COURSE SYLLABUS

Federal Employee Relations Course (Basic) (Self-Paced)

Learn the fundamental principles and policies governing federal employee rights and responsibilities, including performance management, discipline, and leave issues.

> Group classes (Live Online) and onsite training are available for this course. For more information, email onsite@graduateschool.edu or visit: https://www.graduateschool.edu/courses/federal-employee-relations-course-basic-self-paced



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Course Outline

Module 1: Foundation of Employee Relations

- Differentiate the competitive and excepted services and where ER issues arise.
- Navigate governing sources: United States Code, Code of Federal Regulations, and agency rules.
- Apply merit system principles and prohibited personnel practices as the ER framework.
- Identify the roles of OPM, MSPB, EEOC, OSC, FLRA, and grievance systems in ER matters.

Module 2: Basic Workplace Rights in Employee Relations Matters

- Define management rights (set expectations, assign/reassign work, enforce conduct, ensure attendance and safety).
- Explain employee rights (pay, leave, safe and nondiscriminatory workplace, privacy, “obey now—grieve later” limits).
- Use case examples to distinguish proper discipline from protected activity or rights violations.
- Recognize residual rights and how agency policies/CBA terms shape daily practice.

Module 3: Distinguishing Between Conduct and Performance Problems

- Decide conduct vs. performance using standards, elements, and evidence burdens (preponderance vs. substantial).
- Link conduct to rules/standards and performance to critical elements and PIPs.
- Know when Chapter 75 may address performance (e.g., safety, legal violations, self-certification).
- Apply practical guidelines for choosing the correct route and avoiding mitigation pitfalls.

Module 4: The Probationary Period

- Explain length, coverage, and how breaks in service/prior service credit affect probation.
- Follow proper procedures for termination during probation (pre- vs. post-appointment reasons).
- Address absences during probation and their treatment toward completion.
- Apply special rules for supervisory/managerial probation and limited appeal/grievance rights.

Module 5: The Investigation

- Collect and evaluate physical, written, demonstrative, and testimonial evidence.

- Plan interviews and address uncooperative witnesses, credibility issues, and representation.
- Avoid common interview problems and document findings effectively.
- Handle resignations during an ongoing investigation and preserve the record.

Module 6: Adverse Action Principles and Procedures

- Differentiate informal vs. formal discipline and use tables of penalties appropriately.
- Build actions around the charge, nexus, burden of proof, and penalty considerations.
- Provide due process (notice, reply, decision) and manage duty status during actions.
- Time actions correctly and distinguish voluntary from constructive actions.

Module 7: Performance Appraisal and Taking Performance-Based Actions

- Understand performance systems and plan components; evaluate plans for clarity and measurability.
- Apply performance expectations, ratings, and treatment of unsatisfactory performers.
- Address WIGIs, PIPs, and post-PIP options consistent with Chapter 43/432 requirements.
- Document performance evidence that supports defensible actions.

Module 8: Types of Leave and Their Application

- Administer administrative, annual, sick, FMLA, wounded warrior, and LWOP appropriately.
- Address approval/advancement rules, restoration, and restricted sick leave.
- Manage AWOL, leave abuse, and excessive absence using established criteria (e.g., Cook).
- Balance program needs with employee rights and documentation requirements.

Module 9: Medical Issues and Reasonable Accommodation

- Request and evaluate medical documentation under applicable definitions and privacy rules.
- Process reasonable accommodation requests, including undue hardship analysis.
- Differentiate conduct/performance issues from medical inability to perform.
- Make and document medical inability determinations that withstand review.