COURSE SYLLABUS

Federal Employee Relations Course (Basic)

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://sdfm.graduateschool.edu/courses/federal-employee-relations-basic



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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.
- Recognize Schedule Policy/Career (EO 14171) and Schedule G (EO 14317) as new excepted service categories for policy-influencing and policy-advocating positions.

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 appeal/grievance rights as modified by EO 14284 (Civil Service Rule XI).

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, Paid Parental Leave (PPL), FEFFLA, 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 Accommodations

- 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.