

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

Atlanta Field Services Group
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 1018
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

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

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Office Automation Clerk
GS-326-4

Organization: [name] Department
Director for [name]
Naval Hospital, [location]
U.S. Department of the Navy
[location]

OPM decision: Office Automation Clerk
GS-326-4

OPM decision number: C-0326-04-02

/s/ Virginia L. Magnuson
Virginia L. Magnuson
Classification Appeals Officer

May 22, 2003
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:

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Introduction

On January 15, 2003, the Atlanta Oversight Division, now the Atlanta Field Services Group, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal from [appellant's name]. Her position is currently classified as Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-4. The appellant requests that her position be reclassified as Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-5/6, because the degree of skill and expertise required by her duties warrant classification at a higher grade. Her position is located in the [name] Department, Director for [name], Naval Hospital, [location] U.S. Department of the Navy, [location]. We received a complete administrative report on February 24, 2003. The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

The appellant believes that the agency did not properly evaluate her work. In adjudicating her appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of her position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing her current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). This decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision. Therefore, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying her position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant, her immediate supervisor, the [name] Department Head, and Assistant Department Head.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to position description number [#]. The appellant and her supervisor certified the accuracy of the position description. It contains more information about how the position functions and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

The [name] Department is responsible for providing a wide range of administrative support for all active duty and civilian staff members of the hospital. These responsibilities include processing awards, special pay, leave, welcome aboard packages, the sponsorship program, processing gains and losses, human resources for civilian staff, military evaluations and fitness reports, efficiency reviews, and the manpower module within the Standard Personnel Management System (SPMS). This organization is also responsible for the day-to-day responsibilities associated with readiness and training for the Fleet Hospital Platform.

The appellant provides clerical support for the department. Her primary duties are related to the processing of Officer Fitness Reports, enlisted evaluations, and the awards program nominations. She coordinates the receipt and routing of fitness reports and evaluations to the appropriate organizations at other levels within the agency, reviews documents for proper

format, spelling, and grammar, and corrects minor errors. She maintains a tracking log for all reports and evaluations received, prepares final documents for signatures of rated individuals and rating officials and summary letters when required, maintains files for reports, and prepares replacement copies of missing reports and evaluations.

The appellant works under the supervision of the department head who is a Navy officer. She independently carries out recurring assignments in accordance with previous guidance and instructions and standard operating procedures. Situations that are not covered by standard procedures or with which the appellant is not familiar are brought to the attention of the supervisor.

Series, title and standard determination

The agency classified the appellant's position in the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326, and titled it Office Automation Clerk. The appellant does not disagree with the series determination, but believes that the position should be titled as Office Automation Assistant. We concur with the agency's series and title determination. The GS-326 standard requires the title Office Automation Clerk for positions at GS-4 and below. The GS-326 standard does not have evaluation criteria and directs that office automation work be evaluated using the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide (OAGEG). The office and clerical work performed by the appellant is general rather than specialized and is evaluated through application of the grading criteria contained in the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work (the Guide).

Grade determination

Evaluation using the OAGEG

The OAGEG is in the Factor Evaluation System Format (FES). Under the FES, positions are evaluated by comparing the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required with nine factors common to non-supervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor in accordance with the factor-level descriptions. For each factor, the full intent of the level must be met to credit the points for that level. The total points assigned for the nine factors are converted to a grade by reference to the grade conversion table in the standard. Our analysis of the appellant's position follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts a worker must understand in order to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skills needed to apply this knowledge.

At Level 1-3, the employee must apply a knowledge of varied and advanced functions of one software type, varied functions of more than one software type, or other equivalent knowledge of automated systems. The employee applies knowledge of software functions to produce a wide range of documents that often require complex formats, such as graphics or

tables within text, to edit and reformat electronic drafts and to update or revise existing databases or spreadsheets.

Level 1-3 is met. Comparable to this level, the appellant applies a knowledge of standard word processing software, the agency standard software used to prepare/generate officer fitness reports and enlisted evaluations, and the database software used to store information related to a variety of agency/organizational activities. The word processing software is used in the preparation and editing of a variety of text documents. The database software is used to input and extract information and reports from agency/organizational databases as required by her superiors. The appellant must be knowledgeable of the various functions and features of the software used to generate the fitness reports and evaluations and to use built-in validation commands to identify errors and make corrections. She must be knowledgeable of the functions and features of the database software to the extent that specific information can be extracted to generate a variety of reports in requested formats.

At Level 1-4, the work requires knowledge of the capabilities, operating characteristics, and advanced functions of a variety of types of office automation software, e.g., database, spreadsheet, and word processing; and knowledge of the similarities, differences, and integration of the different software types. This level of knowledge is applied to select the most appropriate software type for a specific office need or to integrate different software types into a single document, e.g., to retrieve data, convert it into graphic form, and incorporate it into the text of a report. This level of knowledge may also be applied to devise new methods of automated office support, such as a spreadsheet to keep track of office operating expenses or time and leave records; to resolve problems with current automated office support methods; or to complete other nonstandard assignments using varied office automation technologies.

Level 1-4 is not met. The appellant's work primarily involves the preparation and checking of a variety of documents and requires knowledge and use of the agency software developed to generate the fitness and evaluation reports, standard word processing software used to produce word processing documents, and database software to input and retrieve information and reports from databases. Each type of software is used for its specific function and the appellant is not required to integrate the products of different software types into a single document as envisioned at this level. The work also does not require devising new methods, resolving problems, or completing other nonstandard assignments comparable to Level 1-4.

Level 1-3 is credited for 350 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor considers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-2, the supervisor provides general instructions for standard, pre-established, or continuing office automation tasks, e.g., priorities, deadlines, or quantity. When the work is unusual or difficult, more specific instructions are provided regarding desired format,

electronic storage requirements, maintenance requirements, hardware/software selection, etc. The employee works independently in carrying out familiar assignments in accordance with previous instructions, standard procedures for creating documents or entering or retrieving data, and established use of software packages. The employee seeks further guidance when new or unusual assignments call for deviations from established procedures or otherwise require special instructions. Completed work is usually checked for compliance with office procedures or instructions, technical accuracy, and appearance. When the work is unusual, it is also checked for adherence to special instructions provided.

Level 2-2 is met. The appellant independently carries out her assignments which are standard and repetitive in nature. The majority of the work performed is covered by specific methods and procedures and does not require supervisory input or intervention. As at Level 2-2, the appellant refers all instances involving deviation from established methods or procedures, new or unusual assignments, or unusual problems to the supervisor for guidance. Completed work is reviewed in terms of accuracy and compliance with directives.

At Level 2-3, assignments are given with information on general administrative changes, deadlines, and priorities. For work that has not previously been automated, the supervisor defines overall objectives. The employee works independently to plan and carry out steps for completing assignments in accordance with established office instructions and practices for office automation. When current practices or deviations in an assignment cause problems, the employee uses initiative to resolve them and coordinates efforts with other employees involved in or affected by the nonstandard procedures. Completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, usefulness, and conformance with office operating requirements and needs. The methods used to produce work normally are not reviewed.

Level 2-3 is not met. The appellant does not have the freedom to resolve problems encountered on her own initiative. Her work also does not involve coordinating problem solving efforts with other employees. She brings all situations which require deviating from established methods, standard procedures, or instructions to the attention of her supervisor for recommendations as to the appropriate means of resolving the issue. The appellant's work is reviewed for accuracy, but since the work is limited in nature, review for usefulness and conformance to requirements as provided at Level 2-3 is not pertinent to this position.

Level 2-2 is credited for 125 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-2, guidelines include both detailed step-by-step instructions for specific office automation tasks and more general procedural guidelines in the form of manufacturers' manuals and tutorials for users, agency correspondence procedures, style manuals, technical dictionaries, sample work products, etc. Employees must select and apply detailed instructions for each office automation task or function, when available. For tasks not

covered by specific guidelines, they must search more general guidelines to determine the specific steps to apply.

Level 3-2 is met. Guidance is available to the appellant in the form of oral instructions from the supervisor, office policies, correspondence manuals, a wide variety of organizational and agency directives, standard procedures, instructions, etc. The guidance for accomplishing the majority of the appellant's office automation assignments and tasks is detailed, specific, and generally covers all facets of the work that she performs.

At Level 3-3, much of the work requires adaptation of available guides, such as user's manuals, to meet requirements for new tasks or to solve processing problems either encountered in the employee's own work or referred by others. Judgment is required to search manuals for methods that can be applied and to adapt those methods to specific requirements. Employees also exercise initiative and judgment in deviating from existing instructions or practices to resolve operating problems or to develop more efficient processing procedures.

Level 3-3 is not met. The majority of the appellant's work is covered by very specific guidelines outlining steps and methods which are required to be followed in carrying out her assignments. The appellant does not have the authority to deviate from or to adapt the guidance available or methods to resolve problems that she may encounter.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

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 work.

At Level 4-2, the documents, formats, and specific processing functions involved require a varying number and sequence of steps and use of different functions from one assignment to another. Assignments at this level involve using one type of software to create or edit a variety of standard documents requiring differing procedures and functions, or to process lengthy documents with a variety of format changes within each document. Other assignments at this level involve using two or more types of software, e.g., word processing and database management, to process different types of documents, paragraphs, tables, reports etc. Processing steps and procedures required to complete assignments are varied and numerous, differing in terms of the type of software used, the type of document or specific report to be produced or edited, the specific formatting required for a document, the existence of prerecorded formats, and other differences of a factual nature. In addition, employees at this level are expected to recognize discrepancies and correct or question originators in such matters as improper formatting; errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation; missing information; or discrepancies between the nature of the material and the processing instructions.

Level 4-2 is met. The appellant uses different steps and functions from one assignment to another creating different types of documents using three types of software. She uses word processing software to produce various memos, letters, awards and reports required by her organization. Other documents that the appellant prepares have standardized required formats that must be used. The appellant uses an agency standard software program designed specifically for the preparation of officer fitness reports and enlisted evaluations. Database software is used to update the information contained in databases and extract the information for reports used by higher level organizational officials. The processing steps and procedures used by the appellant will vary according to the software used and the type of document or other information being generated. As at Level 4-2, she proofreads officer fitness reports and enlisted evaluations to ensure that these documents are free of grammatical and/or spelling errors and in the correct format and makes minor changes or corrections where necessary.

At Level 4-3, the work involves using several types of software packages for different office needs. In deciding how to proceed, the employee considers many factors that are varied and that are not always clearly established. In performing the work, the employee applies judgment in considering and selecting from among many different software types in light of the range and peculiarities of the unit's information processing capabilities and requirements. The employee regularly develops methods and procedures for office automation tasks and identifies and solves problems in existing methods or procedures.

Level 4-3 is not met. The appellant's assignments do not require her to develop methods or procedures related to office automation tasks or to identify and solve problems in existing methods or procedures. She does not select from among many software types or develop methods or procedures for work.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of work products or services within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-1, the purpose of the work is to perform specific, recurring tasks required to maintain electronic records, e.g., calendars, directories, spreadsheets, and databases, and/or to produce various items, e.g., correspondence, memos, publications, manuscripts, reports, or forms, in draft or final form according to most recent data. Production usually includes steps such as: selecting and adhering to the proper format; determining the spacing and arrangement of material; making entries to and retrieving data from electronic records; and checking references, distribution requirements, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The services performed facilitate the work of the originators of the documents or the users of the data maintained.

Level 5-1 is met. The work performed by the appellant involves the performance of recurring clerical tasks in accordance with specific guidelines and/or requirements for the

preparation of officer fitness reports and enlisted evaluations. The appellant ensures that these documents contain required entries, are in the proper format and are free of errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling. The work performed by the appellant assists the individuals who initially prepare the documents and those who use the document information.

At Level 5-2, the purpose of the work is to collect, select, organize, and provide information in oral or written form. The work is performed in accordance with established rules, regulations, procedures, and office automation practices. The work affects the way in which other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information, and increases the availability and usefulness of the information involved.

Level 5-2 is not fully met. The appellant's work does not affect the way other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information nor does it increase the usefulness of the information involved. Work at Level 5-2 is more concerned with organizing information, whereas the appellant's work is concerned with the coordination of documents and recording of information.

Level 5-1 is credited for 25 points.

Factor 6, Personal contacts and Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

These factors include face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogues with persons not in the supervisory chain, and the reasons for making those contacts.

Personal contacts

At Level 1, contacts are with employees within the immediate work unit or related support units such as points-of-contact and document originators.

Level 1 is met. The appellant's regular and recurring contacts are with staff at various levels within the command, rating officials, individuals in higher-echelon agency personnel organizations and those of other military services. The majority of the contacts made by the appellant concern the ratings received by officer and enlisted personnel.

At Level 2, contacts are with employees at various levels throughout the agency who are involved in or affected by integrating or changing automated office procedures.

Level 2 is not met. The appellant does not have recurring contacts with individuals throughout the agency on matters related to integrating or changing office automation procedures.

Purpose of contacts

At Level a, the purpose of contacts is to exchange information about the assignment or methods to be used to complete the assignment.

Level a is met. The appellant establishes contacts to exchange information with rating officials concerning the accurate preparation of officer fitness reports, enlisted evaluations, and other documents that her organization is responsible for processing or preparing.

At Level b, the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, and integrate work processes or work methods for office automation between and among related work units.

Level b is not met. The record does not show that the appellant's regular and recurring work requires planning, coordinating, or integrating her work activities with those of other work units or organizations.

Factors 6 and 7 meet Level 1a for 30 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

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

Level 8-1, the highest level specified in the guide, is met. Work at this level is primarily sedentary in nature and requires no special physical demands. The appellant's work requires some walking, standing, bending and carrying light items such as papers, books, files, etc. The work also may require prolonged periods of sitting at and using a computer.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings and the safety regulations required.

Level 9-1, the highest level specified in the guide, is met. Work at this level normally involves minimal risks and requires observance of safety precautions typical of office settings. The appellant's work is performed in a well lit, climate controlled office environment and does not require observance of any special safety precautions.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

Summary

| <i>Factor</i> | <i>Level</i> | <i>Points</i> |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Knowledge required by the position | 1-3 | 350 |
| 2. Supervisory controls | 2-2 | 125 |
| 3. Guidelines | 3-2 | 125 |
| 4. Complexity | 4-2 | 75 |
| 5. Scope and effect | 5-1 | 25 |
| 6. and 7. Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts | 1a | 30 |
| 8. Physical demands | 8-1 | 5 |
| 9. Work environment | 9-1 | 5 |
| <i>Total</i> | | <i>740</i> |

A total of 740 points falls within the GS-4 point range of 655 to 850 in the OAGEG for the appellant's office automation work.

Evaluation using the Guide

The Guide provides general criteria for use in determining the grade level of non-supervisory clerical and assistance work. The Guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 to GS-7 and uses two criteria for grading purposes: *Nature of assignment* (which includes knowledge required and complexity of the work) and *Level of responsibility* (which includes supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts).

Nature of assignment

At the GS-4 level, the work involves performing a full range of standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems. Work consists of related steps, processes, or methods which require the employee to identify and recognize differences among a variety of recurring situations. The actions taken or responses made differ in nature and sequence because of differences in the particular characteristics of each case or transaction. The work requires some subject-matter knowledge of an organization's programs and operations; or of a type of business practice such as maintaining inventory records and replenishing supplies; or of a body of standardized rules, processes, or operations.

The GS-4 level is met. Comparable to work performed at this level, the appellant's work involves performing standard clerical assignments related to the receipt, review, editing, routing, tracking, and preparation of performance ratings of military personnel, and other documents, reports, etc., required by her organization's mission. The work requires that the appellant be knowledgeable of her organization's programs and operations as well as the specific rules and processes applicable to her areas of responsibility to provide information and answer questions.

At the GS-5 level, the employee performs work consisting of a full range of standard and non-standard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of non-recurring problems. Work includes a variety of assignments involving different and unrelated steps, processes, or methods. The employee must identify and understand the issues involved in each assignment and determine what steps and procedures are necessary and the order of their performance. Completion of each transaction typically involves selecting a course of action from a number of possibilities. The work requires extensive knowledge of an organization's rules, procedures, operations, or business practices to perform the more complex, interrelated, or one-of-a-kind processing procedures.

The GS-5 level is not met. The appellant's assignments are primarily of a standard nature involving recurring problems. Assignments are typically accomplished through the execution of a series of related steps, processes and methods. The appeal record provides no evidence that the appellant's work requires the depth of knowledge of the organization's rules, procedures, or practices described as typical for the GS-5 level.

Level of responsibility

At the GS-4 level, the supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments, and the employee uses initiative to complete work in accordance with accepted practices. Unusual situations may require the assistance of the supervisor or higher level employee, and the completed work may be reviewed more closely. Procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available. The employee uses judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures. The employee has contacts with co-workers and people outside the organization to exchange information and to resolve problems in connection with the immediate assignments.

The GS-4 level is met. The appellant exercises her own judgment, previous instructions, and standard procedures to independently carry out assignments with which she has previous experience. Supervisory input is typically provided only when unusual problems or matters requiring deviating from normal procedures or policies arise. Review of the appellant's completed work is in terms of accuracy and compliance with applicable directives. Extensive guidelines, in the form of oral instructions, standard office policies, organizational and agency instructions, etc., are available and cover the major aspects of her work. The appellant has contacts within the command and at other military commands to exchange information and verify references and dates on rating documents and reports.

At the GS-5 level, the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance on assignments that do not have clear precedents. The employee works in accordance with accepted practices and completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting goals. Extensive guides in the form of instructions, manuals, regulations, and precedents apply to the work. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines for application and adapting them according to circumstances of the specific case or transaction. A number of

procedural problems may arise which also require interpretation and adaptation of established guides. Often, the employee must determine which of several alternative guidelines to use. If existing guidelines cannot be applied, the employee refers the matter to the supervisor. Contacts are with a variety of persons within and outside the agency for the purpose of receiving or providing information relating to the work or for the purpose of resolving operating problems in connection with recurring responsibilities.

The GS-5 level is not met. The appellant's work is performed in accordance with standard procedures, office policies, and organizational and agency instructions. She does not use judgment in interpreting or adapting available or established guidance and procedures to resolve any problems that may be encountered. Any issues or situations that are not specifically addressed by existing guidance and/or procedures are required to be referred to the supervisor.

Both *Nature of Assignment* and *Level of Responsibility* are evaluated at GS-4. Therefore, the appellant's clerical duties equate to GS-4.

In summary, both the appellant's office automation duties and her general clerical duties are evaluated at GS-4; therefore, her position is properly graded at that level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-4.