

Employee Relations Newsletter: ER Matters

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Introduction



Dear Colleagues

This is the final ER Newsletter of 2021 – where has the year gone!

The ER team have been gradually getting back to working on campus, with some of the team in most days of the week. We do however continue to hold investigations and hearings remotely and this seems to be the most popular approach currently. Despite remote working, 2021 saw an increase in the number of cases and we will be publishing our statistics in our next ER Newsletter in early 2022.

During the last year the team have reviewed and updated the Investigating Officer training and we have now resumed this two-hour training session with positive review and feedback. We continue to run Managing Sickness Absence and Managing Probation and would encourage you to attend these training sessions particularly if you have new staff or if you are managing long or short-term sickness absence issues in your team and would like some support in taking these forward.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who continue to support our work and have undertaken investigations and sat on panels over the last year. I very much appreciated your willingness to voluntarily take on this task and I do not underestimate the amount of time and commitment it takes.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and hope you enjoy the break and festivities. The ER team look forward to continuing to work with you during 2022.

Best wishes

Ann

Ann Kelly
Head of Employee Relations

Meet the Employee Relations (ER) team



We have good news and bad news. Our friend and colleague, Fern Whyte, has been successful in being promoted to an Employee Relations Manager role, that's the good news; the bad news is that it is with UCL and therefore she will sadly be leaving us in the new year. We thank Fern for being a great colleague and for her valuable contributions to the team; we wish her all the best for the future.

Our friend and colleague, Tara Cox, has been successful in being promoted to an Employee Relations Specialist role, outside of Higher Education. Tara will also sadly be leaving us in the new year. We thank Tara for her support and valuable contributions over the last three years; we wish her all the best for the future.

[Visit the ER Contact Us page](#), for information on the ER team and our contact details.

NEW! Resolution Policy and Procedure



Disputes and complaints are an inevitable factor in the workplace. With the introduction of the new Resolution Policy and Procedure, we hope to resolve workplace issues constructively and speedily to help create and sustain a positive working environment for all in the College.

The new Resolution Policy replaces the Grievance Policy and Procedure and aims to minimise the number of formal complaints, through the promotion of Facilitated Conversations. Facilitated Conversations can offer a timely, supportive and proactive approach for resolving workplace issues and are designed to have constructive and lasting outcomes.

The Resolution Policy still includes both informal and formal resolution processes, but the purpose of the new policy is to encourage the use of informal resolution first. In some instances, formal resolution may be the only option where informal processes have not resolved matters or in more serious cases, for example sexual harassment/misconduct.

The key principles of the policy will be to:

- Encourage managers and staff to seek early resolution to issues.
- Encourage open communication between staff, their colleagues and managers so problems can be discussed and, where possible, resolved quickly to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The College will provide the following mechanisms to help resolve issues:

- Facilitated Conversation
- Formal Mediation
- Formal Investigation
- Appeal

The policy will be promoted at Faculty Board and DOM meetings in the coming weeks.

The link to the policy is <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/resolution/>

The ER team will also be measuring the effectiveness of the Resolution Policy and will provide feedback in future ER newsletters.

Update on Training



We are fully booked for the last training sessions of the year and are now taking bookings for our 2022 training dates.

To book a space on one of the sessions detailed below, please email Tara Cox, t.cox@imperial.ac.uk or Hayley Shinkaiye, h.shinkaiye@imperial.ac.uk

- **Managing Probation Effectively Workshop**

This is a 75-minute workshop run by the Employee Relations team. The workshop provides line managers with advice on how to effectively manage probation periods and includes guidance on the benefits of following College process and the repercussions when the process is not followed. This workshop looks at the probation process in depth, highlighting the importance of each stage, i.e. appointment, planning an induction, setting objectives, mid and final probation review meetings and PRDPs, in line with the College Policy and Values.

2022 Dates and Times:

Thursday 27 January 2022	10:00am – 11:15am
Thursday 24 February 2022	10:00am – 11:15am
Thursday 24 March 2022	10:00am – 11:15am
Thursday 28 April 2022	10:00am – 11:15am
Thursday 26 May 2022	10:00am – 11:15am
Thursday 30 June 2022	10:00am – 11:15am

- **Sickness Absence Workshop**

This is a two-hour workshop run by the Employee Relations team and provides line managers with advice on how to manage long and short-term sickness absence within their teams. The workshop includes guidance on the College's Sickness Absence policy and an interactive session where you are able to seek advice on real life scenarios and managing these in line with the Policy and Values.

2022 Dates and Times:

Wednesday 19 January 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday 16 March 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday 18 May 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Wednesday 20 July 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm

- **Investigating Officer Training**

This is a two-hour workshop aimed at managers who may be called upon to undertake the role of an Investigating Officer for grievance or disciplinary investigations. The workshop will provide a step-by-step guide on how to conduct investigations ensuring the investigation process is conducted fairly, consistently and in line with College processes and Values. You will also gain an understanding of the role Employee Relations play in the investigation process which will enable you to lead an investigation confidently and successfully.

2022 Dates and Times:

Thursday 20 January 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday 17 February 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday 17 March 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday 21 April 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday 19 May 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm
Thursday 16 June 2022	10:00am – 12:00pm

You Asked – We Listened

Following on from our successful Investigating Officer training, a suggestion was made as to whether any support and training could be provided on how to Chair a formal hearing. We are pleased to announce that we took that feedback on board and created a Chair/Panel Training Pack to further supplement the Investigating Officer training. Within the pack, we have explained the roles and responsibilities of a Chair and panel member, the hearing process and include a useful template script to further support.

ER and the new College Values

We are excited by the introduction of the new set of College Values and behaviours. We will be working to incorporate them into our individual approaches and also in the details of our working policies, practices and activities as a team.

We are always looking for ways to improve what we do and the new Values have provided us with a framework and the impetus to reflect on the things we do well and how that can filter down into the areas we want to improve.

Further information

Please click <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/about-us/contact-us/employee-relations/> for more information about the ER team.

Please click <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/covid/> for current general HR information.

Please contact the team if you have any questions or ideas. We would really appreciate your feedback as to what you would like to see in future editions.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all the team