

GES1000/SS1204: Employment Law in Singapore

Lecturer : A/P Ravi Chandran (course coordinator)

Session : Semester II: 2019/2020

Course Objectives:

The course introduces students to the development of industrial relations and labour laws in Singapore. Students will be able to understand why labour relations are the way they are in Singapore. However, the course is not purely historical. A substantial part of the course is aimed at looking at the current legal problems faced by employees and employers in Singapore. The objective of the course is that at the end of it, students while appreciating the history of industrial relations and labour laws in Singapore would be able to confidently make informed decisions concerning current employment issues without falling into legal pitfalls. This course will be of general relevance to all, as students are either employees or employers.

Course Outline:

The course deals with the rights and obligations of employers and employees and can be divided into 3 main parts.

The first relates to contractual issues, since as between the employer and employee there will be a contract. Issues examined include matters like whether the employee can moonlight or make use of confidential information, who has the right to intellectual property created in the course of work, how termination can be effected, whether there must be a justification for termination and whether redundancy payments must be paid?

The second part relates to statutory obligations of employers. There are various statutes relating to employment in Singapore, such as the Employment Act, CPF Act, Retirement Age Act, Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, Workplace Safety and Health, Employment of Foreign Manpower Act and Work Injury Compensation Act. Without knowing these statutes, many of which carry criminal sanctions for breaches, a business can easily find itself in trouble. Prosecution for breach of these statutes is a very common occurrence.

The third part relates to industrial relations. It looks at the history of industrial relations and discusses what unions can do and cannot do. Though unions in Singapore may have less power in some respects as compared to those in some other countries, they still have a very useful role to play and this role is examined.

Further, the course also looks at methods of dispute resolution such as, mediation. Aside from looking at legal perspectives, some issues will also be discussed from a HR perspective. For instance how would an action on the part of the employer (even though it may be legal) have an implication on employee motivation? In addition, it would be examined how a business can protect itself better in light of the various laws. Some comparative examples would also be examined.

Reading Lists

Basic Reading:

Employment Law in Singapore (Lexis/Nexis) **6th Edition, 2019/20** (older editions are out of date and not appropriate as the law has changed considerably).

Supplementary Reading: Various cases, articles and web based resources will be referred to as the course progresses.

Methods of Assessment

Group Assignment 1: 20%

In Class Quiz: 20%

Individual Class Participation: 20%

Final Examination: 40%

Further Details about Assessment:

As for the group assignment 1, each group would typically consist of 5 students. The group assignment will involve answering highlighted questions in the tutorial. There is no word limit, but marks may be deducted for irrelevant content. There will also be no presentation. The grading rubrics is available on LumiNUS.

This is a “group project” and hence there should be a collaborative effort. If it suspected that there is no collaborative effort (eg: the writing styles or approaches are very obviously different), marks may be deducted. In addition, there should be no free-riders. Hence if a group member/s has not contributed much to the project, please inform the instructor who will deal with it accordingly.

As for class quiz, this relates to weekly short in-class group based quizzes.

As for class participation, this includes answering and asking questions in class. It is very crucial that you participate actively. This would make it more interesting for all. It forces you to think on the spot and also builds your confidence. Your participation will be monitored and taken note of on a weekly basis. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this. However please approach this in a positive and friendly manner. Mere talking for the sake of it would not reflect well at all on the student and marks may be deducted. Similarly unhelpful behaviour such as over domination, aggressiveness or mocking at other students may also result in marks being deducted. Subject to that, for each session, the grading is as follows:

0	Does not participate or contribute in any meaningful way.
0.5	Minimal participation

1	Some participation with some value.
2	Significant participation with good value.

Please note that participation in discussion forums or within groups or sending questions via email (though certainly encouraged) is not counted as class participation.

As for the final examination, it is an open-book examination. You can bring in any relevant material which is not in breach of copyright law. Since it is an open book examination, the emphasis would not be on whether you have memorized certain topics. Rather the emphasis would be on your thinking/reasoning skills. The grading rubrics is available on LumiNUS.

Contacting the Lecturer

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Consultation Hours: You are most welcome to come and see me. You can also use the e-mail me or the IVLE discussion forum. Do not hesitate at all.