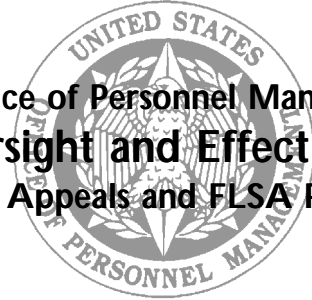


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Washington Oversight Division
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20415

Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [name]

Agency classification: Personnel Management Specialist
GS-201-13

Organization: [city] Oversight Division
Office of Merit Systems Oversight
Office of Merit Systems Oversight
and Effectiveness
Office of Personnel Management
[city and State]

OPM decision: Personnel Management Specialist
GS-201-13

OPM decision number: **C-0201-13-03**

Linda Kazinetz
Classification Appeals Officer

November 7, 2000
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a classification certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, sections 511.605, 511.613, 511.614, as cited in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[appellant]

[servicing personnel officer]

INTRODUCTION

On June 13, 2000, the [city] Oversight Division accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who is employed as a Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-13, at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), [city] Oversight Division, Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness (OMSOE), Office of Merit Systems Oversight. The appellant requested that his position be classified as Lead Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-14. His initial appeal to OPM was denied and his position certified as Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-13 on April 14, 2000.

This is the final administrative decision of the Government, subject to discretionary review only under the conditions and time limits specified in Subpart B of Part 511 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In deciding this appeal, we considered information obtained from the following sources:

1. The appellant's letter of appeal (with attachments) dated June 5, 2000.
2. The information submitted by the OPM servicing human resources management office on June 29, 2000.
3. A desk audit of the appellant's position on August 3, 2000, and an interview with both the first-level and second-level supervisors on August 3, 2000, and August 15, 2000, respectively.
4. Additional written materials and work samples furnished by the appellant during the on-site audit.

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant's duties and responsibilities are described in Position Description Number 6A06028001, which was classified as Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-13 on March 20, 1996.

The [city] Oversight Division is responsible for human resources management oversight in the [city] metropolitan area. The appellant performs a range of duties in support of this major mission, with regularly assigned responsibilities in two major areas as described below.

- The appellant serves as a team leader or participates as a team member in broad-scale evaluations of human resources management programs of a department, agency, or major organizational component of an agency. As a team leader, the appellant is responsible for designing the evaluation methodology that will accomplish the objectives of the review, providing technical guidance to team members, and assessing

team performance to provide input to the immediate supervisor. This work consumes about 75 percent of the appellant's time.

- The appellant leads or participates as a member of a team charged with conducting special studies of distinct human resources management programs or segments of human resources management programs on a Governmentwide basis. In a leadership role, this work involves developing the study plan, establishing the general parameters for the review, and providing advice and guidance to the on-site team. The appellant also compiles information collected from each on-site review, and develops the final report. This work consumes about 25 percent of the appellant's time.

In addition to the two major duties described above, the appellant may occasionally perform other duties such as: (1) mentoring other less-experienced evaluators to include providing technical guidance and providing on-the-job training; (2) identifying best practices that contribute to successful human resources management programs by analyzing the full range of factors and packaging that information for use by other evaluators and agencies to improve Governmentwide human resources management policy and programs; and (3) participating in OMSOE program planning and development to include technical, administrative, and managerial issues, as well as advocating positions on legislative proposals related to the OPM oversight program.

The appellant's position description is accurate and adequate for classification purposes. Both the appellant and his supervisor certified the accuracy of the description on June 20, 2000.

STANDARDS REFERENCED

1. U.S. OPM Position Classification Standard (PCS) for the Personnel Management Series, GS-201, dated June 1976.
2. U.S. OPM General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide, dated April 1998.
3. U.S. OPM Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide, dated August 1990.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

Series

The appellant has not questioned the series allocation of his position. The Personnel Management Series, GS-201, includes positions that either: (1) direct or assist in directing a human resources management program; (2) advise on, supervise, perform, or provide staff leadership and technical guidance for work that involves two or more specialized human resources functions; or (3) perform specialized human resources management work not covered by other series in the GS-200 group. The appellant's duties involve program

evaluation assignments that involve advising on operating human resources management work in a variety of human resources disciplines. This work is not covered by a more specific occupation in the GS-200 group and is, therefore, allocated to the Personnel Management Series, GS-201.

Title

The appellant's position is correctly titled **Personnel Management Specialist**. This is the prescribed title for nonsupervisory positions covered by the GS-201 series that involve work not covered by other specific series in the GS-200 group.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The agency has evaluated the appellant's position against the directly applicable criteria in Part II of the standard for the Personnel Management Series, GS-201. However, the appellant contends that two different standards, the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG) and the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide (AAGEG) are more appropriate for evaluating his position.

General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide

The appellant contends that he spends the majority of his time functioning in the role of a team leader over three to 15 other personnel management specialists. He further contends that he makes team assignments, stays abreast of the status and progress of work being performed, sets deadlines and work requirements, provides specific instructions for completing work, reviews and edits written work products, reports on team performance to the supervisor, and represents the team in obtaining needed supplies and resources. The appellant also stated that he is the supervisor of record during site visits that are located away from the office, takes any action required on employee conduct or performance, or approves emergency leave when required. He also indicated that he nominates or recommends team members for awards and recommends action on poor performance.

The appellant's duties as a team leader are responsible and demanding, but they must be carefully examined to determine whether they are appropriately classified under the GSLGEG. There are many different types of leader positions in the Federal workplace today, and the distinction between team leaders classifiable under the GSLGEG and other types of leadership positions is not always clear. To understand the intended coverage of the GSLGEG, the guide must be read and construed as a whole. The *Exclusions*, *Notes to Users*, and the *Occupational Information* sections of the guide jointly circumscribe its intended coverage. The guidance in these sections of the GSLGEG indicates that the guide is intended to be used to grade team leader positions that evolved with the Governmentwide effort to reduce the number of supervisory positions. Thus, team leaders covered by the GSLGEG function as "alternatives to traditional supervision," and support delayering and reductions in supervisory levels.

Accordingly, it can reasonably be concluded that the GSLGEG is applicable to positions that have responsibility for a permanently assigned group of employees for which both technical and administrative leadership responsibilities are performed on a continuing basis. The GSLGEG specifically excludes positions that have functional “project” responsibility but do not lead other workers on a continuing basis.

While the appellant may spend a considerable amount of time performing in a leadership role vis-a-vis other employees, his work in this role is clearly project driven. The appellant does not have continuing responsibility for leading a permanently assigned group of employees. Rather, he leads ad hoc teams that are formed to conduct a specific human resources management evaluation or study. Decisions as to the constitution of the teams are made when teams are formed with consideration being given to such factors as availability of staff, interest in the assignment, past experience, and complexity of the assignment. While the appellant alleges that he “serves as the supervisor of record during site visits,” both his first- and second-line supervisor refuted this claim. Further, the position description of record (certified as accurate) offers no support for this allegation. The appellant has no assigned supervisory duties, and he is required to refer performance or conduct issues that arise on site back to the first-level supervisor. Thus, while the appellant may perform some duties similar to those of a team leader, these duties do not meet the criteria for classification under the GSLGEG. In fact, the team leader duties performed by the appellant are acknowledged and fully credited in the grade level criteria for GS-12 and GS-13 level program evaluation work in the GS-201 standard.

Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide

The appellant contends that his duties that involve conducting special studies and preparing for Agency Focused Reviews are analytical in nature and cannot be adequately evaluated under the standard for the Personnel Management Series, GS-201. He believes these duties are better evaluated using the Administrative Analysis Grade Evaluation Guide (AAGEG) because the “major competency required by the evaluator is not the technical knowledge of human resources management but is, in fact, the analytical and evaluative concepts, methods, and techniques of program analysis”

There is no question that the appellant’s duties require a high level of analytical ability, but this does not justify evaluating the position under the AAGEG. By definition, all administrative positions require a high level of analytical ability. However, the position description of record indicates that the paramount knowledge requirement for the appellant’s duties is a high degree of technical competence in the basic personnel functions and insight on the integration of these functions into an effective human resources management program. The AAGEG excludes positions that involve specialized administrative duties and responsibilities which are more thoroughly covered by criteria in specific occupational standards. Such positions must be evaluated through reference to the appropriate subject matter standard. Accordingly, the appellant’s position, which involves specialized human

resources management work that is directly covered by the Personnel Management Series standard, GS-201, is excluded from coverage of the AAGEG.

Personnel Management Series, GS-201

The appellant's position is directly covered by Part II of the GS-201 standard. The grade-level portions of this standard describe separately, at each grade, the characteristics of each of three different kinds of positions in terms of the kind of function and work situation. The functions described are program operations, program evaluation, and program development. Program evaluation positions involve the review and evaluation of the work of operating human resources offices to determine the quality of the human resources management program. The appellant's duties clearly fall within this functional category.

The standard distinguishes between grade levels of program evaluation work on the basis of the complexity and difficulty of the technical human resources problems encountered, nature of supervision received, and personal contacts. Each of these factors is addressed below.

Complexity and Difficulty of Technical Problems

At the GS-12 level, program evaluation work is characterized by the independent evaluation of human resources management programs in terms of the degree to which they are achieving basic program goals and objectives. At this level, program evaluations are comprehensive, covering such program areas as employee development, performance rating and incentives, recruitment, placement, promotion, wage administration, and employee-management relations and communications. At the GS-12 level, the employee may function as a team leader, an individual worker, or a team member with relative independence from supervision, sometimes performing in all three capacities over a reasonable period of time. At this level, the emphasis is on scope or breadth of knowledge about all aspects of human resources management, rather than intensity or depth of knowledge about any one specialized function.

At the GS-13 level, program evaluation work is characterized by: (1) responsibility for evaluating the program of an entire department or agency or a major primary organizational segment thereof, which is carried out by many subsidiary human resources management offices widely dispersed throughout the agency; (2) responsibility for staff-level advice to operating human resources offices or to other program evaluation staff members in the development of solutions to especially complex problems of program improvement in one or more specialized human resources management fields and/or (3) responsibility for other kinds of human resources management work of equivalent complexity or responsibility, e.g., as an expert evaluator assigned to identify, evaluate, and recommend solutions to human resources program problems of an especially complex, difficult, or sensitive nature in a number of different departments and agencies. Program evaluation of an entire department or a major segment of a department [(1) above] is distinguished from GS-12 evaluation work by: (1) the need to generalize or draw inferences from evaluations of the human resources programs of many subordinate organizations, (2) the demand

for an unusual degree of insight into the relationship between program policies and guides at their point of origin and evaluation findings at subordinate levels, and (3) the increased scope and impact of findings and recommendations. The expert evaluator type of position at this level [(3) above] is characterized by the application of a very high level of skill in evaluation techniques and a very broad knowledge of human resources management to especially complex problems. Typically, individual assignments of this kind are of considerable significance to the management of a major Government department and, over a period of time, the individual assignments cover problems of this level in a number of different departments and agencies.

The majority of the appellant's time is spent independently leading or serving as a member of a team responsible for evaluating the human resources management program for an entire department or agency. This work matches the criteria in paragraph (1) above. A recent example of this type of Agency-Focused Review is the evaluation of the National Institute of Health (NIH) conducted between August 1998 and June 1999. Corresponding to the GS-13 criteria, this review required the appellant to develop an evaluation plan establishing the coverage and focus of the review, determine the methodology to be used, identify sites to be visited, establish the staff requirements and number of teams needed to conduct the review, and prepare guidance for the evaluation teams. The review covered five broad human resources management areas: staffing; workforce management, including work and family programs; human resources management accountability; delivery of human resources services; and administration of Intergovernmental Personnel Act mobility assignments. Six teams were formed to gather information from 15 different subordinate organizations, each having delegated human resources management authority and its own human resources office. Further corresponding to the distinguishing GS-13 criteria, the appellant was required to obtain input from the various teams, analyze and consolidate the information, and prepare the overall report, drawing inferences, and reaching conclusions about the overall NIH human resources management program. The appellant developed a report with detailed findings and both required and recommended actions to improve the overall human resources management program. The report reached conclusions about the overall impact of the human resources management program on the merit systems principles and on mission accomplishment. In terms of coverage, complexity, scope, and impact, the program evaluation work performed by the appellant, as evidenced by this example, is a good match to the GS-13 criteria. In no way does the work exceed the GS-13 level.

Likewise, the appellant's work with respect to the special HR policy studies is equivalent to the GS-13 level criteria in paragraph (3) above. The work is characterized by problems where the solutions are expected to be particularly controversial. A recent example of this type of assignment involved a study designed to assess the state of workers' compensation programs at Federal installations. The review focused on program effectiveness, particularly in terms of returning employees to work and agency efforts to control program costs. The appellant served as the project director for this study. The scope of the study was extremely broad, covering 155 different installations in 16 different agencies. The factfinding work was conducted by 155 two-to four-person teams from six OPM regions. The appellant developed the study criteria, established the parameters for the review, and provided advice and guidance for the on-site teams. He gathered the information from each on-site review, analyzed the data, formulated conclusions

from the data, and prepared the final report with recommendations for improvement of the Governmentwide workers' compensation program administered by the Department of Labor.

In light of the above analysis addressing both types of assignments, *Complexity and Difficulty of Technical Problems* is evaluated at the GS-13 level.

Supervision Received

At the GS-13 level, program evaluation work is subject to essentially the same kind of supervision as GS-12 level positions--very general in nature. At the GS-12 level, the employee functions as a team leader or an individual worker assigned to conduct program evaluations of specific organizations. Instructions are given as to time schedules and generally as to program area emphasis desired. Within these limits, the employee plans and schedules the work independently at the site, adapting general policy instructions to the specific needs of the local situation. In most cases, the employee is expected to reach and report independent conclusions to the top management of the organization as to the degree to which personnel program goals and objectives are being met. Where these tentative findings indicate major problems in program operations, the employee discusses them with the supervisor prior to reporting to management. Final written reports are reviewed for conformance with policy, adequacy of support for any suggestions or recommendations made, and effectiveness of presentation.

The position description of record indicates that the appellant works under general supervision comparable to that described in the standard for GS-12 and GS-13 positions, and the desk audit with the appellant confirmed the general nature of supervision received. The Operations Supervisor sets program goals, priorities, and resources available. For Agency Focused Reviews, the general areas of coverage are pre-determined by an internal OPM management body, the Business Council, and the appellant's reviews must focus on these areas. However, within these general guidelines, the appellant is expected to tailor the evaluation plan to the agency based on a preliminary review of data. When the plan has been finalized, the appellant is responsible for planning and carrying out assignments, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with others, and interpreting policy on his own initiative. While on site, the appellant is responsible for planning, scheduling, and completing the work independently in accordance with general policy guidance, but he is required to consult with the supervisor on whether to expand the scope of the study. The appellant is charged with developing findings and recommendations while on site and reporting them to the top management of the agency being reviewed. Findings that indicate major problems in program operations must be discussed with the Operations Supervisor before they are presented to the agency. Reports include recommendations and required actions to improve the overall human resources management program. Reports are reviewed in draft form by the Operations Supervisor and three additional levels of management. The review focuses on adequacy of corroborating information to support findings, consistency of data, proper references, overall tone, and compatibility of the report with OMSOE goals.

When the appellant serves as project director for a nationwide special study, he develops a plan of action that sets out the methodology for the study. In developing the study proposal, he is subject

to the guidance on broad goals and objectives established by the Business Council. The level of responsibility and authority afforded the appellant and the nature and purpose of the review given completed work products is similar to that described for the Agency Focused Reviews.

In light of the above analysis, *Supervision Received* is consistent with the GS-12 and GS-13 criteria described above.

Personal Contacts

At the GS-13 level, personal contacts are similar in nature and purpose to those described for GS-11 and GS-12 level positions. At all three levels, personal contacts are important elements of the work. The contacts occur to obtain information about the facts as well as the basis for management decisions made. The appellant also engages in contacts for the purpose of convincing operating human resources management officials to reconsider their own decisions in light of evaluation findings. At the GS-13 level, the greater scope and impact of the work serve to enhance the importance of personal contacts.

The appellant's contacts include a wide range of program and management officials as well as other human resources management officials. He engages in contacts to gather and provide in-depth information and more importantly to influence human resources management and line management officials to implement necessary program, practice, and/or policy changes. As at the GS-13 level of the standard, the broad scope and impact of the appellant's evaluation reviews and policy studies make personal contacts a key element of his position. Thus, *Personal Contacts* is credited at the GS-13 level.

Since *Complexity and Difficulty of Technical Problems* and *Personal Contacts* are evaluated at the GS-13 level, and *Supervision Received* is also consistent with the GS-12/13 criteria, the appellant's position is considered properly graded at GS-13.

The appellant contends that the classification principle of "impact of the person on the job" should be considered in rendering a final decision on the grade level worth of his position. He specifically mentioned his responsibility for serving, on a collateral basis, as the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Merit Systems Oversight Officer and cites this responsibility as an indication of how his skills and knowledge have affected the position. He also mentioned his responsibility for serving as the President of the OPM Chapter of the Federal Managers Association. Finally, he claimed his responsibility for mentoring and providing on-the-job training to new evaluators represent indications of how his skills and knowledge have affected the position.

According to the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards published by OPM, the impact of the person on the job should be considered when the unique capabilities, experience, or knowledge a particular employee brings to the job affects the work performed and, therefore, the classification of the position. More specifically, this situation exists when the performance of the incumbent broadens the nature or scope and effect of the work being performed. For example, exceptional ability of the employee may lead to the attraction of

especially difficult work assignments, unusual freedom from supervision, special authority to speak for and commit the agency, continuing contribution to organizational efficiency and economy, recognition as an "expert" sought by peers, or similar considerations. Such changes affect the difficulty of work or the responsibility and authority given the employee and can be recognized in the position classification decision. Job changes resulting from the individual impact of an employee should be recorded to distinguish the position from descriptions of other positions.

The appellant's responsibility for serving as the IPA Merit Systems Oversight Officer involves carrying out OPM's role in ensuring that State and local government recipients of Federal grants establish and maintain a merit system of personnel administration for employees managing the grant programs. The appellant contends that his knowledge of State and local government programs has changed his position to the extent that he is able to bring a broader perspective to the Agency Focused Reviews. However, both the appellant and his supervisor indicated that this work involves a very small portion of the appellant's time and is not a significant part of his position. Nor has this work affected the actual nature and scope of the primary work being performed. Thus, it has no impact on the classification of the position. Likewise, the appellant's work as President of the OPM Chapter of the Federal Managers Association is a collateral assignment that has not impacted the nature or scope of the position. The mentoring duties performed by the appellant are no different from the kind of on-the-job training that is often required of senior administrative employees. This responsibility is a function of all GS-13 personnel management specialists who serve as expert evaluators in the [city] Oversight Division and thus, it does not set the appellant apart from other GS-13 evaluators in terms of the capabilities, skills, and knowledge he brings to the position. In summary, none of the additional duties identified by the appellant has affected the complexity of the position or its classification.

DECISION

The appealed position is properly classified as Personnel Management Specialist, GS-201-13.

This decision constitutes a classification certificated issued under the authority of section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This decision is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government.