

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

Dallas Field Services Group  
1100 Commerce Street, Room 441  
Dallas, TX 75242

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

**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** Computer Assistant  
GS-335-9

**Organization:** Resources Flight  
[number] Civil Engineering Squadron  
[number] Support Group  
[number] Fighter Wing  
Air Education & Training Command  
Department of the Air Force  
[location]

**OPM decision:** Computer Assistant  
GS-335-9

**OPM decision number:** C-0335-09-05

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

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Bonnie J. Brandon  
Classification Appeals Officer

April 18, 2003

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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]

[appellant's civilian personnel office]

Director, Civilian Personnel Operations  
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Department of the Air Force  
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## **Introduction**

On December 23, 2002, the Dallas Oversight Division, now the Dallas Field Services Group, of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant's name], an employee in the Resources Flight, [number] Civil Engineering Squadron (CES), [number] Support Group, [number] Fighter Wing, Air Education and Training Command (AETC), Department of the Air Force, [location]. Her position is currently classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9. She believes the position should be classified as Information Technology Specialist (System Administrator), GS-2210-11. We received the complete appeal administrative report on January 21, 2003. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code.

## **Background information**

The appellant's position was previously classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-9. After the GS-334 series and classification standard were canceled in May 2001, the agency applied the newly-issued Job Family Position Classification Standard for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200, to the appellant's position and classified it as Information Technology Specialist (System Administrator), GS-2210-9. The appellant was assigned to the GS-2210-9 position on September 8, 2002. After receiving guidance from AETC headquarters in November 2002 on the application and interpretation of the GS-2200 standard, the local human resources office reviewed the appellant's position and changed the classification to Computer Assistant, GS-335-9, on November 26. The appellant was formally assigned to Core Personnel Document (CPD) number [number] on December 15, 2002.

According to the appellant, CPD number [number] is a generic and incomplete description of her duties. Specifically, she says she performs eight functions that are not addressed in the CPD. Those functions include responsibility as Unit Software License Manager, Equipment Custodian Officer, Functional System Administrator, Network Administrator, Unit Computer Security (COMPUSEC) Manager, Security Administrator for the Interim Work Information Management Systems (IWIMS) and the Automated Civil Engineer System (ACES), Unit Information Operations Condition (INFOCON) Manager, and Unit Automated Data Processing (ADP) Equipment Manager. The appellant has authority to initiate or review and recommend approval for the purchase and disposal of computer hardware and software to the CES Commander. The supervisor agrees that CPD number [number] is generic, but he believes it is a complete description of the appellant's duties.

## **General issue**

A position description is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Position classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision classifies a real operating position and not simply the work depicted in a position description. Therefore, this decision is based on the actual work assigned to and performed by the appellant.

We conducted telephone audits with the appellant on February 25, February 26, and March 4, 2003, to supplement information provided by the appellant and the agency in the written record. On March 3, we interviewed her supervisor by telephone to clarify responsibilities and authorities assigned to the appellant's position. Our fact-finding shows that CPD number [number] covers the appellant's major duties and responsibilities and meets the standard of adequacy as described in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

### **Position information**

The Resources Flight manages the CES resources and provides support in financial management, management of real estate and ADP assets, and CES organizational policies and procedures. A GS-301-12 Civil Engineering Resources Officer supervises the Flight staff, which includes one GS-1170-11 Realty Officer, one GS-1170-9 Realty Specialist, one GS-899-9 position, one GS-560-9 Budget Analyst, three Budget Technicians (one GS-561-5, one GS-561-6, and one GS-561-7), and two GS-335-9 Computer Assistants, one of whom is the appellant. As the senior Computer Assistant, the appellant serves as a technical resource for the other Computer Assistant position. According to information in the appeal record, the two Computer Assistants provide technical support on computer hardware and software to approximately 400 CES employees, located in 26 facilities, utilizing about 300 computer workstations with related peripheral equipment. Most, but not all, of this equipment is connected to the AFB's Local Area Network (LAN).

The CES's mission is to maintain [name] AFB facilities and deliver combat support anytime and anywhere needed. The appellant's major duties and responsibilities in support of this mission include monitoring and maintaining operation of CES computer equipment and information systems, recommending selection of and installing new computer hardware and software, providing assistance to users regarding operation and maintenance of the systems, and administering the computer security program for the CES. Her duties include being the first point of contact support for users in CES; administering the Fire Department's server; and coordinating systems services or training provided to users in the CES by the Communications Squadron, COMPUSEC, AETC headquarters, INFOCON, the Field Assistance Branch (FAB) at Gunter AFB, and vendors.

The appellant sets up and maintains CES computer workstations which includes assembling computer system components, using established configurations to set up the workstations based on the type of user assigned, and connecting workstations to the LAN and servers that are maintained by the Communications Squadron. She provides management and users with information on system limitations as needed. When equipment is installed by the vendor, she coordinates the installation of the equipment and schedules users in CES for training provided by the vendor. The appellant also maintains an area specifically set aside for computer training where six students can be accommodated at any one time. They can use any of the commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) tutorial packages available in compact disc, digital video disk, or video home system formats.

The appellant responds to user-reported problems and issues on a daily basis. She works with users to identify the origin of the problem, troubleshoots hardware and software problems, and ensures the problem is resolved.

All servers except the Fire Department server have been removed from the appellant's work area, with most servers being relocated to the Communications Squadron. As a result of these changes, the appellant, functioning as the CES Network Administrator, is now responsible for system connectivity from CES users to the server decks. The Communications Squadron has connectivity responsibility for the server decks themselves and the rest of the system. The appellant's system administrator duties include duties such as modifying user information for secure access to authorized users; reporting connectivity problems to the Communications Squadron if the problem is at the server deck or beyond; maintaining the Fire Department server by backing up the databases, resetting the server, changing tapes, and updating virus software; and modifying and maintaining computer databases as directed by system administrators at the AFB, AETC headquarters, Communications Squadron (including the COMPUSEC and INFOCON sections), or the FAB.

As the CES Unit Software License Manager, the appellant maintains an inventory of software registrations and licensures, updating records as needed. As the Unit ADP Equipment Manager, the appellant maintains records on computer hardware assigned to CES. As the CES Equipment Custodian Officer, the appellant tracks the age of all computer related equipment in CES from date of acquisition to date of transfer to the Disposal Reclamation Management Office for disposal. She plans and recommends purchase of equipment and installs replacements for all CES hardware that is over three years old.

In carrying out her responsibilities as the Functional System Administrator for CES and the System Security Administrator for IWIMS/ACES, the appellant ensures permissions and passwords are requested and received; unlocks user accounts; monitors security of CES hardware, software, and data; and installs security banners and antivirus software on CES computers. As CES's COMPUSEC Manager, the appellant assists users with prevention and eradication of viruses and ensures infected systems and files are properly isolated and cleaned. The appellant maintains records of employee network access requests sent to and approved by the COMPUSEC for all CES users. She also conducts security orientations for new CES users and refresher security training as needed and disperses security updates and information to users in CES.

The appellant issues information bulletins by electronic mail to CES users regarding hardware and software problems as determined by notices and issuances forwarded from AETC headquarters, the Communications Squadron (including COMPUSEC and INFOCON sections), the AFB, and the FAB. She modifies materials from these offices as necessary to improve clarity and readability for CES users or to adapt guidance to the needs of each flight within CES. For example, as the Unit INFOCON Manager, the appellant may modify an INFOCON directive for the AFB to provide flight specific instructions for CES users.

### **Series, title, and standard determination**

The agency placed the appellant's position in the Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335, for which there is a published classification standard, and titled it Computer Assistant. The appellant believes that she is performing two-grade interval information technology (IT) work.

The IT Management Series, GS-2210, is a two-grade interval series for positions with responsibility to plan, design, develop, acquire, document, test, implement, integrate, maintain,

or modify computer systems. GS-2210 equipment work focuses on system architecture, including defining system hardware requirements. This work exceeds the level of work assigned to and performed by the appellant. The GS-2200 standard discusses how to distinguish between specialist and assistant work. It states that positions responsible for monitoring the operation of small networked systems, adding network users, updating passwords, installing or assisting users in installing COTS, configuring hardware and software according to instructions, troubleshooting minor problems, and responding to less complex user questions are excluded from the GS-2210 series. These and similar functions do not require regular and recurring application of a full range of knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods. The appellant's position is a direct match to this exclusion. Functions covered by the GS-2210 series are not part of CES's mission. Such functions are vested in other components of the agency, including the Communications Squadron and higher-level organizations as previously identified. Therefore, the GS-2200 standard may not be used to evaluate the appellant's position.

The duties and responsibilities of the appellant's position are characteristic of the kind of work described in the Occupational Information section of the GS-335 standard as assistance or support to other employees who design, operate, or use ADP systems applications and products by performing work in one or a mix of functional areas. The appellant's position supports and augments the work of several server systems administrators, software application developers, as well as specialists in Communications Squadron, COMPUSEC, and INFOCON functions. Like computer assistants, the appellant operates within established methods and procedures and, when she encounters a technical problem that cannot be resolved by applying or adapting standard operating procedures and guidelines, she seeks assistance from an appropriate source (i.e., COMPUSEC section, a hardware/software vendor, the Communications Squadron help desk, FAB help desk, or AETC headquarters). The appellant's work requires knowledge of external data processing sequences, controls, procedures, or user and programming languages rather than in-depth knowledge of computer requirements or techniques associated with development and design of data processing systems as described in the GS-2200 standard.

The position is properly classified to the GS-335 series and evaluated by application of the grading criteria in the GS-335 classification standard. Based on the grade level analysis that follows, we find the position is properly allocated as Computer Assistant, GS-335.

### **Grade determination**

The GS-335 standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each 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 aspects, 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. Each factor level has a corresponding point value. The total points are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion chart in the standard. Our evaluation 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 which the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories,

principles and concepts) 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, the knowledge must be required and applied.

At Level 1-6, the highest level described in the standard, in addition to the knowledge described at Level 1-5, employees use extensive knowledge of at least one multiprocessor and typically several single processor computer systems. They monitor processing work flow and diagnose and resolve error and problem conditions involving many program interrelationships and interlocking computer systems. The work at this level encompasses many of the problem solving aspects of specialist work concerned with effective program implementation and processing except those requiring programming corrections or equipment repair. This work requires extensive knowledge of computer equipment, internal computer processes, applications, and utility programs and magnetic media. It also requires knowledge of a wide range of analytical and diagnostic methods, procedures and principles. In addition, knowledge is required of some elements of programming, systems analysis, and equipment operations. The knowledge is used to identify the nature and source of problems occurring during processing and to plan and implement solutions. Employees at this level commonly use these knowledges to advise specialists in setting run instructions and developing effective operating methods. Work at this level commonly involves taking action to order and interpret system dumps, order and implement back-up recovery procedures to replace faulty tapes or disks, reallocating equipment usage to work around equipment malfunctions, etc.

The appellant's position meets, but does not exceed, Level 1-6. As at this level, the appellant's work requires knowledge of a wide range of computer techniques, requirements, sources, and procedures. Comparable to Level 1-6, the appellant's work also requires extensive knowledge of the current system hardware and software, operating systems, and application software packages that are used in CES. The work also requires knowledge of information system security principles and methods, technical documentation requirements, and commercially available security products to provide guidance and assistance in implementing antivirus software and updating signature files. Troubleshooting skills are necessary to monitor, operate, and maintain CES's information systems equipment, which includes microcomputers, scanners, terminals, a system file server, and a variety of printers. For example, the appellant's work requires sufficient knowledge and skills related to telecommunications, LAN connections, ports, and switches to maintain and troubleshoot workstations interfacing with the file server and the LAN. This knowledge is used to identify the sources of operational failures in the system and to take actions to resolve problems and restore operations. Knowledge of the equipment and system requirements is used to plan, purchase, and coordinate the installation of new systems or the upgrading of system components or infrastructure within the framework established or imposed by [name] AFB, Communications Squadron (including COMPUSEC and INFOCON) at the installation level, FAB, or higher levels within AETC. The level of knowledge required for the appellant's position to troubleshoot and resolve problems, coordinate installation of new hardware and software, and recommend acquisition of or purchase new hardware or software is indicative of Level 1-6.

We assign Level 1-6 (950 points).

### *Factor 2, Supervisory controls*

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the responsibility of the employee, and the degree to which work is reviewed by the supervisor.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard, the supervisor provides direction on objectives and priorities for new work, deadlines, and deadline changes for new and established work. The employee identifies the work to be done, plans and carries out the steps required, and submits completed work to users (programmers, operators, functional users) without supervisory review. The employee independently deviates from instructions to provide for lower or higher priorities and other changes based on past experience and flexibility within processing specifications. The employee commonly adapts or develops new work procedures and instructions for application by self and others. The employee will seek supervisory assistance and discuss problems related to the work such as when processing requests appear to exceed system capacity or could have an adverse effect on other processing requirements. Completed work is reviewed for conformity to deadlines and accepted practices on the basis of responses from technical and functional users regarding the quality and accuracy of work products. Work methods are not normally reviewed unless a recurring common pattern of problems develops.

The appellant's position meets, but does not exceed, Level 2-3. Similar to this level, the appellant is responsible for determining the approaches to be taken and the methodology to be used in accomplishing her assignments, such as providing computer support to avoid work stoppages in CES processing caused by computer hardware or software problems. Based on her expertise, the appellant has significant latitude to independently plan and carry out her assignments; interpret policies, procedures, and practices based on established objectives; and resolve the majority of conflicts that arise. For example, the appellant usually resolves minor, accidental, or first-time security breaches with the user. Security breaches of a more sensitive nature and those identified by COMPUSEC or Communications Squadron are reported to the appellant's supervisor who contacts the Wing Commander or Squadron Commander as appropriate. Comparable to positions at Level 2-3, the appellant notifies the supervisor of potentially controversial issues (such as security breaches) and seeks supervisory assistance in those instances where a technical resource has not been established or is not available. She also keeps the supervisor informed about any work issues that indicate a pattern or trend so that he can discuss the issue at the next management briefing. Characteristic of Level 2-3, the appellant notifies the supervisor daily on work accomplished and work in progress, and the supervisor reviews completed work in terms of adequacy based on feedback from users in CES about the quality and accuracy of the work.

We assign Level 2-3 (275 points).

### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

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

At Level 3-3, the highest level described in the standard, the employee works with new requirements or new applications for which only general guidelines are available. The employee uses judgment in adjusting the most appropriate guidelines to fit new processing requirements or



develops new methods for accomplishing the work. Guidelines may require modification to provide for adding new forms of input, allowing for flexible as opposed to fixed scheduling, adjusting to new or conflicting requirements, or to adapting to a new hardware or software capability.

The nature of the appellant's guidelines, the judgment required, and the need to modify existing guidance meet, but do not exceed, Level 3-3. The appellant's guidelines consist of various agency regulations, manuals, instructions, and directives issued by the Department of Defense, Air Force, the local AFB, the FAB, AETC headquarters, Communications Squadron, COMPUSEC, and INFOCON. Available guidance may also be in the form of user manuals, training books, procedural materials provided by hardware and software vendors, and information available on the Internet. Although much of the guidance is specific in nature, the appellant is required to use judgment to interpret, adapt, and apply this guidance, as at Level 3-3, to determine which is more appropriate for resolving local problems relating to computer workstations or system operations and to integrate new hardware and software into existing systems to maintain compatibility and accomplish work.

We credit Level 3-3 (275 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 the work.

Level 4-4, the highest level described in the standard, is distinguished from Level 4-3 by (1) the variety and complexity of operating systems monitored, (2) the nature and variety of problems encountered and resolved, and (3) the nature of independent decisions made by the employee. Specifically, employees at this level perform problem solving duties involving a wide range of problem or error conditions in equipment, program data, and processing methods and procedures. This diagnosis and resolution of error and problem conditions involves equipment configurations having different operating characteristics, a wide variety of data and programs, and many different processes and methods to arrive at solutions or develop new procedures. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include assessing unusual circumstances or conditions, developing variations in approach to fit the specific problems, or dealing with incomplete or conflicting data.

The appellant's duties meet, but do not exceed, Level 4-4 based on the range and variety of tasks that the appellant performs independently and the problems that she resolves. Like employees at this level, the appellant works with systems that have different equipment configurations and processing methods and procedures. As needed, the appellant obtains input from management regarding where new equipment will be installed. She has primary responsibility for ensuring that new or upgraded components interface and are compatible with existing hardware and software. When faced with a technical problem that she is unable to correct, the appellant contacts an appropriate resource for assistance, for example, AETC headquarters, the FAB help desk, the Communications Squadron help desk, including COMPUSEC and INFOCON, or a hardware/software vendor (typically Dell or MicroSoft). When a user in CES reports a suspected virus infection, the appellant, as the COMPUSEC Manager for CES, shuts down the

system, isolates and eradicates virus conditions, and reports the situation to COMPUSEC. The decisions that the appellant makes and the problems she resolves are equivalent to the description for Level 4-4.

Based on her knowledge of CES's work, processes, and computer systems currently in service, the appellant researches hardware specifications and pricing by using the Internet and technical manuals to determine the most appropriate replacement hardware to purchase. She initiates or reviews purchase requests for replacement equipment. She also certifies that new equipment requested by CES flights is compatible with the current systems. The appellant forwards all purchase requests to the appropriate offices, including the CES Commander's office and the Communications Squadron, for funding authorization and approval. Her recommendations are usually approved without question. The appellant's level of research and determination of compatibility of replacement equipment are commensurate with Level 4-4.

We credit Level 4-4 (225 points).

#### *Factor 5, Scope and effect*

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

Level 5-3, the highest level described in the standard, is distinguished from Level 5-2 by the addition of requirements for solving problems and answering technical questions about control, scheduling, and/or direct support functions. The problems and error conditions encountered are conventional to data processing although solutions are not always covered by established or standardized procedures. Results of the work affect the efficiency of processing services, adequacy of products used in subsequent activities, and processing procedures and methods.

The appellant's work meets, but does not exceed, Level 5-3. Comparable to this level, the appellant's duties involve resolving problems in accordance with established criteria, answering technical questions, and troubleshooting hardware and software problems. The appellant's work affects activities within the CES.

We credit Level 5-3 (150 points).

#### *Factor 6, Personal contacts*

This factor considers face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain.

At Level 6-2, the highest level described in the standard, contacts are with specialists and recipients of services who are employees of the same agency but outside the data processing organization; with employees of other agencies who use the facility; or with contractors' representatives such as vendor repair technicians or customer engineers. These contacts are structured and routine, and the role of each participant is readily determined.

The appellant's contacts meet, but do not exceed, Level 6-2. Comparable to this level, contacts are with employees and managers within the agency, typically outside the Resources Flight, but within the CES in structured settings. The appellant also has contact with various levels within the agency (i.e., [name] AFB, AETC, etc.) and with hardware and software vendors. Such contacts take place in a moderately structured setting, similar to situations described at Level 6-2.

We assign Level 6-2 (25 points).

#### *Factor 7, Purpose of personal contacts*

In General Schedule occupations, the purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

Consistent with Level 7-2, the highest level described in the standard, the appellant's contacts are for the purpose of coordinating work, resolving hardware and software problems, providing technical advice and assistance to users, training new and existing users on new or upgraded systems hardware and software, and discussing issues related to automated systems, equipment and software acquisition with managers.

We credit Level 7-2 (50 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 physical exertion involved in the work.

The appellant's position is comparable to Level 8-2 where the work requires extended periods of standing, walking, stretching, bending, stooping or carrying of loads of paper, tapes, or cards that may weigh as much as 45 pounds. The appellant regularly moves equipment between computer workstations within the CES which requires disconnecting and reinstalling computer equipment and repositioning other equipment such as printers and fax machines. These duties require stooping, bending, crouching and/or kneeling as well as carrying heavier loads.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 8-3 where the work requires regular and recurring lifting and carrying of objects of heavy weight (over 50 pounds) and occasional lifting and carrying of heavier materials.

We credit Level 8-2 (20 points).

#### *Factor 9, Work environment*

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

The appellant's position meets Level 9-1 where the work involves the common risks or discomforts, requiring normal safety precautions typical of offices, meeting rooms, libraries and

the like. When setting up workstations or installing computer equipment, the appellant must observe common electrical safety practices. As at Level 9-1, the appellant's work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

Unlike positions at Level 9-2, the appellant's work does not involve moderate risk requiring exercise of safety precautions when operating or working around equipment with exposed moving parts such as decollators, bursters, and others. The appellant's work does not require special clothing or protective equipment.

We assign Level 9-1 (5 points).

### *Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-6	950
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts and	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-1	5
<i>Total</i>		1,975

A total of 1,975 points is credited. Using the grade conversion table in the GS-335 standard, 1,975 points fall in the GS-9 range (1,855-2,100).

### **Decision**

The position is properly classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9.