ILR CAHRS

Cornell's Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies

Targeted Benchmarking on HR Graduate Programme

Benchmark Completed in October 2019

CAHRS Partners have the opportunity to benchmark with other partner companies on HR topics of interest. The benchmarking is typically conducted with 5-7 other CAHRS Partners selected by the company that initiated the request. The CAHRS office identifies the appropriate connections at selected companies and the benchmarking company then schedules 1:1 phone calls to explore their questions.

Examples of recent requests include: Sponsorship Initiatives, Organization Designs and Structures, Diversity Metrics, Talent Management Practices, Competency Models and a variety of HR Policy Questions (i.e. Relocation, Cost of Living, Airline Mile Usage, etc.).

CAHRS partners find this more qualitative approach to benchmarking very valuable for revealing novel insights and practices, as well as for building their network. At the conclusion of the process, the benchmarking company shares an anonymized summary of their findings with the participating companies and CAHRS, who then makes them available so all partners can benefit from the learning.

Key Findings

1. Grad programs are between 2-3 year, with rotations spanning from 6 months to 1.5 years.
2. Majority of the companies benchmarked hire graduates through the internship process and expect these employees to become leaders in the future.
3. There is variation around whether roles are earmarked for graduates or not, but all companies aim to provide the graduates with a breadth of experiences spanning from generalist (junior business partner) to specialist COE roles.
4. Most companies have a central budget for graduates, and some exclude graduates from their headcount as well. The reason for this is to ensure graduates can gain experience in the right roles for their development.
5. In general, there isn't a formalized assessment process for completing the graduate programme. In addition, there is a variation in the depth and breadth of formalized development, but in general grads gain a mix of virtual and F2F experiences, both about broad business/soft skills and more targeted HR skills.

Q1: What does the HR operating model in your company look like?

Company A:

- Moved transactional work to service centres about 20 years ago – Philippines, Hungary, and Costa Rica.
- Change in generalist model 2 years ago – front line leaders no longer have dedicated business partners. There are two COEs (Manager Solutions Centre and Workforce Restructuring) where service centres can escalate questions to.
- 65-70% of questions are answered by service advisors. Remaining questions go to the two COEs or other SME specialists (e.g. payroll).
- There's also a chat feature and the use of Watson technology – a chat box that provides 24/7 service.

Company B:

- Corporate HR owns the global early career rotational programs.
- HR Operations teams support the businesses in particular countries. Employee Relations Managers are client facing with employees, HRBPs are more senior and strategic.
- There are hubs in HR – strategic HR employees sit close to where their business leaders sit / headquarters. Employee-facing HR is localised.
- Rolling out Workday in 2020.

Company C:

- 45-50% sit in headquarters.
- Started transition to shared services a few years ago (Mexico City, Chennai, and Prague). Shared services also act as the frontline to employee questions.
- Employees can look in the internal HR website and/or submit questions which, depending on complexity, are routed to different people. Tier 1 is handled by someone in the service centre, Tier 2+ go to HR Consultants (line solutions team, almost frontline generalist). Some Tier 2 are in the service centres, but most are local with an employee relations background.
- HR Business Partners are the true generalists – work with GMs or above as strategic partners.
- Tier 2 is organized by regions and businesses.

Q1: What does the HR operating model in your company look like (continued)?

Company D:

- Moving work to Manila and starting up in Buenos Aires.
- Business side of HR – each big business segment has an embedded HR leader and team that supports that business. These HR employees report into the business with a dotted line to the CHRO. An HR Manager supports each President for each business unit, reporting to the HR VP.
- Corporate HR – total remuneration, shared services, HRIS, talent and learning, etc.
- Total Rewards (TR) is mostly in the US and TR consultants are assigned clients in the compensation and benefit space – all still local, not yet offshored.
- Starting to move some administrative elements of TR to Manila.
- Starting to migrate shared services transactional work to Manila, same as Mobility. Have had shared services for 20 years but hasn't evolved too much.
- Currently deploying Workday by geographic area.

Company E:

- Majority of HR roles are in the US; some work is international but it's to support international employees rather than offshoring work to support the US.
- HR Business Partners are focused on the executive level, working on more strategic items.
- Centres of Excellence exist – e.g. Learning, Total Rewards.
- Went through a recent transformation moving to Workday.

Company F:

- Main face of HR is through the Service Centres in Krakow, Manila, and Kuala Lumpur – informational, transactional, and advisory support. Some COE work is located here too.
- Operating model split into 4 areas: Business, Country, Operations, and Expertise. Line managers can reach HR through phone, chat, and email (all to HR Operations in the service centres). HR Business Partners support senior leaders (typically GM and above), and are physically located close to the leaders.
- Rolling out Workday in 2020

Q2: What is your HR employee base and how many HR grads do you hire each year?

Company A:

- 5000 HR staff, 10 grads hired each year.
- About 50% is early professional hiring.

Company B:

- 4000 HR employees, 15-30 graduates hired each year.
- 60 graduates in the programme in about 16 countries.

Company C:

- 1850 HR employees.
- 12 interns start in the summer and if successful, will get a full-time offer (usually 11-12 get converted to grads).

Company D:

- More than 1000 HR staff around the globe, hire between 4-6 grads each year.

Company E:

- 3300 HR employees, about 16 graduates hired each year.
- Typically hire 30-40 interns/year with 50% conversion to grads.

Company F:

- 3000 HR employees, about 15-17 graduates hired each year.

Themes: Majority of graduate hires come from interns and the number of grads hired each year relative to the total HR population is between 0.2-0.6%.

Q3: What is the purpose of our graduate hiring and are their hubs the grads are hired into?

Company A:

- Mainly hired into the US, also have hires in 4 other countries.
- Aligned with top strategic HR roles.
- Learn core skills and electives, exposure to senior leadership. Build pipeline for the country they're hired in.

Company B:

- Expected to become future leaders.

Company C:

- Purpose is to empower the HR university talent to achieve more.
- All interns and grads start in headquarters because most of the senior HR leaders are located there and want the grads to have high leadership visibility.
- Not defined as a leadership development program, but more of a career accelerator. Unrealistic to say you're going to be a director after you roll off the program.

Company D:

- Half of the HR leadership team came through the graduate program – point of the program is to identify future leaders in the function.

Company E:

- Focused on developing future leaders and identifying those with the potential to move up in the organisation.
- Mainly hire graduates into the two main locations in the US (Puget Sound and St. Louis).

Company F:

- Purpose of graduate hiring is to build leadership pipeline – expect grads to become the company's future leaders.
- Grads are not hired into hubs, although more grads are hired into locations with the largest concentration of HR employees / senior leaders.

Themes: Most programmes aim to develop future leaders and are primarily hired into largest corporate locations.

Q4: What is the length of the grad programme and length of rotations?

Company A:

- Length of programme: 3 years
- Rotations: 3 one-year rotations

Company B:

- Length of programme: 2 years
- Rotations: 3 eight-month rotations

Company C:

- Length of programme: 3 years
- Rotations: 3 one-year rotations in general
  - In development: 12 months in first role, 8-10 months in another role, 2-4 months international, and then last 12 months is springboard year where you would be placed in a longer term role.

Company D:

- Length of programme: 2 years
- Rotations: 4 six-month rotations

Company E:

- Length of programme: 2 years
- Rotations: 4 six-month rotations
- In the past it used to be a 3 year program (4 six-month rotations and 1 year-long rotation). Found that by the 3rd year, many grads were essentially placed in that position and stayed

  there after the program.

Company F:

- Length of programme: 3 years
- Rotations: Two 18-month rotations, with some flexibility (usually between 12-18 months).

Themes: Programs run between 2-3 years; rotations range broadly from 6 months to 1.5 years.

Q5: Are their international opportunities for the graduates?

Company A:

- Change this year – used to have some opportunities as part of the program but shifting to be more geo-aligned. Roles will stay within their geography with no global rotations. But if something happened to be posted, grads can apply (case-by-case).
- Grads were coming in with an expectation for international roles and it created frustration when they couldn't deliver.

Company B:

- Yes, used to be mandatory but not anymore - based on benchmarking with other companies.
- Now more focused on growing local, flexible, networked, capable, and skilled future HR leaders.

Company C:

- Still working through what this looks like, but thinking 2-4 month international assignment in one of the larger subsidiaries/countries.

Company D:

- Yes, one six-month stint.

Company E:

- 1 international assignment each cycle – typically someone in their second year. 2 per year (very competitive).
- It's a 6 month assignment and the work varies depending on the role. Typically an HR- generalist type of role.
- More geared towards top talent for the programme.

Company F:

- There have been international opportunities in the last few years, typically 1-1.5 years in the service centre locations.
- Recently set up a formalized international rotation process for about 6-8 grads per year to one of our service centres – intent is to gain front line HR skills and/or early leadership opportunity.

Themes: There's a mix of whether graduates receive an international assignment or not.

Q6: Are their cross-business rotations?

Company A:

- Previously whoever had the headcount could take someone in, not anymore. Very clear that they need to be in various HR roles.

Company B:

- Used to be mandatory, but not anymore.
- Feedback has been mixed – either miss out on too much when you leave the function for 8 months, or others find it invaluable.

Company C:

- No

Company D:

- Nothing formal, but sometimes will go to Corporate Strategy & Planning or the Competitor Review team.
- For the most part the programme is very functionally driven – need to be a functional expert before going out of your function.

Company E:

- Not formally and there hasn't been a lot of consistency. While there's a lot of interest, there are also mixed views – one function is paying for the program so typically the function wants their own function's grads to be in their roles.

Company F:

- No

Themes: No cross-business rotations; there is a strong interest in developing graduates within the HR function and gaining a variety of HR experiences.

Q7: What types of roles do your graduates go into?

Company A:

- Currently changing – in the past, managers were asked if there was an opening. Now looking to have a senior leader to have a viewpoint on what roles are important, because every department thinks they're important.
- HR Advisory Board of 3 senior leaders to guide the ship.

Company B:

- ERM role (HR manager), client facing role (ideally site role), specialist, and one more.
- Roles are not earmarked specifically for graduates.
  - Found if someone moves to a new role, resignation, maternity leave, etc.
- After the program, they likely become an ERM (employee HR leader), or go to site and be a site HR leader.

Company C:

- Roles defined by business need first, and then employee preference or developmental area of focus.
- Businesses submit rotations for the following fiscal year; vetted through an advisory board.
- Roles span across all areas of HR (COE as well as line-facing). Want grads to have a line experience as well as COE experience.

Company D:

- Experiences in: being embedded in the business (usually during pay determination process), staff assignment (comp, ben, learning, talent, etc.), an international assignment, and the last one varies.
- Roles are earmarked for graduates – these are evergreen assignments that will be kept in the queue in certain locations that go to graduates.
- There's a standing assignment in Manila.
- When they graduate from the program, they are placed in their first 'real role'.

Company E:

- During the program – rotations are managed through the rotation cycle and grads are aware of the roles that are available.
  - Preferably have roles in Employee Experience (performance support, career growth, etc.), COE, and Jr. HRBP
- Some find their own placement after they graduate from the program – it's based on
  - opportunity.

Company F:

- Based on opportunity / availability in the country.

Themes: Graduates typically gain experience in a mix of generalist and specialist roles. Generalist roles target business partnering and/or employee-facing positions.

Q8: What development is required for the graduate and is there an assessment at the end of the program?

Company A:

- Currently implementing a required 6 month and 1 year assessment for each rotation, in addition to mandatory education and yearly electives.
- Core skills and electives that are specialized/role-based. There's a digital learning platform (gamification) with different bundles of learnings. There are modules specific to each functional team (e.g. ER/IR, Talent, Comp&Ben, etc.). All HR professionals need to go through Essentials training, and then deeper into functional teams.

Company B:

- Coaching and mentoring, skills assessment of the competency model, formal learning curriculum, 3 global seminars (once F2F somewhere in the world).
- Every 2nd year in September: 1 week virtual global seminar.
- 1 week leadership development course in the US.
- Part of the learnings are externally curated.
- Grads who join close together are in a community; everyone gets a buddy from an older group in addition to a formal mentor in the business.
- Looking to get external coaches to coach grads on their individual development plans (exploring an app-based external coaching service).

Company C:

- There's an umbrella of training and events that take place at a higher level, and then more specialized to HR.

Company D:

- Nothing formal at this time – evaluate on experience, likeability, and relationships.

Company E:

- Week-long orientation focused on learning the business, emotional intelligence, and other key skills.
- Moving towards a core development framework – regardless of what functional program
  - you're in, you're in the same core development framework (with a unique functional piece).
- No formalized assessment process before finishing the programme.

Company F:

- Grads must achieve a certain number of competencies at Skill and Knowledge levels before completing the programme. Majority of development comes through on-the-job learning, supplemented with some virtual / classroom learning.
- There is a 'roundtable' assessment at the end of the programme where the grad needs to prove they have met the required competencies.

Themes: Vast differences in formalized training during the graduate program and whether there's an assessment at the end. In general, there's a mix of core 'business skills' and more functional/specialised training.

Q9: How does the budget for graduates work?

Company A:

- There's an HR budget held at the top. Previously they funded the first year/first rotation, but changed to fund all 3 years to be able to drive the roles they have, duration, and location.
- Ability to place grads based on need and give flexibility and control.

Company B:

- A central leader owns the budget for the program.
- When grads travel, most of the time the business covers the cost (corporate card is linked to their business).
- Budget is put back onto the businesses.

Company C:

- Headcount is ringfenced and grads are funded in a central budget.

Company D:

- Paid out of a central fund (CHRO's budget).

Company E:

- All graduates roll up to Talent, so all costs go into one central organisation.
- If the graduate goes international, the host pays.

Company F:

- Paid through the team's cost centre the grad is sitting in (no central budget).

Themes: Most benchmarked companies have a central budget for graduates.

Q10: What is the educational background of graduates?

Company A:

- Masters in HR.

Company B:

- Mainly Masters with a few years of experience (2-4 years).

Company C:

- Masters or MBA
- Now also targeting folks with 3-5 years previous work experience – looking for people to have prior experience to be more impactful and provide more perspective.

Company D:

- Master's degrees.

Company E:

- Hire both undergrad and graduate students.
- Typically some kind of HR related degree; sometimes general business or MBA.

Company F:

- Depends on the country – hire both undergrad and graduate students.
- Grads typically have a Business degree but in some countries (e.g. particularly in Asia), that's
  - not always the case.

Themes: Most companies hire employees with Masters background (however, most companies benchmarked are very US-centric).

Q11: Other info, successes, challenges?

Company A:

- What wasn't working well has been fixed – aligning grads to the right roles.
- Embedding more education and development throughout the program.

Company B:

- Would like to introduce individual development plans to personalize the program further. E.g. if someone would benefit more from a cross-business move than a client-facing role, we would do that.

Company E:

- All grads are paired with an HR executive for mentoring.
- Working well: many high performers, very high thought of and there's lots of interest from teams wanting a graduate because they perform well.
- Challenges: providing the right development at the right time to give the best experience.