

HR Glossary

A clean, practical guide to common HR, recruitment, workplace and employability terms - designed for students, early-career learners and small business readers.



Student-friendly

Plain English definitions



Career-ready

Useful for interviews & applications



Modern HR

Recruitment, people and workplace terms

How to use this glossary

This document keeps HR language simple without making it vague. Use it when preparing for interviews, writing LinkedIn posts, reading job descriptions, working on HR projects, or trying to understand workplace processes.



For job applications

Understand terms used in job adverts, interviews and assessment centres.



For HR learning

Build confidence with people-management language and core workplace ideas.



For content writing

Use the definitions as quick prompts for LinkedIn, blogs and student guides.



For SMEs

Explain HR basics in a practical way without overwhelming jargon.

Glossary sections

A-C

D-H

I-P

R-W

Tip

When learning HR, focus on what each term means in practice - not just the textbook definition.

Glossary

A

Absence Management

How an organisation tracks, supports and manages time away from work, including sickness, appointments and leave.

Applicant Tracking System (ATS)

Software used by employers to collect applications, screen CVs, track candidates and manage recruitment stages.

Assessment Centre

A recruitment stage where candidates complete exercises such as group tasks, presentations, case studies and interviews.

Attraction Strategy

The plan an organisation uses to encourage the right people to apply for its roles.

B

Behavioural Interview Question

A question that asks for an example of how you behaved in a previous situation. These are often answered using STAR.

Benefits

Non-salary rewards such as pension contributions, healthcare, discounts, wellbeing support or flexible working options.

C

Candidate Experience

How applicants feel during the hiring process, from the job advert to interviews, feedback and final decisions.

Competency

A skill, behaviour or ability that helps someone perform well in a role.

Compliance

Following employment law, internal policies, data protection rules and workplace standards.

Contract of Employment

A legal agreement setting out the main terms of employment, including pay, hours, duties and notice period.

CV Screening

Reviewing CVs to decide which applicants meet the role requirements and should move to the next stage.

D

Disciplinary Procedure

A formal process used when an employee may have breached workplace rules, standards or expectations.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Workplace practices focused on fairness, representation, accessibility and belonging.

E

Employee Engagement

The level of motivation, commitment and connection employees feel towards their work and organisation.

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Employee Relations

The management of workplace relationships, including communication, conflict, grievances and trust between employees and employers.

Employer Brand

How an organisation is perceived as a place to work by current employees, applicants and the wider market.

F

Flexible Working

Working arrangements that differ from a fixed full-time pattern, such as hybrid working, compressed hours or adjusted start times.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)

A way to measure workload. One full-time role is usually 1.0 FTE, while half-time may be 0.5 FTE.

G

Grievance

A formal complaint or concern raised by an employee about something affecting them at work.

Gross Pay

Pay before deductions such as tax, National Insurance and pension contributions.

H

Human Resource Information System (HRIS)

Software used to store and manage employee information, such as contracts, absence records, payroll data and performance notes.

Human Resources (HR)

The function that manages people-related processes, including recruitment, onboarding, training, policies and employee support.

Hybrid Working

A working pattern where employees split their time between remote work and the workplace.

I

Induction

The early introduction process for new employees, covering systems, policies, team structure and role expectations.

Internal Mobility

When employees move into different roles, departments or career pathways within the same organisation.

J

Job Description

A document explaining what a role involves, including responsibilities, duties and reporting lines.

Glossary

K

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

A measurable target used to assess progress or performance, such as retention rate, response time or task completion.

L

Learning and Development (L&D;)

Training and development activities that help employees build skills, confidence and career progression.

Line Manager

The person directly responsible for supporting and managing an employee day to day.

M

Mentoring

A development relationship where a more experienced person supports someone with learning, confidence and career growth.

N

Net Pay

The amount an employee receives after deductions such as tax, National Insurance and pension contributions.

Notice Period

The amount of time an employee or employer must give before employment ends.

O

Onboarding

The process of helping a new employee settle into the organisation, understand their role and become productive.

Organisational Culture

The shared values, behaviours, attitudes and working style within an organisation.

P

Payroll

The process of calculating and paying employees, including wages, deductions, taxes and pension contributions.

Performance Management

How an organisation sets expectations, reviews progress, supports improvement and recognises performance.

Person Specification

A document describing the skills, experience, knowledge and qualities needed for a role.

Probation Period

An initial period where employer and employee assess whether the role is a good fit.

R

Recruitment

The process of attracting, assessing and hiring people for roles.

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Redundancy

When a role is no longer needed, often because of restructuring, reduced demand or business change.

Reference Check

When an employer contacts a referee to confirm information about a candidate, usually after an offer.

Retention

An organisation's ability to keep employees over time.

S

Shortlisting

Selecting the strongest applicants to progress to the next stage of a recruitment process.

Sickness Absence

Time away from work because of illness or health-related reasons.

Stakeholder

A person or group affected by, involved in or able to influence a decision, project or organisation.

STAR Method

A structure for answering interview questions: Situation, Task, Action and Result.

T

Talent Acquisition

A strategic approach to finding, attracting and hiring people, often linked to long-term workforce needs.

Talent Management

How an organisation develops, supports and retains skilled employees.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

A process used to identify what training employees, teams or organisations need.

Turnover

The rate at which employees leave an organisation and need to be replaced.

W

Workforce Planning

Planning the number of people, skills and roles an organisation needs now and in the future.

Workplace Policy

A document that sets out rules, expectations and procedures for a workplace topic.

Quick revision prompts

Use these prompts to turn the glossary into interview preparation, LinkedIn content or study notes.

1

Explain it simply

Pick 5 terms and explain each one as if you were speaking to a first-year student.

2

Apply it to a workplace

Choose one SME and identify where onboarding, payroll, performance management and retention would appear.

3

Prepare for interviews

Create STAR examples for teamwork, communication, conflict handling and problem-solving.

4

Build content ideas

Turn one glossary term into a short LinkedIn post with a practical student or SME example.

UmayHR

Practical HR, careers and employability content for students and early-career learners.

Use as a glossary, study guide, or content planning resource.