

Employee Relations Newsletter: ER Matters

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Introduction



Dear Colleagues

Welcome to our latest Newsletter.

Firstly, I would like to welcome Hayley, Navi and Omaira to the team. I am sure you will get the opportunity to meet with them all in due course if you have not already. Sadly, we also said goodbye to Catherine Watt and we wish her well on her new adventure.

The team have been working from home for well over a year with the occasional visit to campus. We are now looking towards the future with regards to having more of a presence on Campus. It is likely that this will be some form of hybrid working. With that in mind we have included some guidelines for the continued use of Microsoft Teams which I hope you will find useful.

From time to time, we are also required to attend Employment Tribunals as a witness and to give evidence. Included below is some useful information on how Tribunal's work if you are ever asked to attend to give evidence.

With best wishes

Ann

Ann Kelly
Head of Employee Relations

Meet the Employee Relations (ER) team



Please welcome Hayley Shinkaiye, Employee Relations Administrator, Navdeep Deo, our Employee Relations Adviser and Omaira Fernandez, Senior Employee Relations Manager.

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

News you can use!



Employment Tribunals

From time to time, we are required to attend an Employment Tribunal to defend our decisions and to give evidence. The following is a brief overview of what you can expect if we ask you to attend as a witness during a Tribunal.

Complex cases will tend to be heard by a tribunal panel of three people, including a legally qualified employment judge. The two remaining panel members are lay members and are not legally qualified, one of whom is from an employer focused background and the second from an employee or trade union focused background.

Hearings

Currently many hearings are being held remotely via the Tribunal's Services secure Cloud Video Platform (CVP), which is similar to Zoom. If you are a witness for a remote hearing, you will need access to a computer or laptop with a camera, speaker and microphone. Login details will be provided by the Tribunal Services in advance of the hearing date. You will also be provided with an unmarked copy of the paperwork and witness statement. All witness statements are prepared in advance of the hearing.

Giving evidence

If giving evidence remotely, our legal representative will introduce you to the tribunal panel. You will then be sworn in or if you are not religious, asked to affirm.

For physical hearings you will sit at the witness table with an unmarked copy of the documentation in front of you including the witness statement. Your witness statement will form the basis of your evidence. The Tribunal panel normally read the witness statement in private and in advance of the hearing starting. You may be asked questions by the panel based on what they have read and as you give evidence.

As a witness you will also be asked questions by the claimant or their representative.

The prospect of giving evidence may seem daunting and stressful. The expectation is that witnesses give truthful answers to all questions asked. It is quite legitimate to say that you do not know or cannot remember the answer to something if that is the truth. It is quite acceptable to refer to the documentation before answering a question.

In the Pipeline



Values & Behaviours

The ER team are supporting the development and launch of Values & Behaviours across the College and incorporating this within the College Policies and Procedures. This is still a work in progress and details will be shared shortly.

Resolution Policy

Recent research commissioned by ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) found that workplace conflict can cost UK organisations £28.5 billion a year! Anyone involved in workplace conflict will be aware of how distressing, difficult and time consuming it can be. We are currently reviewing our Grievance Policy which we wish to retitle the **Resolution Policy**. We want the focus to be on supporting both employees and managers in resolving conflict within the workplace through informal interventions at an earlier stage of the process, with a focus on solutions rather than blame. This is currently out to consultation with our Trade Unions and further information will be provided soon.

Update on Training



Training sessions will continue to be held remotely via Microsoft Teams. Face to face sessions will be confirmed at a later date depending on any social distancing restrictions that may be in place at the time.

If you are interested in registering for any of the sessions listed below, please contact Tara Cox: t.cox@imperial.ac.uk or Hayley Shinkaiye: h.shinkaiye@imperial.ac.uk

Sickness Absence Workshops – (10:00am – 12:00 noon)

We still have places available on the following dates:

Wednesday 25 August 2021
Thursday 28 October 2021
Thursday 09 December 2021

Investigating Officer Training sessions – (10:00am – 11:30am)

We are pleased to introduce a new, improved format of training which is updated and more interactive that will provide a step-by-step guide on how to conduct investigations, whilst ensuring the investigation process is conducted fairly, consistently and in line with due process.

The next scheduled dates are:

Thursday 16 September 2021
Thursday 21 October 2021
Thursday 18 November 2021
Thursday 16 December 2021

Managing Staff during Probation sessions – (10:00am –11:15am)

We still have places available on the following dates available on:

Thursday 26 August 2021
Thursday 23 September 2021
Thursday 21 October 2021
Thursday 25 November 2021

Report & Support



You may recall in the last edition we touched upon our Report and Support system. This is a relatively new reporting tool providing the means for individuals to report something they have witnessed or experienced. Anyone can use the tool, including staff, students, contractors and visitors to the College.

The Report and Support tool, allows you to disclose unwelcoming behaviours such as bullying, harassment, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, racial discrimination and any other inappropriate behaviours. You can raise matters anonymously or provide your details to be put in contact with someone.

If you do choose to disclose anonymously; the information you provide will remain confidential and this data will be used to monitor issues across the College and helps identify areas where appropriate interventions may be required.

Details can be found here: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/resources/report-and-support/>

MS Teams Etiquette



It certainly looks like Microsoft Teams is here to stay. MS teams has been a useful tool during the pandemic and has allowed a great deal of business continuity whilst working from home. Within the ER team, we have used this device to conduct numerous investigation meetings and hearings. So, we thought that it may be useful to have a quick guide to 'meeting etiquette' when chairing and participating in formal ER meetings.

1. **“Lights, Camera, Action!”**

Some of you may be camera shy and others may be exhibitionists – whatever your preference, it is always good practice to turn on your video. Video meetings allow the ability to meet “face-to face” with the added benefit of facial expressions and ability to plug into non-verbal cues. It also allows us to “put a face to a name” and pick up on any signs if the individual being questioned feels uncomfortable or distressed by the formal process.

2. **“You’re on mute!”**

The most common phrase of 2020-21. It is quite easy to forget to put your mic on however, the mute mic is a useful tool in preventing background noises from individual work environments which can be distracting, causing other colleagues to lose out on hearing any valuable evidence or information during meetings. So, perhaps it is better to hear this dreaded phrase rather than the participants being subjected to the Ring doorbell or washing machine in the background.

3. **“Hands up!”**

At times it can get a little chaotic when all of us enthusiastic and eager employees have plenty to say albeit at the same time. It is best to use the “Raise your hand” feature especially during hearings which can be difficult to manage whilst ensuring everyone has an opportunity to participate and share.

4. **“Are you talking to me?”**

Let’s face it, whilst on MS teams – it is quite easy to become distracted and start focusing on the 68th email that has come through from a member of staff which requires your urgent attention. But realistically – during a formal meeting – you are not going to be reading and

responding to emails whilst in the middle of a formal discussion. Therefore, it is best to put the keyboard and mouse to one side and focus on the issue in hand. It will have your undivided attention which is important to allow a fair process and the other participants will feel like you are listening to what they have to say.

5. **“Ready to engage”**

During formal hearings and meetings, there are difficult conversations to be had which require a degree of seriousness however body language and facial expression is one matter that should not be taken lightly. If you appear engaged and connected – there are less risks of complaints or appeals being raised by individuals going through these formal processes.

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.