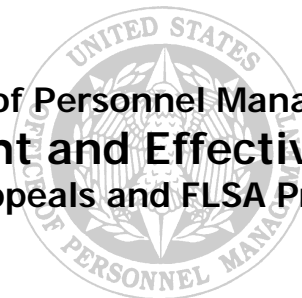


U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness  
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Atlanta Oversight Division  
75 Spring Street, SW., Room 972  
Atlanta, GA 30303

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

**Appellant:** [Appellant]  
**Agency classification:** Computer Specialist  
GS-334-11  
**Organization:** [Field location]  
Department of Energy  
**OPM decision:** Computer Specialist  
GS-334-11  
**OPM decision number:** C-0334-11-08

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy W. Day  
Classification Appeals Officer

7/31/00  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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).

**Decision sent to:**

**Appellant:**

[Appellant]

**Agency:**

[Manager, servicing human resources  
office]

Director  
Human Resource Management  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW.  
Washington, DC 20585

## **Introduction**

On May 11, 2000, the Atlanta Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management accepted a classification appeal from [appellant], an employee [organizational location], Department of Energy, [geographic location]. The appellant is currently classified as a Computer Specialist, GS-334-11. He believes his position should be classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-12.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

## **General issues**

The appellant contends his position was classified incorrectly as GS-11 in August 1998. He states that other specific position descriptions (generic position descriptions for Desktop Computer Specialist, GS-11; Server Computer Specialist, GS-12; and Generalist Computer Specialist, GS-12) have exactly the same wording for Factor 1 (Knowledges required by the position), Factor 4 (Complexity), and Factor 5 (Scope and effect) as his position description, but are assigned different point values, resulting in a higher grade assignment. As a result of an agency classification appeal in October 1998, the appellant's position was reviewed through desk audit in December 1998, resulting in changes to Factor 1 (increased to Level 1-7) and Factor 3 (decreased to Level 3-3), with no change in assigned grade level. Since the appellant has expressed disagreement with the agency determination for Factors 3, 4, and 5, this decision specifically addresses only those factors. We concur with the agency findings on the remaining factors.

## **Position information**

The appellant is assigned to position description number [#]. The appellant, his supervisor, and the agency have certified the accuracy of the position description.

The position is one of eight Computer Specialist positions (three GS-12s and five GS-11s) in Desktop Support, Field Corporate Services, which provide support to various assigned field components in [organization]. The primary duties of the appellant's position are to provide desktop and local area network (LAN) support to [organization] in the [geographic] area. These duties include installing, configuring, and maintaining desktop hardware/software and LAN servers and their associated peripheral devices (printers, tape backups, CD-ROMS, etc.). Duties of the position include installation, maintenance, and upgrading of personal computers (PCs) and server operating systems and associated [organization] standard and non-standard system and desktop software packages. In addition, the position assists in the assembly, configuration, installation and maintenance of voice, data, videoconferencing, and network communications systems.

The appellant's supervisor, who is located in [geographic location], establishes the overall objectives of the work. The appellant is responsible for planning and carrying out assignments,

including resolving most problems, coordinating the work with others, and interpreting policy in terms of established objectives. Completed work is reviewed only in terms of effectiveness of meeting objectives and compatibility with other activities.

### **Series and title determination**

The agency determined that the appellant's position is classified properly to the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, and the appellant agrees. We concur that the appellant's position is properly assigned to the GS-334 series. Based on the titling practices contained in the GS-334 standard, the appellant's position is properly titled *Computer Specialist*.

### **Standard determination**

Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, dated July 1991.

### **Grade level determination**

The GS-334 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under FES, positions are placed in a grade on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

#### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used, and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency credited Level 3-3. The appellant believes Level 3-4 is correct.

At Level 3-3, guidelines are available but are not completely applicable or gaps exist in significant areas. The employee is required to adapt guides and precedents for application to the assigned project or gather considerable information to supplement gaps or lack of specificity to particular problems. Judgment is required in relating precedent approaches to specific situations.

At Level 3-4, policies and precedents provide general guidance, but little specificity regarding the approach to be followed in accomplishing the work. The assignments usually require deviating from traditional methods or researching trends or patterns to develop improved methods or formulate criteria. The employee must use initiative and resourcefulness in researching and

implementing state-of-the-art techniques and technologies in order to develop new and improved methods to cope with particular projects.

The appellant's use of guidelines is comparable to Level 3-3. Although problem resolution is frequently difficult, guidelines for hardware/software are generally available, and guidelines on system operations are contained in manuals for manufacturer's software such as Windows 95/NT, Exchange, etc. These guidelines do not always provide direct guidance in resolving a specific user problem. The appellant may need to adapt and modify these guidelines, manufacturers' manuals and software applications guides to fit the problem situation based on his past experience and knowledge of current technologies.

Although the appellant has been involved in project lead activities, such as lead for field locations for desktops, servers and peripherals for Y2K compliance, this type of project does not meet Level 3-4 requirements, in which projects typically encompass unprecedented design efforts. The appellant is not involved in any activities where significant research or analysis is required or where methods and techniques are unique. The adaptation and modification of standard guidelines and operating procedures does not meet the scope described at Level 3-4.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

#### *Factor 4, Complexity*

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. The agency credited Level 4-4. The appellant believes Level 4-5 is correct.

At the Level 4-4, assignments consist of projects, studies, or evaluations characterized by the need for substantial problem analysis. Typically, concern is with project assignments in a specialty area that require a variety of techniques and methods. In these assignments, deciding what has to be done typically involves assessing situations complicated by conflicting or insufficient data, which must be analyzed to determine the applicability of established methods. Computer equipment or system software evaluation and modification at this level primarily concern items available from vendors already in use in other government or private ADP operations.

At Level 4-5, the coordination or situation involves exceptional technical difficulty, such as developing specifications for a major segment of a new application system where the work typically is unprecedented in nature or scope.

The appellant's duties meet Level 4-4. He provides desktop support and ensures the operation and efficiency of networking and voice and data telecommunications. These responsibilities require substantial problem analysis to assess situations and evaluate alternatives.

The appellant's duties do not involve the complexities inherent at Level 4-5. His position does not require the variety of techniques and methods typically found at this level, nor is it

complicated by the conflicting and complex circumstances described. In addition, he does not make significant departures from established practices.

Level 4-4 is credited for 225 points.

*Factor 5, Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. The agency credited Level 5-3. The appellant believes Level 5-4 is correct.

At Level 5-3, the work involves resolving a variety of problems using established practices and techniques. This level includes responsibility for projects that, although affecting activities or individuals throughout the agency, are primarily to facilitate a local operation.

In comparison, work at Level 5-4 involves investigating and analyzing a variety of unusual problems, questions, or conditions associated with a particular application or specialty area; formulating projects or studies such as those to substantially alter major systems; or establishing criteria in an assigned application or specialty area. The work at this level affects a wide range of agency activities, activities of non-government organizations, or functions of other agencies.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work fully meet the criteria at Level 5-3. The appellant relies on established practices and commonly accepted techniques for resolving user problems. He is responsible for the primary desktop and LAN support for an assigned field area, with troubleshooting activities focused on his assigned organization. Although requiring creativity and resourcefulness, common routines are involved in troubleshooting, identifying, and resolving user problems.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-4. His work does not impact a wide range of agency activities at numerous sites around the country, nor does his work affect the operations of other agencies.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

<b>SUMMARY</b>		
<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	3b	110
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	2470

A total of 2470 points falls within the range for GS-11, 2355 to 2750 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-334 standard.

### **Decision**

The position is properly classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-11