	3.57	1%	12%	25%	53%	9%
Benefits	351	4.12	*	4%	12%	52%	32%
Business	353	4.21	*	1%	8%	59%	31%
Compensation	354	4.25	*	2%	8%	54%	36%
Diversity	352	3.76	*	8%	28%	44%	20%
Employee relations	352	4.34	*	1%	11%	42%	46%
Employment law	354	4.47	*	1%	5%	39%	55%
Financial management	356	3.91	*	4%	22%	54%	20%
Global/international HR	355	3.48	*	11%	40%	39%	10%
HR measurement and metrics	356	4.14	*	3%	13%	50%	34%
HR information systems	355	3.85	1%	5%	21%	57%	17%
Industrial/organizational psychology	356	3.80	1%	6%	26%	47%	21%
Job analysis and performance management	356	4.02	1%	3%	14%	57%	25%
Labor relations	357	3.81	1%	7%	25%	45%	22%
Managerial economics	355	3.66	*	6%	32%	50%	11%
Marketing	354	3.23	2%	16%	42%	38%	2%
Motivation and work attitudes	355	3.98	*	5%	16%	53%	25%
Organizational behavior	355	4.20	*	1%	10%	55%	34%
Performance management	356	4.24	*	2%	9%	50%	39%
Personnel psychology	352	3.75	1%	5%	29%	45%	19%
Persuasive communication/negotiations	357	4.25	*	1%	11%	46%	41%
Strategic HR management	356	4.51	*	1%	3%	40%	56%
Strategic planning	353	4.36	*	1%	5%	49%	44%
Training and development	357	4.04	*	2%	15%	57%	25%
Workforce planning and staffing	357	4.15	*	2%	13%	51%	33%

\* Less than 1%

Note: While the sample size reflects the total number of respondents, in some cases, not all respondents answered all parts of the question. Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Average ratings are based on a scale where 1 = no value, 2 = low value, 3 = neither high nor low value, 4 = high value and 5 = extremely high value (a higher average means more value was placed on the course).

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 93** The most and the least valued graduate HR courses (senior HR professional respondents):

Top Three Courses	Bottom Three Courses
1 Strategic HR management	23 Accounting
2 Employment law	24 Global/international HR
3 Strategic planning	25 Marketing

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 94** What value do you place on graduate HR students learning practical applications/scenarios and theoretical knowledge and concepts in HR? (senior HR professional respondents)

	n	No Value	Low Value	Neither High Nor Low Value	High Value	Extremely High Value
Practical HR applications	340	*	*	7%	55%	37%
Theoretical HR knowledge	342	*	9%	33%	51%	7%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 95** All things being equal, a graduate HR student who has completed coursework in strategic HR management is better qualified for a career in HR than a student who has not completed such coursework (senior HR professional respondents).

(n = 417)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1%	5%	10%	52%	32%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Business Versus Nonbusiness-Oriented HR Degree

Senior HR professionals' responses to the value of a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentra-

tion in HR are indicated on the following page. Senior HR professionals believed that a graduate degree in HR or an MBA with a concentration in HR was valuable for a career in HR (75% and 84% respectively). More than half (54%) also agreed that an MBA with a concentration in HR was relatively more valuable than a graduate degree in HR.

**Table 96**

How valuable do you think a graduate degree in HR and an MBA with a concentration in HR are for a career in HR? (senior HR professional respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Not Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of a graduate degree in HR	342	1%	7%	18%	57%	18%
Value of an MBA with a concentration in HR	343	*	3%	13%	55%	29%

\* Less than 1%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 97**

Relatively speaking, an MBA with a concentration in HR will assist graduate students in their career more than a graduate degree in HR (senior HR professional respondents).

(n = 342)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6%	15%	25%	31%	23%

Note: Percentages are row percentages.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Internships

The majority of senior HR professionals (56%) believed that HR internships should be a mandatory requirement for graduation if a student did not have HR experience. However, 82% of senior HR professionals indicated that their organizations did not offer HR internships for students, and 40% felt that sponsoring an HR internship would neither be of high

nor of low value to their organizations. Fifty-two percent of senior HR professionals did indicate that they would value guidelines for operating graduate HR internship programs provided by a professional society. The responses to these questions were similar to those from the *SHRM Undergraduate HR Curriculum Study*, in which 71% of senior HR professionals indicated that they did not offer HR internships and 59% indicated that HR internship guidelines would be valuable.

**Table 98**

A graduate internship that allows students to gain practical experience in human resources should be (senior HR professional respondents):

(n = 355)

Neither Mandatory Nor Recommended	Only Recommended, Not Mandatory	Mandatory Only if a Student Does Not Have HR Experience	Mandatory Regardless of HR Experience
2%	28%	56%	14%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 99**

Does your organization currently have an internship program for students in HR?  
(senior HR professional respondents)

(n = 343)

No	Yes, Undergraduate Students Only	Yes, Graduate Students Only	Yes, Both Graduate and Undergraduate Students
82%	6%	3%	8%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

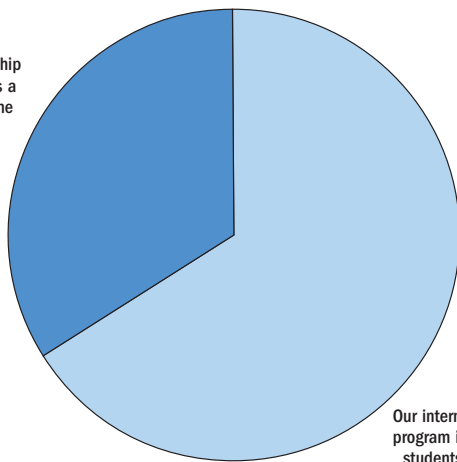
Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 14**

Is your internship program specific to HR?  
(senior HR professional respondents)

(n = 67)

Our internship program is a general one  
34%



Our internship program is for students in human resources  
66%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 100**

If your organization has an internship program, what percentage of the time do graduate interns spend on the following activities?  
(senior HR professional respondents)

(n = 52)

Project management	27%
Overall assistance to functional areas of HR	26%
Administrative/clerical duties	17%
Shadowing	12%
Research	9%
Workforce analytics/HR metrics	5%
Other duties	3%

Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 101**

How valuable would it be for your organization to sponsor a graduate HR internship opportunity? How valuable would it be for your organization to have guidelines for operating a graduate internship program provided by an HR professional society? (senior HR professional respondents)

	n	Not At All Valuable	Not Very Valuable	Neither Valuable Nor Not Valuable	Valuable	Extremely Valuable
Value of sponsoring a graduate HR internship	328	8%	16%	40%	31%	5%
Value of a guide for internships	333	4%	8%	36%	44%	8%

Note: Percentages are row percentages.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

## Qualifications for an Exempt-Level HR Position

All groups were asked about the minimum years of experience that an individual with a graduate degree in HR realistically needed to possess to be hired for an exempt-level HR position. The average minimum number of years of HR experience that senior HR

professionals expected graduate HR students to have was 2.5 years. Senior HR professionals also indicated that they preferred to hire someone whose HR graduate program had a business orientation (58%), as opposed to an HR orientation (31%). Similarly, HR professionals thought that students would be more successful in HR if their programs had a business orientation (66%) as opposed to an HR orientation (27%).

**Table 102**

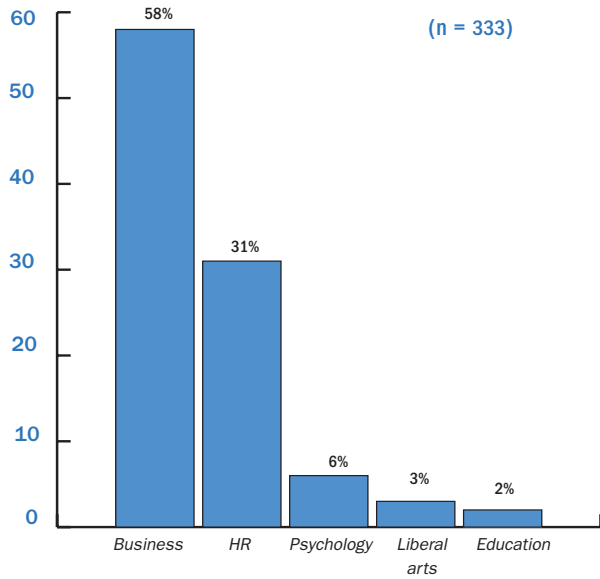
To be hired for an exempt-level HR role, what are the minimum years of HR experience that an individual with a graduate degree should realistically possess? (all respondents)

	Academics (n = 290)	Students (n = 552)	HR Professionals (n = 405)	Senior HR Professionals (n = 337)
Average minimum years	1.6	1.7	2.6	2.5

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 15**

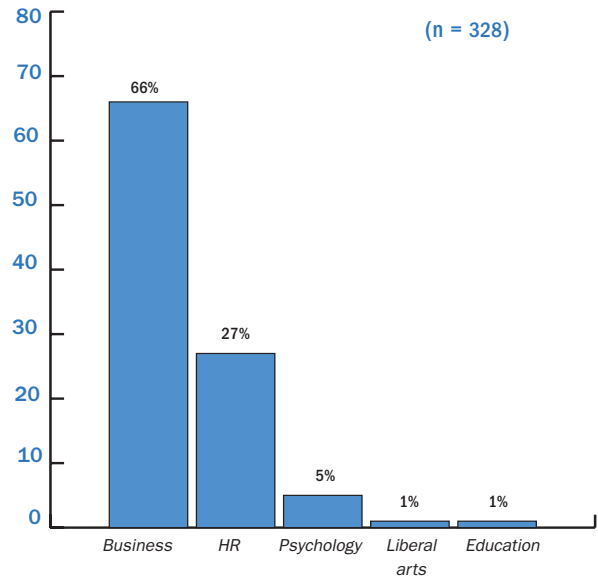
In general, do you prefer to hire someone with a graduate degree related to HR whose degree program has the following orientation (senior HR professional respondents):



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Figure 16**

An HR professional will be most successful after completing a graduate degree related to HR if the degree program had the following orientation (senior HR professional respondents):



Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 103**

Comparison of hiring preferences and expectations of success by degree orientation (senior HR professional respondents):

	n	Business	HR	Psychology	Education	Liberal Arts
Hiring preference in terms of educational program orientation	333	58%	31%	3%	2%	6%
Expected success based on educational program orientation	328	66%	27%	3%	1%	3%

Note: Percentages are row percentages. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

# Demographics: Senior HR Professional Respondents

**Table 104** How many people are employed at your organization? How many people work in your HR department?

	n	Median
Total full-time equivalents (FTEs) in the organization	335	360
Total FTEs in HR in the organization	333	4

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 105** What is the highest degree level you have attained?

(n = 333)

Undergraduate degree	40%
Master's degree (other than MBA)	35%
MBA	17%
Ph.D. or other doctorate	3%
High school	1%
Associate's degree	1%
Law degree	1%
Some college	*
Other	4%

\* Less than 1%  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 106** In what field is your highest degree?

(n = 335)

Business	42%
Human resources	25%
Psychology	8%
Social sciences (not previously listed)	7%
Education	4%
Humanities	4%
Industrial relations	3%
Natural sciences	2%
More than one	2%
Law	1%
Information systems	*
Mathematics or statistics	*
None	*
Other	1%

\* Less than 1%  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 107** How many years have you worked in the HR profession?

(n = 335)

	Median
Number of years of HR experience	17 years

*Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study*

**Table 108** Geographic region:

(n = 334)

Northeast (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont)	23%
North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin)	22%
Southeast (Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia)	22%
Southwest Central (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah)	19%
Pacific West (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming)	14%
Puerto Rico	*

\* Less than 1%

Note: The above regions are based on the SHRM member regions.  
Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 109** Which industry best describes this location's main business?

(n = 335)

Services (profit)	17%
Health	16%
Services (nonprofit)	9%
Educational services	8%
Manufacturing (durable goods-)	8%
Finance	7%
Government	6%
High-tech	6%
Insurance	4%
Wholesale/retail trade	4%
Manufacturing (nondurable goods)	3%
Construction and mining/oil and gas	2%
Consulting	2%
Telecommunications	2%
Transportation	1%
Utilities	1%
Newspaper publishing/broadcasting	1%
Other	3%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 110** Is your organization in the public/government or private sector?

(n = 332)

Public/government sector	22%
Private sector	78%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study

**Table 111** Is your organization a for-profit or a nonprofit organization?

(n = 334)

For-profit organization	65%
Nonprofit organization	35%

Source: SHRM Graduate HR Curriculum Study