

Strategic People Management / Electives / 2025

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FACULTY INFORMATION

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FACULTY BIO

Dr. Madleen Meier-Barthold is an Assistant Professor at Rotterdam School of Management. Her research focuses on the strategic role of HRM in organizations, investigating how HR policies, practices, and leadership shape employee perceptions, decision-making, and organizational outcomes. Her work employs a wide range of advanced quantitative methods from different disciplines. Her work has been recognized by best paper awards of the Academy of Management and the Dutch HRM Network Conference and has appeared in leading journals including *Human Resource Management* and *Organizational Research Methods*. Besides her research and teaching, she is committed to bringing research and practice closer together.

Dr. Maartje E. Schouten is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Organisation and Personnel Management at the Rotterdam School of Management. She holds a doctorate in Management from Erasmus University. Prior to returning to RSM, she worked in the United States at a.o. Iowa State University and Michigan State University. Maartje's research focuses on power, status, influence, and conflict in teams. Her research has been published in internationally recognized outlets such as the *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and *Organization Science*. She is an experienced Negotiation Skills and Human Resource Management educator at both bachelor and graduate level.

Dr. Colin Lee is an Assistant Professor at Rotterdam School of Management, specializing in using computational tools for data extraction and processing to match people to work and develop academic dissemination tools. His PhD explored Big Data in management research, notably using data from 440,000 applicants to predict applicant selection decisions. He has since worked on labor market simulations and studied over- and underqualification, particularly for migrants. Colin has received three Best Paper Awards from the Academy of Management, multiple awards for his work on HAPP (a methodology for evaluating student assignments), and has published in top journals like the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Human Resource Management Review*.

ABSTRACT

People are at the heart of every organisation. They are a key determinant in translating business strategy to business value. Yet effectively managing people remains one of the most complex challenges for leaders at all levels. Aligning people's strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and interests with the business strategy is no easy feat. In most cases, managers and leaders learn this the hard way, even though there are clear evidence-based guidelines to follow and build upon.

This course helps you on your journey of finding a professional, structured, and evidence-based approach to managing people. Whether it concerns your direct colleagues, your direct reports, or your organisation, this course equips you with the strategic insight, interpersonal skills, and analytical tools necessary to navigate today's evolving workplace. Through six interactive sessions, you will explore the interdependence between people management, business strategy, and leadership effectiveness. You will develop critical interpersonal skills for managing difficult conversations and building inclusive cultures, while also learning how data analytics can inform evidence-based decision-making. Whether you are a manager, consultant, or executive, this course will provide you with the frameworks and skills to align people management with organisational success.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Learning areas	Educational Goals
I. Content-related	Upon completion of the course, participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify opportunities for improvement in people management policies and processes.- Understand how changes in work and the management of work affect people management.
II. Skills-related	Participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Analyse how strategic people management drives business performance and organisational success.- Design evidence-based interventions in people management using data and analytics.
III. Attitude-related	Participants will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Take a strategic and evidence-based perspective of the organization, viewing people as a key driver of competitive advantage.

TEACHING METHODS AND WORKLOAD

The course consists of six sessions. Each session will combine discussion of theory with practical application through exercises to build your people management skills. The sessions will be highly interactive, and attendance is required to gain the benefits of this course. The course Canvas page will be used to publish slides decks and to provide feedback on submitted assignments. We will also open a discussion forum on Canvas to keep the conversation going.

Description	Calculation	Total
In-Class sessions:	6 sessions x 3 hours	18 hours
Class Preparation: (average 2 hours for every 1 hour spent in class)	6 sessions x 3 hours x 2 hours	36 hours
Preparation of In-Class Group Assignments		6 hours
Individual Assignment		24 hours
Total Course Hours		Total hours
EC (Number of study credits)	3 EC x 28	84 Total hours

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Course: MBA26 Strategic People Management	Assessment formats		
Educational goals per course (formulated using action verbs (Bloom's Taxonomy))	In-Class Group Assignments	Individual Assignment	Total
After following this course, students will be able to:			
• Identify opportunities for improvement in people management policies and processes.	X	X	
• Understand how changes in work and the management of work affect people management.	X	X	
• Analyse how strategic people management drives business performance and organisational success.	X	X	
• Design evidence-based interventions in people management using data and analytics.	X	X	
• Take a strategic and evidence-based perspective of the organization, viewing people as a key driver of competitive advantage.	X	X	
	In-Class Group Assignments	Individual Assignment	Total
Weighting factor	--	100%	100%
Minimum grade required	Pass/Fail	5.5	5.5
When failed, resit option (Yes/No)	No	Yes	
Form of examination (e.g. MC, Open-book, etc.)	Assignment	Assignment	
Group / Individual assessment (Group/Individual)	Group	Individual	

In order to pass the course, each assessment or deliverable (component grade) with a resit option, needs to be at least 5.5. Components with no resit option bear no minimum grade required, but to pass the overall course, the final grade needs to be at least 5.5.

Grades are rounded according to the rounding provisions included in the Examination Regulations (ER) of the programme, and are expressed with 1 decimal point. Not meeting the minimum grade required for either a component grade or the overall course grade determines a fail for the course. Participants can resit a failed component only once. There is no capping of the grade for a resit examination, unless determined by the faculty. The only exception is when the nature of the failed assignment allows for an improvement effort of the same assignment (capped at 5.5 for that component). For this particular course, the faculty has decided that you will have the opportunity **to improve your individual assignment** (which determines 100% of the final grade) if the minimum grade requirement (5.5) is not met. The maximum grade after the improvement opportunity is capped at 5.5.

Grade penalties for unauthorized late submissions will be automatically imposed. Penalties for unauthorised late submissions range from 10% to 20% deduction from the examination component depending on the hours/days late. Unauthorised late submissions 4 days or longer after the deadline without prior notification and a reasonable explanation for the late submission, will not be accepted.

Attendance is mandatory and a requirement to pass the course. Missing classes and arriving late may result in grading penalties and even a fail for the course.

Fraud, Plagiarism / Self-plagiarism (Appendix B on Code of Conduct, Examination Regulations -ER-)

The Examination Board defines fraud as “the action or negligence of a student because of which it is impossible, entirely, or partially, to form a correct judgment about the knowledge, insight, and skills of them or another student” (ER, 2024-2025). Examples of fraud are cheating, cribbing, plagiarism, freeriding in a team assignment, availability of unauthorized (study) material during a test such as mobile phones, contract cheating/outsourcing/ghost-writing, unauthorized use of generative AI, identity fraud, theft.

Confirmed cases of fraud/plagiarism will lead to (appropriate and proportional) sanctions as defined by the Examination Board in the Rules and Guidelines section of the Examination Regulations (ER). Repetitive cases of fraud/plagiarism lead to expulsion from the programme.

Plagiarism is presenting another person’s work as one’s own. Plagiarism includes any paraphrasing or summarising of the work of another person or group without acknowledgment, including submission of another student’s work as one’s own. Plagiarism frequently involves a failure to acknowledge the quotation of paragraphs, sentences, or even a few phrases written or spoken by someone else.

Using ideas from your own prior work (assignment) without referencing the work in your assignment is considered self-plagiarism.

Participants are required to adhere to the 6 principles outlined in the RSM AI guidelines with regard to the use of Artificial Intelligence Platforms such as ChatGPT and related software/tools. The unauthorised use constitutes violation of plagiarism/ fraud policy. For this particular course, the faculty **embraces the uses of AI**. This means that you are free to use GenAI tools to assist with, for example, brainstorming, structuring your writing, and deepening your understanding of complex concepts. However, it is crucial to maintain the originality of your work. The use of GenAI does not replace the need for original thought and analysis. Your work should reflect your ideas and contributions. We expect that your submissions will allow us to distinguish your thinking from that generated by others, including AI tools. Failure to follow these existing regulations regarding plagiarism will be considered fraud.

For more information about academic integrity and AI please refer to the Programme’s Examination Regulations and RSM AI guidelines documents on the Student Hub.

Assessment / Deliverable:	Individual or group:	(Due) date and hand in location:	% of final grade:
In-Class Group Assignments	Group	TBD	--
Individual Assignment	Individual	TBD	100 %

For all Canvas submissions, please make sure to include the student name and programme name in the title of the file submission, as well as within the document itself (on the cover page).

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK(S) AND READINGS

This course relies solely on articles that can be retrieved from the library.

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

Each session begins with a real-world challenge you might face in your daily work. Together, we will explore scientific insights, share experiences, and engage in hands-on in-class exercises to build practical skills. You will leave each session with key principles and actionable strategies to apply in your own organisation.

The Right People: Finding, Developing, and Retaining Talent

Session 1 – Dr. Madleen Meier-Barthold – Monday, 24 November	
Topics:	The Strategic Importance of People Management for Leaders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People are the most valuable asset of an organisation, yet CEOs frequently cite challenges such as talent shortages, engagement issues, and leadership gaps as key concerns. - How can leaders—beyond HR—strategically manage people to drive performance and long-term success? Session 1: Talent Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem: Organisations struggle to attract, select, and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive and dynamic environment. - Focus: How leaders can build a talent strategy that aligns with business goals. - Key Topics: Recruitment, selection, onboarding, retention strategies. - Skills Learned: Make strategic hiring decisions that align with long-term business goals.
In-class exercises:	Common talent management myths Real-world talent management dilemmas
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBD

Session 2 – Dr. Madleen Meier-Barthold – Tuesday, 25 November	
Topics:	Session 2: Learning, Adaptability & Skill Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem: The pace of change requires employees to continuously develop skills, yet many organisations lack effective learning cultures. - Focus: How leaders can foster adaptability, continuous learning, and self-management within their teams. - Key Topics: Learning & development, reskilling/upskilling, employee autonomy. - Skills Learned: Create an environment that encourages self-directed learning and skill development.
In-class exercises:	Skill Mapping Exercise Case study analysis on the workforce of tomorrow
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TBD

The Right Processes: Managing People Effectively

Session 3 – Dr. Maartje Schouten – Wednesday, 26 November

Topics:	Session 3: Creating an Inclusive Workplace <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Problem: Many organisations struggle to build truly inclusive cultures where diverse perspectives thrive.- Focus: How leaders can design systems and behaviors that promote equity, inclusion, and belonging.- Key Topics: Unconscious bias, psychological safety, inclusive leadership.- Skills Learned: Recognise and mitigate unconscious bias while building an inclusive culture
In-class exercises:	Including Behaviors Training
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- TBD

Session 4 – Dr. Maartje Schouten – Thursday, 27 November

Topics:	Session 4: Managing Issues & Difficult Conversations <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Problem: Poorly handled conflicts and difficult conversations can derail teams and damage performance.- Focus: How leaders can effectively manage workplace tensions while maintaining trust.- Key Topics: Conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, feedback culture.- Skills Learned: Techniques for handling difficult conversations while maintaining trust and engagement
In-class exercises:	Practicing with difficult conversations
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- TBD

The Right Data: Understanding Analytics for Better People Decisions

Session 5 – Dr. Colin Lee – Monday, 1 December

Topics:	Session 5: From Data to Decisions <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Problem: Applying data and analytics seems unrealistic for most people management decisions due to a lack of skills and resources.- Focus: How to leverage metrics and people analytics to drive better decision-making.- Key Topics: People analytics, analytic ascendancy, and the ethics of predicting and prescribing behavior in the workplace.- Skills Learned: Using data-driven approaches to support effective and responsible decision-making.
In-class exercises:	Data-Driven People Decisions: Students analyse their own survey data to describe and predict their behavior. They will then propose strategic interventions and discuss ethical considerations in applying their findings.
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Simbeck, K. (2019). HR analytics and ethics. <i>IBM Journal of Research and Development</i>, 63(4/5), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1147/JRD.2019.2915067

Session 6 – Dr. Colin Lee – Tuesday, 2 December

Topics:	Session 6: Evidence-based People Management in Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Problem: Evidence-based people management sounds good in a classroom setting, but it is challenging to bring to practice.- Focus: Using live data and analytics tools to solve practical workforce challenges.- Key Topics: Hands-on analytics, interpreting HR data, and translating insights into decisions.- Skills Learned: Applying analytical tools to HR data, deriving actionable insights, and making data-driven recommendations.
In-class exercises:	Hands-on analysis of a live case using the Crunchr system to generate insights and recommendations.
Readings:	Required Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- None

ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTION

In-Class Group Assignments (Pass/Fail)

There will be three group assignments directly tied to topics and skills developed in class. Further details will be provided on Canvas and discussed in class.

Individual Assignment (100%) – Reimagining Your Organisation for Strategic People Management

In this written assignment, you will critically analyse your own organisation or team and reimagine it as an ideal organisation from a strategic people management perspective. This assignment consists of two key components:

1. Problem Identification – Diagnose a key people management challenge in your organisation or team, analysing its root causes and impact on business outcomes.
2. Problem Solution – Develop a strategic, evidence-based solution to address this challenge and move your organisation closer to an ideal state.

This assignment is designed to bridge theory and practice, encouraging you to apply course insights to real-world organisational challenges. More detailed instructions, including grading criteria, will be provided on Canvas and discussed in class. The page limit is 4 pages maximum.