COURSE SYLLABUS

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

Gain advanced knowledge of federal employee relations to effectively address complex workplace issues and advise management.

> 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-intermediate-self-paced



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Course Outline

Module 1: Basic Workplace Rights and Expectations

- Legal foundation of management's right to assign work and set expectations.
- Key management rights and limitations in directing the workforce.
- Employee rights, including the right to due process in agency actions.
- Core due process procedures supervisors must follow.

Module 2: Coverage Requirements for Disciplinary and Adverse Actions

- What actions are covered (e.g., suspensions, removals, grade/pay reductions, furloughs ≤30 days) and what are not.
- Which employees are covered vs. excluded and why that matters.
- Jurisdictional issues: probationary removals, pre-/post-appointment reasons, and appeal rights.
- When actions are considered voluntary vs. involuntary (e.g., resignations, demotions via reassignment).

Module 3: Approaches to Discipline and Adverse Action

- Determine whether the problem is misconduct or performance—and choose the correct path.
- Principles of discipline: positive vs. negative, progressive discipline, and "just cause."
- When adverse action procedures apply; employee coverage and voluntary/involuntary actions.
- Constructive suspensions/removals and harmful procedural error.

Module 4: Common Problems in Discipline and Adverse Action

- Indefinite suspensions and criminal/off-duty misconduct (ascertainable end, reasonable period).
- Security clearance or license failures; correcting erroneous personnel actions.
- Threats, falsification, insubordination, and misuse of government property/vehicles.
- Leave problems (AWOL, abuse, excessive absence) and medical inability to perform.

Module 5: Proving Disciplinary and Adverse Actions

- Standards of proof (preponderance) and establishing nexus to the efficiency of the service.
- Formulating charges: charges, elements, and specifications; naming and combining charges.
- Selecting penalties using Douglas factors and agency tables of penalties.
- Assessing credibility with Hillen factors.

Module 6: Taking Performance-Based Actions

- Distinguish performance vs. conduct issues and understand procedural differences.
- Chapter 75 vs. Chapter 43 routes; when each applies.
- Performance Improvement Plans (when to issue, components, monitoring, and documentation).
- Within-Grade Increase (WGI) denials and reconsideration basics.

Module 7: Leave Basics

- Federal workday/workweek rules and leave charging basics.
- Annual and sick leave administration, approvals, and required medical documentation.
- FMLA coverage, rights/responsibilities, and related programs (Wounded Warriors, military family, exigency leave).
- LWOP, leave transfer, and other miscellaneous leave categories.

Module 8: Medical Issues and Reasonable Accommodation

- Two paths: address performance/conduct or the medical condition itself.
- Reasonable accommodation—definitions, request formats, and when accommodation is not reasonable.
- Medical documentation rules and confidentiality.
- Disability discrimination theories and how RA interacts with discipline/performance.

Module 9: Grievances, EEO Complaints, and Appeals

- Overview of appeals procedures across MSPB and EEOC (including mixed cases).
- MSPB process steps and key filing timelines.
- Choosing EEOC or MSPB; handling “mixed case” scenarios.
- Special considerations, including contract employees.

Module 10: Federal Sector Arbitration

- Grievance procedures leading to arbitration and how arbitrators are selected.
- Threshold issues of arbitrability and framing the issue/theory of the case.
- Conducting hearings—opening statements and closing briefs.
- Relationship between MSPB decisions and arbitration outcomes.