

2010

Guide to the Validation of Experience

HRPA | OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR



Human Resources
Professionals
Association
**Office of
the Registrar**



HRPA's Experience Requirement – Validation of Experience

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Executive summary

The overarching objective of HRPA's certification process is to ensure that the HR professionals who are certified by HRPA possess the knowledge and skills in sufficient degree to competently perform important occupational activities. Completion of HRPA's certification process confers the right to use the title 'Certified Human Resources Professional' and the right to use the initials C.H.R.P. or CHRP after one's name in Ontario.

The Human Resources Professionals Association is the regulatory authority for Human Resource Management professionals in Ontario. The experience requirement is established under the statutory authority conferred to the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) pursuant to the *Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990*.

To be certified by HRPA, and earn the right to use the Certified Human Resources Professionals designation, applicants must have accumulated at least three years of demonstrated experience in HR at a professional level. The other requirements for certification by HRPA are a membership requirement, a coursework requirement, a degree requirement¹, and an examination requirement.

The experience requirement was established as an eligibility requirement to ensure that candidates have, at minimum, demonstrated the capability of operating at professional level in an area of Human Resources for sufficient length of time. The length of the experience requirement was set at three years; this length of time has been deemed sufficient to ensure that an individual is capable of operating at a professional level in HR. The three-year experience requirement has been in use at HRPA since the very beginnings of the CHRP designation. The experience requirement was introduced in 1989.

The vast majority of regulated professions in Ontario incorporate some form or experience requirement.

Specific criteria have been established that define what is meant by 'HR experience' and 'professional level.' Determinations as to whether a given candidate's experience meets the established criteria are made by panels constituted from HRPA's Certification Sub-committee. It is demonstrated that these judgments are made with a high degree of consistency.

¹ Effective January 2011

HRPA's Experience Requirement

To be certified by HRP, and earn the right to use the Certified Human Resources Professionals designation, applicants must have accumulated at least three years of demonstrated experience in HR at a professional level. This experience requirement has been in place at HRP since 1989. Over the years, the Board of HRP has reconfirmed the experience requirement on many occasions. As recently as May 2009, the Board of Directors of HRP has reconfirmed that three years of experience in HR at a professional level is a reasonable and necessary requirement for certification by HRP.

Statutory foundation for the experience requirement

The Human Resources Professionals Association is the regulatory authority for Human Resource Management professionals in Ontario. One of the primary roles for regulatory authorities is to ensure the public interest is protected. As a regulatory authority, it is HRP's duty to set the standards necessary to protect Ontarians.

The *Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990*, Section 7(1) delegates to HRP the statutory authority to "set out the criteria for the CHRP designation." Moreover, specifically in regards to the experience requirement, HRP has been granted specific powers by the Government of Ontario.

Section 2(a) of the Act gives HRP the statutory authority to "establish uniform province-wide standards of knowledge, experience and ethics for all persons engaged in the field of human resources management."

Section 4(1)(b) of the Act gives HRP the statutory authority to "prescribe the experience criteria to be met by candidates for registration."

Thus, the Board of HRP is the only body duly authorized to establish experience requirements in relation to the Certified Human Resources Professional designation in Ontario.

The experience requirement

To be certified by HRP, and earn the right to use the Certified Human Resources Professional designation, individuals must have had at least three years of demonstrated experience in HR at a professional level. There are three aspects to HRP's experience requirement: experience must be (1) in HR, (2) at an appropriate level, and (3) for a cumulative duration of three years.

What is professional experience?

The crux of the experience requirement is that the experience must be at the professional level. In determining whether HR experience is at the professional level, the following factors are taken into consideration:

- Independence of actions — relates to the amount of planning, self-direction, decision-making and autonomy involved in the work experience;
- A depth of work requirements — relates to the extent to which work experience requires data analysis and interpretation;

- Level of interaction — relates to the degree to which the individual interacts with a broad spectrum of contacts, including decision-makers; and
- Responsibility for work outcome — relates to accuracy and extent to which the individual is held accountable for his/her work and decisions.

To be clear, professional does not mean supervisory or managerial. Also, it does not matter whether one is working in a specialist position or a generalist position. It does not matter whether one is working as an independent practitioner or as an employee of a company. Professional does not require that one has overall responsibility for the HR function.

Junior levels in a human resources department performing administrative functions are not considered to be at the appropriate level; time spent in these positions will not be credited against the experience requirement.

What is HR experience?

The definition of HR experience is identical to the definition provided in the scope of practice delineated in HRPAs Rules of Professional Conduct.

The *Scope of HR Practice* is the creation and implementation of all policies, practices and processes to effectively organize and manage all human capital resources in the workplace in service of the ultimate goal of enhancing business outcomes. Human Resources Management involves maintaining or changing relations between employees, between employers or between employers and employees.

The *Practice of Human Resources Management* includes, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:

- (1) The development and implementation of human resources policies and procedures;
- (2) Consultation in the area of human resources management;
- (3) Providing advice to clients, managers, and employees in matters pertaining to management of human resources;
- (4) The representation of clients and organizations in proceedings related to human resources management;
- (5) Program development and evaluation in the area of human resources management;
- (6) The supervision of other Human Resources professionals whether registered or non-registered;
- (7) Coaching of employees, managers, and other individuals in matters relating to work and employment;
- (8) The conduct of research in the area of human resources management.
- (9) Teaching in the area of human resources management.

To be credited toward the experience requirement, fifty-one percent or more of an applicant's time must be in human resources as defined above. Beyond this, time will be credited proportionally. For instance, an applicant for whom seventy-five percent (75%) of their time is dedicated to human resources activities as defined above will have their time multiplied by .75. It would take four years of experience in such a position to be equivalent to three years of professional experience in human resources.

The experience must have occurred within the last ten years to count towards the experience requirement and the individual must have worked in HR within the last two years.

Work experience in a line capacity will not be credited towards the experience requirement; for example, a position at a managerial level with human resources responsibilities but not a human resources management position i.e., Manager of Engineering would not be considered as HR experience.

General management work may be considered if the human resources work comprises at least fifty-one percent (51%) and there is no HR department or manager in the workplace where the general management work takes place. The general manager must be the person who has direct responsibility and accountability for the strategy, design, implementation, and co-ordination of one or more HR functional areas for the organization.

Small business owners/operators may gain suitable work experience towards the experience requirement provided that the business is established to provide HR advice. Time spent on business development, supervising staff for example, are not applicable towards the experience criteria. The remainder of the HR work will be prorated accordingly.

Employment lawyers are able to meet the experience requirement. However work experience advising clients or conducting litigation is not eligible. Applied human resources work experience for the law firm or a client, such as conducting labour negotiations or conducting downsizing activities, would be considered. Such activity must comprise a significant part of the applicant's work experience and will be prorated accordingly.

Teaching experience on a fulltime basis enables the applicant to be considered for the experience requirement providing that the courses taught are HRPAA accredited courses.

Work experience gained while serving as a labour union representative or a union employee (such as a Grievance Officer) is not considered to meet the criteria towards the experience requirement unless these activities fall within a position clearly identified as an HR position.

The Experience Requirement is a criterion-referenced decision

The decision as to whether one passes the experience requirement is entirely criterion-referenced. This means that only factor that counts is where applicants stand with respect to the criteria elaborated above. The experience requirement criteria are never adjusted based on the number or proportion of applicants that pass the experience requirement—there are no quotas and there is no targeted pass rate. Indeed, because the criteria are made available to applicants, it is expected that the pass rate will be quite high. This does not mean that the experience requirement is 'too easy,' it means that most individuals who do not meet the experience requirement are aware of this and don't apply for the validation of experience.

The Certification Sub-committee

Determinations with respect to the experience requirement are made by panels constituted by the Chair of the Certification Sub-committee from among the members of the Certification Sub-committee.

The Certification Sub-committee is a standing sub-committee of HRPAA's Professional Regulation and Standards Committee (PRSC). The Sub-committee is responsible for making determinations as to the appropriateness and

adequacy of qualifications of individuals who have applied for accreditation by HRP A in accordance with parameters developed by the Professional Regulation and Standards Committee and approved by the Board. Upon referral of the Registrar, the Certification Sub-committee reviews and makes determinations pertaining to individual applications for the CHRP designation in accordance with the By-laws and Board approved policies.

The Certification Sub-committee consists of approximately ten volunteers with the CHRP designation with representation from the public and private sector. Members have included university instructors, consultants, and HR managers. Typically, members of the Certification Sub-Committee have fifteen or more years of experience in HR and all have their CHRP designation.

The terms of reference for the Certification Sub-committee states that ‘members are appointed for a 2-year term which may be renewed;’ in actuality, most members of the Certification Sub-committee have tenures of ten years or more on the Sub-committee. The long tenure of Sub-committee members is seen to be helpful in keeping the standard consistent over time.

It should be noted that the validation of experience in fulfilment of the three-year experience requirement is not the only activity of the Certification Sub-committee. The Sub-committee also evaluates alternate route applications for equivalency of to the coursework requirement.

For the purpose of the validation of experience in fulfilment of the three-year experience requirement, the Chair of the Certification Sub-committee appoints panels of two from among the members of the Certification Sub-committee.

Timing and sequence of the validation of experience

The validation of experience may occur before or after other requirements with the exception that one must be a member of HRP A to submit an application for the validation of experience. For many, the validation of experience will be the last requirement to be met. For many new entrants to the field, coursework requirements will be completed within the context of a degree program, this would be followed by writing the knowledge exam, and finally the experience requirement. For experienced candidates who choose to pursue certification somewhat later in their career, the validation of experience could be the first requirement to be met (after membership). For these individuals, the sequence may be degree, then experience, followed by the alternate route to coursework requirement, and finally passing the knowledge requirement.

The experience requirement and Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs)

Simply, it does not matter where the experience has occurred; if it meets the criteria elaborated above, it can count towards the experience requirement. Experience in human resources at a professional level is also a component of the alternate routes process.

Application for validation of experience

An application for validation of experience is decided on the merits of the written application and supporting documentation. Accordingly, an applicant must submit all requested information, explanations, and materials supporting the contention that experience requirements have been met.

The application form was designed specifically to give panel members the information that is most relevant to the determinations they are tasked to make (that the experience is in HR, that it is at the appropriate level and the amount of time in that position).

All applicants for the validation of experience must attest that all information provided is accurate and complete. Applications must also have the name of a referee who is a CHRP (preferable) and who is in a position to verify the information provided by the applicant. The member's application is reviewed by staff for completeness before it is forwarded to the Certification Sub-committee for review.

The initiating step in the validation of experience process is for the applicant to fill out the application form. The Validation of Experience application form requires: (1) a chronological resume, (2) job descriptions detailing current and relevant jobs, (3) organizational charts, and (4) job classification codes if applicable. Applicants are also asked to relate how their position(s) compare to the criteria for professional level. Applicants must indicate the proportion of their activities that fall within the area of human resources. Finally, applicants are asked to provide the name of a reference who would be in a position to validate the experience claimed by the applicant.

The first step in the experience validation process is to determine whether the experience is at the standard of being jointly in HR and at the professional level. The second step is to add up the cumulative duration of appropriate experience.

Starting with the candidate's current or most recent position, the validation of experience starts by determining whether the experience is 'HR experience at a professional level.' If the candidate is working in a position that is not a fulltime HR position, it is determined what proportion of this candidate's time is spent in HR. If this proportion is less than 50%, this time will not count. Proportions between 50% and 100% will be used as a multiplier. For instance, if a position is deemed to comprise only 75% HR activities at a professional level, time in that position will be multiplied by .75.

The experience must have occurred within the last ten years to count towards the experience requirement and the individual must have worked in HR within the last two years.

If the credited time for the current position is less than the required three years, the panel will consider the prior position, and so on, up to a maximum of ten years back.

	Experience is not in HR	Experience is in HR
Experience is at the professional level	Experience is at the professional level but not in HR	Experience is in HR and at the professional level
Experience is not at the professional level	Experience is neither in HR nor at the professional level	Experience is in HR but not at the professional level

For those candidates who do not meet the three year requirement, the panel will give the time credited in months (e.g., 18 months credit).

Both panel members must be in agreement as to the determination. In rare cases, it may happen that both panel members do not agree on the determination. In such cases, the materials are forwarded to a second panel. When the panel decides that the experience falls short of the requirement, the case is automatically reviewed by the Chair of the Certification Sub-committee for sign-off. Sometimes the panel will want clarification by the candidate on some point; the request for additional information must also be reviewed and authorized by the Chair of the Sub-committee.

Review by the Certification Sub-committee will result in one of the following outcomes:

- (1) The Certification Sub-committee may defer making a decision pending additional information (this may take the form of written documentation or an interview of the applicant), or
- (2) The Certification Sub-committee may determine that the candidate's experience meets the requirement, or
- (3) The Certification Sub-committee may determine that the candidate's experience falls short of the requirement in some respect, in which case the Committee will provide feedback to the candidate.

Should the candidate's experience be found to fall short of the requirement, the application will be kept on file. In the future, candidates can update their application.

The result of the review is communicated to the applicant by the Registrar of HRP, in writing only, no more than two weeks following the review.

Training of Panel Members

The training process is one of apprenticeship. At first, new members of the Certification Sub-committee sit in on panels of experienced adjudicators. Then these new members are paired with an experienced partner. The

progress of new Certification Sub-committee members is monitored by the Chair of the Sub-committee. For training purposes, unusual cases are often brought up for discussion to the full Sub-committee.

In addition, the Certification Sub-committee maintains a compendium of instructive cases that are used to train new members to the Sub-committee.

Consistency of panel decisions

Clearly, the consistency of panel decisions is of utmost importance. Indeed, a number of aspects of the process are designed to ensure a high degree of consistency in decision-making. One approach to evaluation of consistency is to consider the result of having two panels review the same case independently. It has been found that the consistency of panel decisions is in the range of 95%. Thus, HRPAs' experience requirement handily meets all technical standards of reliability and consistency.

Internal Appeal Process

All decisions of the Certification Sub-committee can be appealed. Appeals should not be construed as a second opinion. Appeals will be considered on the grounds of denial of natural justice or deficiencies in the decision. The fact that the Certification Sub-committee's decision was not the one hoped for is not grounds for appeal.

Appendix A:

Brief history of the experience requirement at HRPA

The present experience requirement and the manner in which it is applied has remained virtually unchanged for twenty years.

Grandfathering

The Personnel Association of Ontario (PAO) Board of Directors approved the implementation of the Human Resources Professional designation (HRP) in February 1989. There was a grandfathering window immediately before the designation was launched. The grandfathering window was from February 15, 1989 to June 1, 1989. Members who met the criteria for Full Membership in PAO were granted the right to be recognized as Human Resources Professionals and to receive the HRP Designation. At that time, “full membership” required a minimum of three years full time experience in the human resources field at a professional and/or supervisory level. This is where the ‘three years HR experience at a professional level’ requirement came in.

Note those who were ‘grandfathered’ into the CHRP did not have to pass any exams nor did they have to undergo any validation of experience. At the time, the experience requirement was embedded in the criteria for full membership. At the time there were no exams, the grandfathering was an exemption from the academic requirement.

The assessment of experience and Peer Review

After June 1, 1989, there were two routes to obtain the designation: (1) the normal route which required completion of the Certificate in Personnel Management (CPM) and three years full time experience in the human resources field at a professional and/or supervisory level, and (2) peer review which required ten years fulltime experience in the human resources field at a professional/supervisory level. The greater amount of experience required for the Peer Review was seen as an equivalency to the academic requirements.

To evaluate whether an individual met the three-year or professional-level HR experience requirement an applicant was required to submit a resume, job descriptions, organization charts and a listing of courses/training/education that showed a broad based knowledge in HR. This process was then called the ‘Assessment of Experience by the Certification Committee,’ and remains virtually unchanged to this day.

Peer review was an alternate route for those individuals that did not have or wished to pursue a CPM. This peer review required ten years fulltime experience in the human resources field at a

professional/supervisory level. It was decided that the peer review option would be offered for a period of 10 years. The idea was that, after 10 years, all candidates for the CHRP designation would be required to have the required academic background.

In a sense, the 10 years experience required for the peer review process could be broken down into two components: 7 years of experience that constituted an equivalency for the CPM and 3 years of professional human resources experience.

The essential difference between the assessment of experience and the peer review was the length of the experience requirement, not the level of experience. The peer review process was not seen as a higher standard than the normal route but a longer standard.

For both assessment of experience (three year requirement) and the Peer Review (ten year requirement) it was required that fifty-one percent of an applicant's time be devoted to human resources activities. Beyond this, time was credited proportionally. For instance, an applicant for whom seventy-five percent (75%) of their time was dedicated to human resources activities would have their time multiplied by .75. It would take four years of experience in such a position to be equivalent to three years of fulltime experience in human resources.

As of February 1990 (which is before the CHRP was created), 2850 members held the HRP designation.

In June 1990, the *Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990*, was passed--the PAO became the HRPAO, and the HRP became the CHRP; the HRPs were converted to CHRPs. In 1991, the CPM (Certificate in Personnel Management) became the CHRM (Certificate in Human Resources Management). This was a transition from 'personnel' to 'human resources;' but the process itself remained unchanged--the CHRP required a certificate based on 8 courses and 3 years experience.

The next significant change was the introduction of the Comprehensive Provincial Exam (CPE) in 1994. The CPE exam was introduced because there were concerns that the various providers of the CHRM certificate were not using a common standard. After the implementation of the CPE, the CHRP required (1) 8 courses, (2) passing the CPE exam, and (3) three years full time experience in the human resources field at a professional and/or supervisory level. Peer review was also an alternative at that time. Those who used the peer review route were not required to do the coursework or to write the CPE. In other words, with the peer review process the only requirement for certification, other than membership, was ten years of HR experience at a professional level.

As per the time frame established 10 years earlier, the peer review process was discontinued after May 31, 1999.

Alternate route

What replaced the peer review process was the alternate route process. The difference between the then new alternate route process and the discontinued peer review process was simply that the alternate route process required passing the CPE. The ten years fulltime experience in the human resources field at a professional/supervisory level requirement remained the same.

More recently

In 2003, the national exams replaced the CPE + assessment of experience, although those who had written the CPE were allowed to complete their certification process by demonstrating three years of professional experience in HR.

The NKE was seen as the equivalent of the CPE and the NPPA was seen as an equivalent for the 3 years of experience. Indeed, the NPPA and the 3 year experience requirement were considered interchangeable for those who had written the CPE. Up until 2005, those who had passed the CPE were only allowed to complete their certification process through the assessment of experience. In 2005, the rules were changed such that those who had passed the CPE would now be allowed to complete their certification process either by writing the NPPA or by having their experience validated by the Certification Sub-committee.

The alternate route was modified to require the passing of both national exams. Logically, the peer review experience requirement should have been reduced to 7 years given that the NPPA was seen as equivalent to 3 years experience; but this was not done to keep things simple.

The experience requirement and the alternate route and are still in use today.

The Certification Sub-committee conducts both assessment of experience and alternate route assessments. Again, the difference is in the length of time and not the level. The level of experience requires (i.e., the professional/supervisory level) is the same for both the assessment of experience and the alternate route.

It is interesting to note that despite all the changes in the certification process, the assessment of experience has been in existence virtually unchanged for 20 years!

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