COURSE SYLLABUS

Standards of Conduct and Government Ethics Course (Self-Paced)

Three hours of self-paced federal ethics across six modules — General Principles, conflicts of interest, gifts, misuse of position, employment restrictions, and the Hatch Act.

> 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/standards-of-conduct-and-government-ethics-self-paced



support@graduateschool.edu •
(888) 744-4723

Course Outline

Module 1

- Introduction to Public Service Ethics & Core Principles (25 min)
- Public service as a public trust
- Where the rules come from, covering the criminal conflict-of-interest statutes, the Standards of Ethical Conduct, the Hatch Act and agency supplemental regulations
- The 14 General Principles
- The appearance standard
- What changed in the 2024 modernization
- Who to contact

Module 2

- Conflicts of Interest & Financial Interests (25 min)
- The criminal conflict-of-interest statute at 18 U.S.C. 208
- Conflicting financial interests
- Impartiality and personal relationships beyond money
- Resolving a conflict through recusal, divestiture, waiver or a blind trust
- Public and confidential financial disclosure

Module 3

- Gifts: From Outside Sources and Between Employees (30 min)
- What makes a prohibited source
- The de minimis exception and the annual aggregate limit
- Common exceptions including widely attended gatherings, nominal promotional items, personal relationships and honorary awards
- Gifts between employees and the rules on superiors and subordinates
- What to do about an inadvertently accepted gift. Includes a sort-the-gift drag-and-drop activity

Module 4

- Misuse of Position and Use of Government Time & Property (20 min)
- Using public office for private gain, endorsement or preferential treatment
- Using nonpublic information for private gain
- Directing subordinates to personal errands
- Personal social media and official title
- Use of government time, equipment and property

Module 5

- Outside Activities, Seeking Employment, and Post-Government Employment (25 min)
- When outside employment or activities conflict with official duties
- Compensated teaching, speaking and writing
- What counts as seeking employment and when disqualification obligations begin
- Post-government restrictions under 18 U.S.C. 207 including the permanent bar, the two-year restriction and senior-official cooling-off periods

Module 6

- Political Activity (the Hatch Act) and Reporting Ethics Concerns (30 min)
- The purpose of the Hatch Act and who enforces it
- Standard versus further-restricted employee categories
- What is generally prohibited and generally permitted
- Reporting waste, fraud, abuse and corruption, and the protections for good-faith disclosures. Includes a permitted-or-prohibited drag-and-drop activity