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

Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

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

Appellant:	[the appellant]
Agency classification:	Office Automation Clerk GS-326-4
Organization:	General Safety Office Adjutant General's Department [a large state] Army National Guard [city, state]
OPM decision:	Secretary (Office Automation) GS-318-5
OPM decision number:	C-0318-05-07

/s/
Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

4/20/98
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a 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 conditions and time limits specified in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

[the appellant

Human Resource Officer
Adjutant General's Department
[state]National Guard
[city, state]

Director for Human Resources
National Guard Bureau
4501 Ford Avenue
Alexandria, VA 22302-1454

Introduction

On December 18, 1997, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant], an employee in the General Safety Office, [state]Army National Guard, [location and state]. [The appellant] is currently employed as an Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-4. She believes her position should be classified as Secretary (OA), GS-318-5. The appeal has been accepted and decided under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

To help decide the appeal, an Oversight Division representative conducted telephone audits with the appellant and her immediate supervisor. In reaching our classification decision, we have reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description 70027000. Both the appellant and her supervisor believe the appellant's current position description does not adequately describe the duties and responsibilities of the position.

General issues

In her appeal, the appellant raises several issues that cannot be resolved through the position classification appeal process. The questions regarding National Guard's response to her requests under the Freedom of Information Act must be addressed to appropriate officials within the National Guard. Questions concerning the agency's procedures for filling positions should be directed to the appellant's servicing personnel office.

Position information

The appellant is chiefly responsible for providing administrative support and clerical services to the Safety Occupational Health Manager, her immediate supervisor, and a safety specialist in her immediate office. The appellant performs a wide variety of office work including the following duties:

- receives telephone calls and visitors, deciding which of those can be handled personally or referring them to appropriate staff or other offices;
- maintains the supervisor's calendar and the office's time and attendance records;
- reviews all outgoing correspondence for the supervisor's signature for proper format, compliance with procedural instructions, typographical accuracy, and necessary attachments;
- maintains office files and manuals, etc., and manages the safety videotape library;
- distributes mail and transmits electronic mail;
- makes travel arrangements and prepares travel vouchers;
- types a variety of documents and reports from drafts;

- prepares agenda for quarterly meetings of the Safety Council Committee and records and distributes minutes of the meetings;

- compiles statistical data on accidents, identifies trends, and provides information on the correct safety rules and regulations to be used to avoid various accidents in the future; and

- prepares safety bulletins based on information gathered from office files, other safety organizations, and safety and occupational health books.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant's duties fall within the type of work covered by the GS-318 Secretary Series, which includes positions that assist one individual, and in some cases the subordinate staff of that individual, by performing general office work auxiliary to the work of the organization. As required by the GS-318 classification standard, the appellant functions as the principal administrative and clerical support position in her organization, operating independently of any other such position in the office. Similar to the description for GS-318 positions, the appellant's duties require knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and requirements, various office skills, and the ability to apply such skills in a way that increases the effectiveness of others. The appealed position also requires a general knowledge of programs and organizational functions and procedures of the safety and occupational health office, but the duties do not require technical or professional knowledge in any specialized subject-matter area. Therefore, the appellant's position is properly placed in the GS-318 series.

The classification standard for the GS-318 series provides for the title of Secretary while allowing an appropriate parenthetical addition. Since the appellant routinely performs duties using her personal computer, the parenthetical title of Office Automation is appropriate. Thus, the proper title of the appellant's position is Secretary (Office Automation).

Since the application of office automation technology is a recurrent part of the appellant's job, the grade level of these duties was evaluated in accordance with the criteria published in the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, dated November 1990. These duties do not exceed the GS-4 grade level. The grade of the office automation duties does not affect the overall grade of the appellant's position, as determined in the remainder of this decision. Therefore, these duties will not be discussed further. The GS-318 standard was used to evaluate the appellant's other duties and responsibilities.

Grade determination

The GS-318 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which employs nine factors. Under the FES, work must be fully equivalent to the factor level described in the standard to warrant credit at that level's point value. If work is not fully equivalent to the overall intent of a particular level described in the standard, a lower level and point value must be assigned, unless the

deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect of the work that meets a higher level. Our evaluation of the appellant's position with respect to the nine factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that employees must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges. In the secretary occupation, the same type of knowledge may be found at different levels, depending upon the extent of knowledge required. The extent of knowledge required in this occupation is related, in part, to the work situation in which the position is found.

Work situation refers to the complexity of the organization served (i.e., the immediate office in which the secretary works and any subordinate offices) which affects the extent of office rules, procedures, operations, and priorities the secretary must apply to maintain a proper and smooth flow of work within the organization and between organizations. Accordingly, this factor is examined by means of these two parts, knowledge type and work situation.

Knowledge type

The appellant's knowledge of basic rules and procedures applicable to receiving and referring phone calls and visitors; her knowledge of common clerical practices and procedures in filing material and obtaining requested data from the files; and her knowledge of grammar, punctuation, and required formats for correspondence and reports are fully credited under Type I of the classification standard.

The appellant's position is further credited under Type II for knowledge of an extensive body of rules, procedures, or operations applied to clerical assignments, as well as knowledge of the organization and functions of the safety and occupational health office in order to carry out and coordinate many different procedures, each of which involves numerous steps, such as preparing travel orders; making travel and lodging arrangements; and preparing a variety of recurring reports and documents from information obtained from the staff, files, and other offices, e.g., documenting the accident forms and reviewing them for accidental trends and compiling information for the safety watch bulletins.

Similar to secretaries at Type III, the appellant must know the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of safety staff so that she can independently note and follow up on commitments made at meetings and conferences. However, her position falls short of the Type III requirement in that she is not responsible for coordinating the safety office's work with that of other offices and for recognizing the need for such coordination in various circumstances.

We evaluate the position's knowledge requirements as equivalent to Type II.

Work situation

Work Situation A is defined as a small organization of limited complexity. Although the organization may include several subordinate sections or subgroups, the secretary's supervisor directs the staff primarily through face-to-face meetings, and internal procedural and administrative controls are simple and informal. Within the supervisor's organization, there are few complicated problems of coordination requiring formal procedures and controls for adequate solution.

Work Situation B requires a system of formal internal procedures and administrative controls and a formal production or progress reporting system. The coordination required among offices is sufficiently complex as to require secretaries' continuous attention. In contrast, the appellant's organization faces few administrative problems requiring coordination through the use of formal procedures and controls for adequate solution. The work of the safety office requires minimal internal procedural and administrative controls, as in less complex organizations.

Administrative controls for the General Safety Office are simple and informal. The manager directs the staff through face-to-face meetings. The office is not complex enough to meet Work Situation B. Further, it does not meet the criteria that describe differences in functions, relationships with other organizations, administrative requirements or complexity of coordination. Accordingly, Work Situation A is credited.

Summary

Type II knowledge and Level A work situation convert to Level 1-3 according to the standard. Therefore, we evaluate this factor at Level 1-3 and credit 350 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the secretary's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. The responsibility of the secretary depends upon the extent to which the supervisor expects the secretary to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review, e.g., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment; detailed review of the finished assignment; spot-check of finished work for accuracy; or review only for adherence to policy.

At Level 2-2, the secretary's supervisor generally defines assignments, deadlines, and priorities and reviews finished work for accuracy and for compliance with instructions and established procedures.

At Level 2-3, the secretary plans and carries out the work of the office and handles problems and deviations in accordance with established instructions, priorities, policies, commitments, and program goals of the supervisor, as well as standard occupational methods. This level requires completed work to be evaluated for adequacy, appropriateness, and conformance to established policy. Examples of Level 2-3 work are maintaining a supervisor's calendar, drafting replies to general inquiries when technical knowledge of the program is not required, relaying instructions to subordinate offices, collecting data, preparing reports for higher echelons, or otherwise acting on requests received concerning procedural or administrative requirements.

The supervisory controls over the appellant's work are best described at Level 2-3 in that she keeps the supervisor's calendar, reviews outgoing documents, answers general safety questions, and receives a general review of her work. Further, the supervisor defines the overall objectives and priorities of the work in the office but allows the appellant to set her own work priorities. She also handles problems and deviations in accordance with established policies and accepted practices while the supervisor may assist with some special assignments. The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 2-3.

We evaluate this factor at Level 2-3 and credit 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgement needed to apply them.

At Level 3-2, guidelines typically include dictionaries, style manuals, agency instructions concerning correspondence, and operating policies of the supervisor or organization served. The secretary locates and selects the appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application to specific cases. The secretary refers to the supervisor significant proposed deviations or situations to which existing guidelines cannot be applied.

At Level 3-3, guidelines include a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices which are not completely applicable to the work or are not specific. Guidelines cover matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than procedural concerns. The secretary at this level applies and adapts guidelines to specific problems for which the guidelines are not clearly applicable.

Guidelines used by the appellant are best described at Level 3-2. The guidelines include various National Guard issuances and guidelines from Army, National Guard, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Other guides used are dictionaries, style manuals, and agency instructions concerning such matters as correspondence, and time and leave reporting. Judgment is required in locating and selecting the appropriate guidelines, references, or procedures. The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 3-2.

We evaluate this factor at Level 3-2 and credit 125 points.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor measures the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-2, the secretary's duties involve various related steps, processes, or methods, and they include a full range of procedural duties in support of the office. Actions to be taken or responses to be made differ in such things as the sources of information, the kinds of transactions or entries, or other readily verifiable differences. Decisions at this level are based on knowledge of the procedural requirements of the work coupled with an awareness of the specific functions and staff assignments of the office.

Level 4-3 work includes various duties involving different and unrelated processes and methods. Decisions regarding what needs to be done, and how it should be done, are based on the secretary's knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the supervisor and staff; and decisions involve analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment.

The appellant uses different steps and functions from one assignment to another to accomplish such duties as filling out various travel forms for the staff; arranging for meeting rooms; and preparing scheduled reports from information readily available in the files. The complexity of the appellant's work matches Level 4-2.

Level 4-3 is not fully met. Although the appellant must have knowledge of the duties, policies, and program goals of the supervisor and staff, the standard says that work at Level 4-3 involves different and unrelated processes and methods. For example, decisions regarding what needs to be done are based on the secretary's knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the Division Director and staff and involve analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in many individual situations. The appellant does not regularly perform duties of comparable complexity to those illustrated at this level.

We evaluate this factor at Level 4-2 and credit 75 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

Effect measures whether the work output facilitates the work of others, provides timely services of a personal nature, or affects the adequacy of systems of clerical and administrative support.

Level 5-2 describes the purpose of the work as that of carrying out specific procedures. The work affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes. At this level, duties include serving as liaison between the supervisor and subordinate units; consolidating reports submitted by subordinate units; and arranging meetings involving staff from outside the immediate office.

Level 5-3 describes positions which serve offices that clearly and directly affect a wide range of agency activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. The secretary at this level modifies and devises methods and procedures that significantly and consistently affect the accomplishment of the mission of the office. The secretary identifies and resolves various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization.

The appellant has been delegated the responsibility of responding to requests from National Guard units and others regarding safety situations which demand immediate action. Depending on the nature of the issue, if she cannot readily provide the answer, she must research the safety regulations or office files or contact other directorates or agencies. She consolidates information for a variety of reports; maintains and manages the safety videotape library; maintains the safety management binder; and arranges for the safety council meetings. Accurate and timely completion of this work contributes to the overall effective operation of the safety office.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-3. As the standard indicates, she does not identify and resolve various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization.

We evaluate this factor at Level 5-2 and credit 75 points.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place (e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities). Above the lowest level, points are only for contacts that are essential for successful performance of the work and that have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the work performed. Contacts credited under Factor 6 must be the same contacts credited under Factor 7.

The appellant's contacts outside her organization are equivalent to those described at Level 6-2 where contacts are with employees engaged in different functions, missions, and kinds of work, e.g., representatives from various levels within the agency such as headquarters, regional, district, or field offices, or other operating offices in the immediate installation. As described at Level 6-2, the appellant's contacts with individuals external to her agency occur in a moderately structured setting, i.e., the contacts are generally established on a routine basis, usually at the employee's work place, and the exact purpose of the contact is frequently unclear at first to one or more of the parties and

one or more of the parties may be uninformed concerning the role and authority of the other participants. Contacts at Level 6-2 include visitors and calls requiring secretaries to clarify first why the caller or visitor is in contact with the office. Similarly, the appellant must determine whether calls need to be referred to other individuals within the immediate office such as the Occupational Health Office.

Unlike Level 6-3, the visitors and calls the appellant handles are frequently routine rather than out-of-the-ordinary. At Level 6-3, contacts frequently occur in moderately unstructured settings where the purpose and extent of each contact is different and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact. Secretaries at this level must frequently handle sensitive or contentious matters, as when dealing with attorneys, public action groups, etc. The appellant's contacts are more routine and structured than those at Level 6-3. Consequently, the appellant's personal contacts meet and do not exceed level 6-2.

We evaluate this factor at Level 6-2 and credit 25 points.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

The purpose of personal contacts may range from factual exchanges of information to resolving problems affecting the efficient operation of the office. The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for this factor must be the same as the contacts which are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6.

At Level 7-2, the purpose of the secretary's work is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems. Typical duties normally evaluated at this level include ensuring that reports and responses to correspondence are submitted by the staff on time and in the proper format, making travel arrangements, and scheduling conferences.

The contacts for the appellant require her (1) to call vendors to inquire about up-coming training, (2) to call the legal office regarding accidents involving personally-owned vehicles, and (3) to call the National Guard Bureau for clarification of electronic messages concerning safety information. She also contacts the safety center at Fort Rucker to send accident reports and the industrial hygiene office in Atlanta, Georgia, regarding test information for lead, air quality, etc. In addition, she has contact with local directorates, action officers (branch chiefs), and maintenance shop personnel to either provide or request information concerning safety regulations. She makes other contacts to ensure that reports are submitted in the proper format, make travel arrangements, and schedule meetings. The purpose of the appellant's personal contacts is equivalent to that described at Level 7-2.

We evaluate this factor at Level 7-2 and credit 50 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment.

At Level 8-1, the work is sedentary. No special physical demands are required to perform the work. However, there may be some walking, standing, bending, or carrying of light items such as papers or books. The appellant's position meets this level in that the work is sedentary and there are no special physical demands.

We evaluate this factor at Level 8-1 and credit 5 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor measures the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.

At Level 9-1, the work environment involves everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices, meeting and training rooms, libraries, and residences or commercial vehicles. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. The appellant's work is performed in an office setting and therefore matches and does not exceed Level 9-1.

We evaluate this factor at Level 9-1 and credit 5 points.

Summary

In sum, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-2	75
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
Total points:		985

The appellant's position warrants 985 total points. In accordance with the grade conversion table in the standard, a total of 985 points falls within the GS-5 grade range (855-1100).

Decision

The proper classification of the appellant's position is Secretary (OA), GS-318-5.