

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 441
Dallas, TX 75242

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Supply Technician
GS-2005-6

Organization: Supply Processing & Distribution
Acquisition & Material Management
Department
Financial Management Services
Department of Veterans Affairs
[city and state]

OPM decision: Supply Technician
GS-2005-6

OPM decision number: C-2005-06-05

/s/

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

September 27, 2002

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's name and address]

President, AFGE Local [number]
[installation address]

Director of Human Resources (05)
[installation address]

Chief, Compensation and Classification Division (051)
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Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management (05)
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Introduction

The Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant] on June 5, 2002, and we received her agency's administrative report on June 20, 2002. The position is assigned to Supply, Processing and Distribution; Acquisition and Material Management Department Financial Management Services; [facility name], Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in Phoenix, Arizona. The agency has classified the position as Supply Technician, GS-2005-6. [the appellant] believes that her position should be classified as an Inventory Management Specialist, GS-2010-9. We accepted and decided her appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and her agency, including the official position description (PD) number [number]. Both the appellant and her supervisor agree that the position description is accurate. The written record was supplemented by a telephone interview with the appellant on July 16, 2002; an interview with the immediate supervisor on August 2, 2002; and a follow-up interview with the appellant on August 2, 2002.

General issues

The appellant believes the duties and responsibilities of her position are the same as those of an Inventory Management Specialist, GS-2010-9/11, position. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding her appeal.

Position information

The Supply Processing and Distribution (SPD) Section serves as the central point from which patient care medical and surgical inventories, instruments, and equipment are procured, received, processed, packaged, and distributed throughout the medical center, including two off-campus primary care clinics. The SPD is organized into units: Decontamination, Sterile Preparation, Storage and Distribution, and Procurement and Fiscal Control. The appellant is one of three Supply Technicians assigned to SPD. The appellant's work involves assisting in inventory management, initiating procurement, receipt, distribution, and cost accounting for control points 021 Medical and Surgical Supplies and 912 Prosthetic Surgical Appliances.

Briefly, the appellant is responsible for screening and processing requests for supplies and services. She inputs transactions into the automated systems and is authorized to sign for and receive supplies, services, equipment, and direct deliveries from vendors. She assists in the process of equipment and supply turn-in/excess. The appellant uses the Integrated Funds Distribution-Controlled Point Activity-Accounting and Procurement (IFCAP) and Generic Inventory Package (GIP) systems to organize and track daily accounting of running balances, distribution, and expenditures to SPD customers. She is responsible for routine and systemic replenishment of supplies needed by SPD customers using VA, Defense Logistics Agency,

General Services Administration, Federal Supply Service, open market and local procurement sources. She deals with vendors on all aspects pertaining to sales and shipments and resolves problems and discrepancies. The appellant will conduct physical “walk through” inventories of SPD stock on a routine basis. The purpose of these inventories is to resolve discrepancies in inventory, prepare adjustments, reconcile inventory accounts, and procure depleted supplies to assure the Center’s medical and surgical needs are met. She is responsible for data entry, maintenance, and preservation of the data bases needed for the IFCAP and GIP systems. The appellant’s PD and other material in the written record furnish much more information about the duties and responsibilities.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency placed the appellant’s position in the Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005. This series includes positions that supervise or perform clerical or technical supply support work necessary to ensure the effective operation of ongoing supply activities. This work requires knowledge of supply operations and program requirements and the ability to apply established supply policies, day-to-day servicing techniques, regulations, or procedures.

The Inventory Management Specialist Series, GS-2010, covers analytical work in managing, regulating, coordinating, or otherwise exercising control over supplies, equipment, or other material. The work includes one or more phases of material management including initial planning; provisioning and requirements determination; acquisition and distribution, accountability; and ultimate issue for consumption, retention, or disposal. The work requires knowledge of acquisition processes, automated records and control systems, material substitution criteria; and storage, issue, and disposal processes. Employees apply knowledge of systems, techniques, and underlying management concepts for determining, regulating, or controlling the level and flow of supplies from initial plan through acquisition, storage, issue, and utilization or disposal. The three primary functions that characterize the occupation are management, coordination, and control of inventory and systems of inventory management. Positions included in this series include those with responsibilities for inventory management, material coordination, and inventory control in conjunction with authority to make decisions which change or revise program guidance, procedures, and/or systems.

Supply specialists must have a broad understanding of an interrelated chain of activities involving the process of supply, often extending from the conception or acquisition of a new item through storage, distribution, property utilization, consumption, or disposal. They plan and develop the supply system, programs, or services, and develop, adapt, or interpret operating methods or procedures. In contrast, supply technicians perform assignments requiring less extensive knowledge of programs, operations, or organizations serviced and requiring a more limited knowledge of system characteristics or technical uses of items of supply or equipment. While some supply technicians perform some of the same work tasks as supply specialists, they do so based on practical experience and familiarity with supply operations, the supply mission of the organization, and supply regulations, policies, procedures, and directives.

The appellant is responsible for replenishment of the SPD’s primary inventory and assists other technicians in replenishment of warehouse stock. Her duties include ordering routine as well as

specialized supplies and equipment. She uses the automated data bases to order and provide cost accounting to the appropriate medical center fund control codes. The appellant closely monitors purchase orders and requisitions and must exercise judgment in ordering, meeting customer needs, avoiding backorders and shipment delays, and dealing with other distribution problems. These duties require knowledge of the supply system to order and maintain the SPD inventory items. She must know the budget and accounting systems required to properly charge the customer for the requested items. These duties are typical of the support work performed by supply technicians rather than supply specialist work. As indicated, inventory management specialists are typically involved in the management, coordination, and control of inventory and systems of inventory management. They may be involved in planning and determining the current and future inventory requirements; planning and determining the distribution and positioning of supplies; preparing recommendations and directives for procurement of material, including the types of items, quantities, and sources; and analyzing plans and requirements to forecast categories and quantities of items and funds required.

The position is properly allocated to the GS-2005 Supply Clerical and Technician Series. Supply Technician is the title for all positions GS-5 and above.

The GS-2005 Position Classification Standard (PCS) is used to determine the grade of the appellant's position.

Grade determination

The GS-2005 PCS is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Positions graded under the FES format are compared to nine factors. Levels are assigned for each factor, and the points associated with the assigned levels are totaled and converted to a grade level by application of the Grade Conversion Table contained in the PCS. Under the FES, a factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the worker must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, knowledge must be required and applied.

The work at Level 1-3 requires knowledge of standardized supply regulations, policies, procedures, or other instructions relating to the specific functions assigned. The majority of positions require familiarity with one or more automated supply data bases to enter, correct, and retrieve recurring reports and to structure and retrieve specialized reports. Employees use a sound working knowledge of the structure of the local supply organizations serviced. Employees use this knowledge and ability to perform a variety of standard clerical assignments and to resolve recurring problems.

Level 1-4 is the highest level described in the PCS. The work at Level 1-4 requires a thorough knowledge of governing supply regulations, policies, procedures, and instructions applicable to the specific assignment. This knowledge is used by employees to conduct extensive and exhaustive searches for required information; reconstruct records for complex supply transactions; and/or provide supply operations support for activities involving specialized or unique supplies, equipment, and parts such as special purpose laboratory or test equipment, prototypes of technical equipment, parts and equipment requiring unusual degrees of protection in shipment and storage, or others that are unique to the organization's mission or are seldom handled.

As in Level 1-3, the appellant must be knowledgeable about the automated data bases and systems used for ordering replenishments to SPD inventory and tracking delivery and distribution. She monitors the cost accounting for the supply items received and distributed to customers. She searches the appropriate catalogs and manuals to obtain required information on difficult stock items. The appellant makes contact with various suppliers to coordinate the handling and shipping of medical supplies. The appellant manages and retrieves files and records that reflect supply trends and budgetary limitations that assist the supervisor and SPD with medical and budgetary expenditures. The appellant has recently had the major responsibility for managing the prosthetic inventory system. The appellant coordinates with the Center staff in ordering specific prosthetic appliances for patients and inputting the codes for a specific appliance into the automated data base. She must maintain confidentiality of the patient's medical data provided with the order and ensure that costs associated with the prosthetic appliances are accurately billed to the patient.

The appellant's duties do not involve the complexities typical of Level 1-4, e.g., conducting extensive and exhaustive searches for required information; reconstructing records for complex transactions; and/or providing supply support for activities involving specialized or unique supplies, equipment, and parts. While each prosthetic appliance is unique to the patient, the medical information needed to order is provided and supply sources are determined. Illustrations at Level 1-4 describe a greater depth of assignment and knowledge required than that required by the appellant's position.

Level 1-3 is credited for 350 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected 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.

At Level 2-2, work is performed under technical guidance of a supply technician, supply specialist, or supervisor who issues general work assignments, controls flow of day-to-day work, and explains major changes in regulations or procedures. The supervisor or higher grade employee provides additional specific instructions for new, difficult, or unusual assignments including suggested work methods or advice on source material available.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described, the supervisor makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines, and assists the employee with unusual situations which do not have clear precedents. In some circumstances, the employee works independently from the supervisor or specialist in a remote location. Although usually available by telephone and periodic on-site visits, contact with the supervisor is infrequent. Considerable independence is exercised with continuing assignments. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps and handles problems and deviations in the work assignment in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices in the occupation. When the employee assists a supply specialist in performing segments of more complex technical operations, the work may be subject to closer technical guidance and control. Completed work is usually evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. The methods used in arriving at the end results are not usually reviewed in detail.

The appellant is supervised by the SPD Manager, a Supervisory General Supply Specialist. Guidance is provided in the form of general policy and directions. The appellant uses independent judgment in making decisions regarding her day-to-day assignments. She replenishes supplies on a routine basis at the request of staff from all areas of the Center. Receiving general directions, the appellant is expected to complete all work assignments on her own initiative within the prescribed timeframes. Initiation of expenditures for medical and surgical supplies and prosthetic appliances are conducted under the direction of the supervisor. For example, the appellant processes purchase orders that are \$2,500 or less without the supervisor's approval. She documents and justifies purchases from other than mandatory sources or lowest bidders for the review and approval of the supervisor. Level 2-3 is met but not exceeded.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-2, procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available in the form of supply regulations, policies, and procedures. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use some judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application and in making minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in specific cases. At this level, the employee may also determine which of several established alternatives to use. The situations to which the existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations from the guidelines are referred to the supervisor.

At Level 3-3, guidelines are similar to the next lower level, but because of the problem solving or case nature of the assignments, they are not completely applicable or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines such as policies, regulations, precedents, and work directions for application to specific cases or problems. The employee analyzes the results of applying guidelines and recommends changes.

Comparable to Level 3-2, the appellant uses regulatory guidelines, policies, and recommended practices as directed by the supervisor. These guides are generally directly applicable to the assignment. The appellant must have a working knowledge of VA Manual MP-2 Subchapter E, Subpart 108-76, and the SPD policies which are essential to the maintenance, rotation, and shelf life of sterile items. She also has information available from journals, circulars, product and equipment technical fact sheets, health care providers, and manufacturers' representatives. She displays some judgment in applying the guidelines but does not deviate from or substitute policy or procedure without her supervisor's review and approval. The appellant does not meet Level 3-3 because her work does not require that she interpret and adapt guidelines.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers 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, work consists of duties that involve related steps, processes, or methods, including work performing routine aspects of technical supply management functions in support of a specialist. The employee must recognize differences between a few easily recognizable situations and conditions to choose a course of action. Actions taken differ in such things as source of information, kind of transactions, or other factual differences.

Level 4-3 is the highest level described in the PCS. At Level 4-3, the work involves unusually complicated or difficult technical duties involving one or more aspects of supply management or operations. The work at this level is difficult because it involves actions that are not standardized or prescribed; deviates from established procedures; involves new or changing situations; or entails matters for which only general provision can be made in regulations or procedures. This typically involves supply transactions which experienced employees at lower grades have been unable to process or resolve, or which involve special program requirements for urgent, critical shortage items requiring specialized procedures and efforts to obtain. The employee decides what needs to be done depending on the analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment, and the chosen course of action may have to be selected from many alternatives. Decisions are based largely on the employee's experience, precedent actions, and the priority assigned for resolving the particular problem. The methods and procedures used to resolve each issue vary based on the circumstances of each individual case. The work involves conditions and elements that the employee must identify and analyze to discern interrelationships with other actions, related supply programs, and alternative approaches.

The complexity of the appellant's work meets and does not exceed Level 4-3. The appellant's assignments are wide-ranging and involve specific principles of supply and budget processes. The appellant monitors the cost accounting associated with supply items by reviewing daily balances of all customers through the GIP/IFCAP data bases. She reviews customer's accounts and supply due-in dates and amendments to orders that reflect different cost balances and distribution patterns. She reviews expenditures associated with prosthetic appliances and enters the patient's medical data with limited assistance. She must be familiar with the many requirements of suppliers and manufacturers.

Level 4-3 is awarded for 150 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 work products or services both within and outside the organization.

In accordance with Level 5-3, the highest level described in the PCS, work at this level involves dealing with a variety of problem situations either independently or as part of a broader problem solving effort under the control of a specialist. Problems encountered require extensive fact-finding, review of information to coordinate requirements, and recommendations to resolve conditions or change procedures. The employee performs the work in conformance with prescribed procedures and methods. The results of the work affect the adequacy of local supply support operations, or they contribute to improved procedures in support of supply programs and operations.

Level 5-3 is met and not exceeded. The work involves ensuring the availability of a large number of medical supplies and equipment used within the medical center and extension clinics. The appellant conducts periodic inventories to reconcile inventory discrepancies and determines any adjustments needed to the account. The appellant manages and updates the GIP and IFCAP which contains broad files of items within the inventory that are used by primary and secondary users. She coordinates and works with vendors on orders that have been erroneously charged or delivered and ensures the costs associated with the order in question are corrected as prescribed within the standards of the SPD. The appellant's work includes research of patient's medical data and correctly coding pertinent data to order prosthetic appliances for patients. She independently resolves any problems that occur involving the prosthetic appliances.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factors 6 and 7, Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts

Personal contacts include face-to-face contacts and telephone contact 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.

At Level 2, contacts are with employees in the same agency but outside the immediate organization. Persons contacted generally are engaged in different functions, missions, and kinds of work, such as representatives from various levels within the agency or from other operating offices in the immediate installation. At this level, contacts may also be with members of the general public as individuals or groups, in a moderately structured setting (i.e., they are usually established on a routine basis at the employee's work place or over the telephone, the exact purpose may be unclear at first, and one or more of the parties may be uninformed concerning the role and authority of other participants). Typical of contacts at this level are employees at approximately the same level of authority in shipping companies, vendor employees concerned with the status of orders or shipments, and others at comparable levels.

At Level 3, contacts are with individuals from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting (e.g., the contacts are not established on a routine basis, 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). Typical of contacts at this level are supply employees in other departments or agencies, inventory item managers, contractors, or manufacturers.

The appellant's primary contacts are with staff within the SPD, Nursing Department, professional personnel, and administrative management officials. These contacts are established on a routine basis. The appellant's responsibility for shipments and deliveries requires the appellant to come in contact with vendors and shippers on a routine basis. The work does not require the appellant to routinely have contacts of the nature described in Level 3. The appellant's contacts meet Level 2.

At Level b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems by clarifying discrepancies in information submitted by serviced organizations, resolving automated system problems causing erroneous transaction records, or seeking cooperation from others to resolve complicated supply actions.

Level b is met. The appellant's primary contacts are to coordinate work and resolve problems to ensure the availability of medical supplies and the proper cost accounting for those supplies.

The combined factors are credited at Level 2b for a total of 75 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

At Level 8-1, the work is primarily sedentary. The employee may sit comfortably to do the work. There may be some walking, standing, bending, and carrying of light items such as papers, books, or small parts. No special physical demands are required to perform the work.

Work at Level 8-2 requires some physical exertion such as long periods of standing; walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces; recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching; or similar activities. This level of physical demands occurs, for example, when employees are regularly assigned to activities such as tracing misplaced items or conducting physical inventories in warehouses, depots, and other storage areas, or when they are regularly involved in stocking and retrieving items from shelves and cabinets.

The appellant's position does not include physical demands that require her to endure long periods of conducting physical inventories in varying warehouse areas or working on uneven terrain. The appellant does some lifting, frequent standing, and opening and stocking of inventory items. The majority of the appellant's time is spent sitting in front of a computer managing the automated data base of stock levels.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risk and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required. Although the use of safety precautions can practically eliminate a certain danger or discomfort, such situations typically place additional demands upon the employee in carrying out safety regulations and techniques.

At Level 9-1, the employee typically works indoors in an environment involving everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices or meeting rooms. Observance of normal safety practices with office equipment, avoidance of trips and falls, and observance of fire regulations is required. The area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

At Level 9-2, the work involves moderate risks or discomforts which require special safety precautions, such as working around moving warehouse equipment, carts, or machines. Employees may be required to use protective clothing gear such as masks, gowns, safety shoes, goggles, hearing protection, and gloves.

The record indicates the appellant routinely moves from an area with high temperatures and the possibility of contamination to an environment that is controlled, clean, and cool. The handling of sterilized items and equipment may necessitate the need to wear various clothing including thin sterile gloves, masks, hair nets, scrub attire, and clean over-jacket covers.

Level 9-2 is credited for 20 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. & 7. Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts	2b	75
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-2	<u>20</u>
<i>Total points</i>		1150

A total of 1150 points falls within the range for GS-6 (1150-1350 points).

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Supply Technician, GS-2005-6.