



# A Competency Model for HR Professionals: A Framework for University Education

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## Introduction

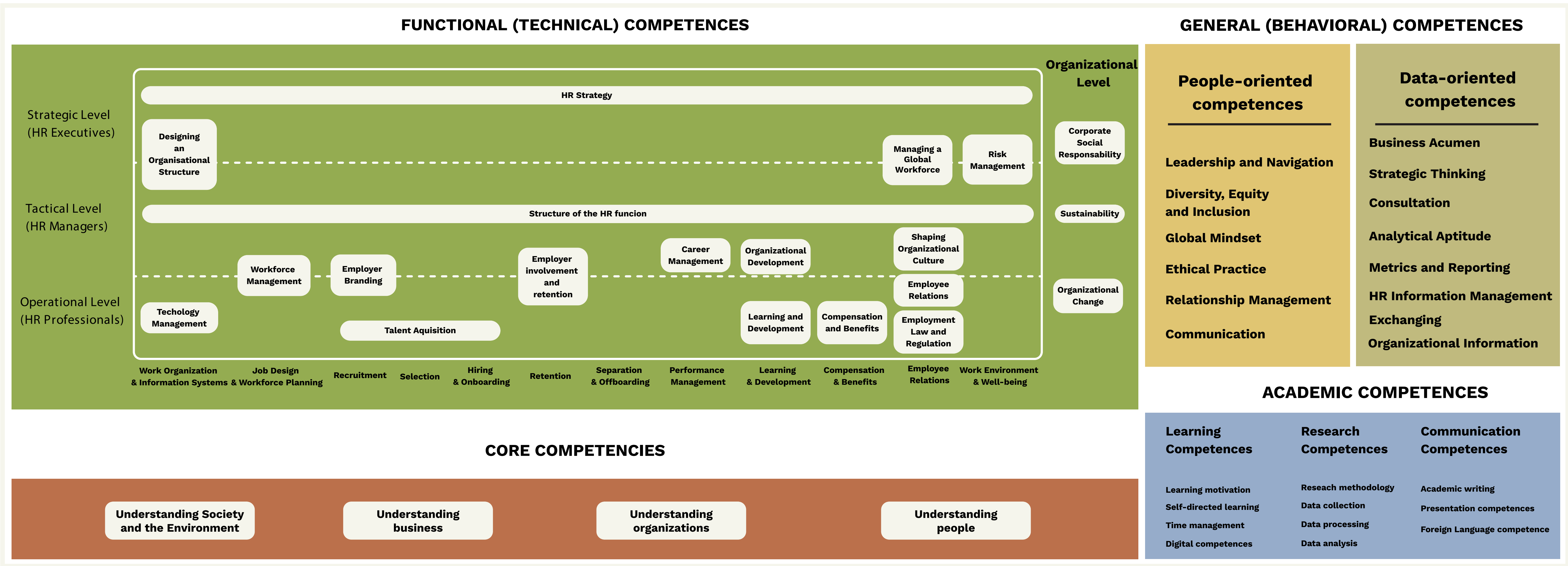
Higher education plays a crucial role in preparing students for professional careers by developing competencies that meet current labor market demands. In the field of Human Resources (HR), several well-established competency frameworks outline the knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected of HR professionals.

Yet a significant disconnect persists between these models and how competencies are embedded in academic programs. Most university curricula do not fully reflect the structure and focus of these frameworks. This creates a need for a more accessible, education-oriented competency model that helps both instructors and students navigate and align learning objectives with the expectations of the HR profession.

## Why a New Model?

There is a widening gap between professional HR competency frameworks and the structure of university curricula. Existing models are often complex, highly practice-oriented, and not easily adaptable to academic contexts. Meanwhile, curriculum guidelines tend to be overly general, offering little support for designing HR-specific educational content.

The proposed model responds to this disconnect by adapting and reorganizing competencies into a structure that is both pedagogically relevant and academically usable. It aims to support curriculum development and help both instructors and students better understand what should be taught and learned throughout HR education.



## Application in Education

This competency model serves as a practical and adaptable tool for Human Resources education at the university level. It provides a structured framework that supports both educators and students in navigating the learning process more purposefully.

### • For educators

- Supports course planning and curriculum alignment
- Links academic content to real-world HR competencies
- Facilitates the formulation of learning outcomes tailored to professional roles

### • For students

- Clarifies expected competencies across different subjects
- Helps set meaningful learning goals and track progress
- Encourages self-directed development and career orientation

The model is adaptable to both undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) programs, offering a coherent structure for continuous competency development throughout the academic journey.

Moreover, its structure is intentionally open and flexible. The model can be expanded using detailed **indicators** and **content elements** from the SHRM and HR-Club frameworks, enabling integration into curriculum design, instructional strategies, and assessment tools. This allows for continuous improvement in response to evolving professional and educational needs.

The model also functions as a **competency map** — a visual and conceptual tool that illustrates how competencies are distributed across organizational levels and HR functional areas. It offers a structured overview of the skills students should acquire and clarifies how different courses contribute to their development.

As such, it supports orientation, curriculum planning, and communication, serving as a shared reference point for instructors, curriculum designers, and students throughout the learning process.

## Competency Model Structure

The proposed model builds on the HR competency frameworks developed by SHRM<sup>1</sup> and HR-Club Romania. While retaining their core content, it reorganizes the competencies into a format that aligns more closely with the structure and logic of higher education.

### • Functional (Technical) Competencies

These 20 HR-specific competencies are classified across three organizational levels: strategic, tactical, and operational. They are mapped to 12 functional areas of Human Resource Management (e.g., recruitment, compensation, performance management).

### • General (Behavioral) Competencies

A set of 13 transversal competencies, grouped into two categories: People-oriented competencies (e.g., communication, leadership, ethical practice) and Data- and process-oriented competencies (e.g., analytics, reporting, strategic thinking)

### • Core Competencies

Four competences, which are the essentials for the effective and professional practice of a given occupation (e.g. understanding business, understanding people)

### • Academic Competencies

The model also includes academic competencies that enhance learning, research, and communication in university contexts.


## Conclusion


By reorganizing existing HR competency frameworks into an education-oriented structure, this model bridges the gap between academic curricula and professional expectations. It promotes a structured, transparent approach to competency-based learning and supports the effective development of future HR professionals.

As a practical and adaptable tool, the model can serve as a valuable resource for institutions seeking to modernize their HR programs, align teaching content with labor market demands, and help students build a coherent, profession-focused learning trajectory.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/credentials/shrm-certification/shrm-bask.pdf>

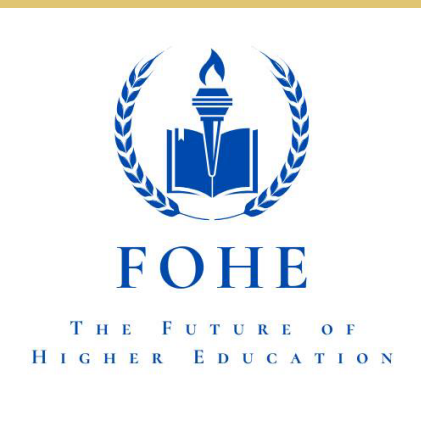
<sup>2</sup> <https://hr-club.ro/ro/modelul-de-competente-in-resurse-umane-hr-club>

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