

Management & Strategy
**CSR and HRM: Responsible People
Management (Master)**
Winter Semester

Institute:	Institute for Human Capital Management
Course lead:	Dr. Steffen Burkert
Format:	Master seminar; in person; weekly sessions
Credits:	6 ECTS
Examination:	Group presentation (50%) and five short individual assignments (50%; best four count)
Language:	English
Prerequisites:	None
Course material:	Slides, readings, and cases

Course Description & Main Objectives

Sustainability is one of the defining challenges of our time. It shapes consumption, political behavior, mobility, working life, and the future of business. Although management research long paid limited attention to these issues, a substantial literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged in recent decades. This literature has stimulated important debates about organizational governance, leadership, and people management.

This class examines how core HR practices shape responsible people management. It begins with foundational perspectives on organizational responsibility and the business case before applying them to domains such as recruitment, performance management, transparency, employee development, and protection. Across all sessions, students assess who benefits, who may be excluded or harmed, and how discretion, accountability, external pressures, and implementation gaps shape organizational outcomes. Specifically, we address the following questions:

- How does corporate social responsibility translate into responsible people management?
- What is the business case for responsible people management, and how does it affect organizational performance?
- How do responsible people management practices affect employees and broader societal outcomes?
- Under what conditions do responsible HR practices benefit employees, and when may they create exclusion or harm?

Learning Objectives

By the end of the seminar, students should be able to:

- Define responsible people management and distinguish it from compliance-oriented rather than “compliance-only” approaches.
- Analyze the challenges and opportunities associated with responsible practices rather than merely “understand” them.
- Recruitment, pay, and performance management are presented as examples, rather than as an exhaustive list.

(Preliminary) Course Outline

The following outline presents the planned seminar structure. Exact dates and the allocation of presentation topics will be announced via Moodle.

Session	Topic	Focus
1	Introduction: What Is Responsible People Management?	Definitions, levels of responsibility, employees as stakeholders, and the relationship between CSR and HRM.
2	Guiding Frameworks of Responsible People Management	Perspectives on organizational responsibility, institutional pressures, stakeholder interests, and HR governance.
3	Business Case, Authenticity, Hypocrisy, and Decoupling	Why firms adopt responsible HR practices, when these practices create organizational value, and why formal commitments may remain symbolic.
4	Recruitment and Hiring	Employer signals, access to jobs, discrimination and exclusion across the hiring process, and the design of fair selection systems.
5	Pay and Performance Management	How reward systems define value; meritocracy, gender and other inequalities.
6	Formalization, Accountability, and Transparency	Standardized procedures, managerial discretion, pay transparency, audits, review structures, and unintended consequences.
7	Training and Organizational Interventions	Diversity training and other interventions; evidence on what works, implementation conditions, resistance, and symbolic compliance.
8	Employee Protection and Well-Being	Work intensity, performance pressure, mental and physical health, voice, and the protective responsibilities of HRM.
9	Digital HRM and Artificial Intelligence	AI-assisted recruitment and management, efficiency-equity tensions, algorithmic opacity, stakeholder reactions, and governance safeguards.

Teaching Format and Expectations

The seminar combines academic readings, student presentations, case analysis, data-based exercises, and structured discussions. Students are expected to prepare the assigned materials, attend all sessions, participate actively, and connect each topic to the broader questions of responsible people management.

Assessment

1. Group Presentation (50%)

Each group presents one seminar topic. Each group presents one seminar topic. Groups usually consist of two to three students, and topics are allocated based on students' preferences.

2. Individual Assignments (50%)

Students complete five short written assignments; the best four count toward the final assignment grade. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are approximately two pages and are submitted through Moodle. Tasks combine conceptual analysis, critical evaluation of evidence, application to organizational cases, and data-based exercises such as gender-pay-gap analysis.