

HRM: 38:533:614:01
Sel Problems – Benefits
Fall 2025 – Monday's (4:30 to 7:20pm) – JBL 006
Professor - Vince Sweeney
Mobile: 201.450.1109
E-mail: vs349@smlr.rutgers.edu or vijsweeney@gmail.com

SMLR Learning Objectives: This course is designed to help students attain the following SMLR learning objectives

I) Written & Oral Communication – Communicate effectively at a level and in modes appropriate to an entry level professional.

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English
- Analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights
- Produce quality research papers with proper convention of attribution/citation
- Produce high quality executive summaries
- Make an argument using contemporary and/or historical evidence
- Present ideas and arguments in a logical and effective way

II) Quantitative, Qualitative and Analytical Skills – Apply appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods for research workplace issues.

- Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information
- Apply quantitative methods to analyze data for HR decision making including cost-benefit analyses, ROI, etc. (HRM)
- Apply qualitative methods appropriately, alone and in combination with quantitative methods

Course-Specific Learning Goals: Upon completion of this course students should understand:

1. The role of benefits from the employee and employer perspective.
2. How benefits actually work and are used within an organization.
3. How organizations use benefit programs to further their business strategies.
4. The impact of government, society, tax, law and regulation on benefit practices.
5. The different types of benefit programs and how employers utilize to reach their HR goals.
6. The underlying costs and value of benefit programs.
7. The ways organizations select, deliver, administer and communicate benefits to employees.
8. The interaction and integration of public, government funded programs with employer provided private programs.
9. How organizations operate regarding funding, governance and grievance resolution of benefit programs.
10. The role of employee benefits in a total rewards program.

Texts: There is no text book for this class. The course material is composed of lectures, questions and answers, exercises and class discussions. Other readings may be assigned from time to time. Students will be accountable for such materials on exams.

Course Description:

Employee benefits have become an increasingly large portion of labor costs for employers. Benefits are viewed by most employees as entitlements, and employer efforts to control or reduce costs to remain competitive in global markets have met with stiff resistance by employees, unions and impacted industries (e.g., insurance, health care). Given that setting, it is critical that human resource professionals understand how individual benefits programs work, what strategies and options are available to organizations, and how benefits programs can be integrated into reward systems, human resource programs and, most importantly, the business strategy.

The perspective taken in this course is that of the employer (and HR professional), and the goal is an understanding of how an employer can design, implement and administer a benefits program that serves major employer, employee and societal needs. While much detailed information will be covered, the course goals do not include memorization of detailed statistics, sub clauses of legislation, or similar materials, but rather knowledge of program characteristics, the impact of work force strategy and understanding what programs might be useful/valuable for a specific organization as well as potential (e.g., legal, regulatory, tax) problems that would require further research before implementation.

Additionally, an understanding of the ways organizations integrates mandated programs (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, Worker's Compensation and Unemployment Insurance) with their own benefit programs is important. Similarly, an understanding of options in administration of programs is necessary, as is the nature of employee communication programs useful in enabling employees to help make sure their benefits choices and benefits-related behaviors (e.g., medical plan choices, savings elections) meet their needs. Recent trends in benefits management, including cost controls, cost shifting programs, and other strategies as well as the outsourcing of benefits administration will be covered.

Because of the wide variety of benefits available, a fairly standard classification of programs will be used to organize the course:

1. Pension and Retirement Savings programs
2. Income protection benefits
3. Healthcare programs
4. Paid time off
5. Legally required plans
6. Work/Life benefits

Course Delivery Format:

The course delivery mode is an "in classroom" setting. We will be utilizing this Canvas learning management system to access materials, post lectures, make announcements, post discussion items, communicate, and deliver course assignments. Be sure to check this site regularly as there will be announcements and instructions.

Attendance

Formal attendance will not be taken for this course. But to attain the maximum amount of learning as well as participate in discussions on relevant HR matters, it is anticipated and recommended that students attend class on a regular basis. Participation in class will represent 34% of the final grade. Should issues prevent attendance (illness, personal, etc.), please be sure to contact me.

Examinations:

There are no examinations for this course. Instead, students will be required to submit the following to determine their grade.

A Project Paper. The purpose of the project is to make sure that you cover a benefits topic in depth. The project will require research and the deliverable will be a written report and a Power Point presentation. The report should be written as if you were the Benefits Lead in an organization and you have been asked to "propose a benefit program" (based on your selected topic) for your organization. More information will be available in the Managing Employee Benefits Project Fall 2025 document on Canvas. The Project Paper will represent 33% of the final grade.

A Case Study. The assignment deals with the potential acquisition of one company by another company. You are the lead Benefits person at the acquiring company and have been asked to pull together a report on the benefit strategies, challenges and opportunities for such an acquisition. The assignment ties together many of the benefits topics we will discuss in class, is an example of a real-world exercise in HR's role in corporate initiatives and will test your thinking around HR and benefits as it applies to a business decision. The Case Study will represent 33% of the final grade.

Grading Components:

Project Paper	33%
Case Study	33%
Class Participation	34%

Grading Scale

A = 90 -100
B+ = 88 -89
B = 80- 87
C+ = 78-79
C = 70-77
F = 60-69

Please note, the syllabus is preliminary and subject to change based on circumstances that might present themselves during the course of the semester.

HR 38:533:614: 01
Select Problems - Benefits
Fall 2025
Anticipated Schedule and Subject to Change

Date	Topics	Important Milestones
9/8	Introduction, benefits history, rationale, rewards, strategies, framework and programs	
9/15	The environment for benefits programs, workforce demographics, cost, social and legislative interests	
9/22	Retirement history, Personal Savings, Social Security, Defined Benefit Pension Programs and Pension Funding and Accounting	Project Paper Selection
9/29	Defined Contribution Retirement Programs, and Investment Concepts	
10/6	Profit Sharing and ESOP's	
10/13	401(k) and comparison DB vs. DC	
10/20	Income Protection Programs, insurance terminology, Workers Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Disability Benefits and Life Insurance	
10/27	Healthcare history, why offered by employers, unique challenges, terminology, costs and cost containment initiatives	
11/3	Flexible Benefits, Indemnity, Managed Care, HMOs, PPOs and HDHP. Dental, Drug, Vision and Long-Term Care	
11/10	Paid Time Off	
11/17	Work Life Benefits: Dependent Care, Adoption Assistance, Family Leaves, EAP's, Tuition Reimbursement and other benefits	
11/24	Outsourcing, Vendor Management, Communications and Program Effectiveness	Case Study Pass Out
12/1	What to Expect at the Next level	
12/8	Last Class and Semester Wrap Up	Project Due Case Study Due