

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Payroll Specialist
GS-501-11

Organization: Payroll Section
Classification and Compensation Branch
Human Resources Division
[the activity]
Bureau of Customs
and Border Protection
Department of Homeland Security
[city and state]

OPM decision: Civilian Pay Technician
GS-544-8

OPM decision number: C-0544-08-01

/s/ Kevin E. Mahoney

Kevin E. Mahoney
Deputy Associate Director
Center for Merit System Accountability
Human Capital Leadership
and Merit System Accountability

July 27, 2006

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision lowers the grade of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the sixth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 5 CFR 511.702. The applicable provisions of parts 351, 432, 536, and 752 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, must be followed in implementing the decision. If the appellant is entitled to grade retention, the two-year retention period begins on the date this decision is implemented. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

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Introduction

On February 10, 2006, the Dallas Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant]. Her position is currently classified as Payroll Specialist, GS-501-11, but she believes it should be classified as Human Resources (HR) Specialist (Compensation), GS-201-12. The position is assigned to the Human Resources Division's (HRD) Payroll Section at the [activity], Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in [city and state]. We received the agency's complete administrative report on April 11, 2006. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 (b) of title 5, United States Code.

Background

The appellant and three other employees requested, through their supervisor, that the agency review the classification of their position. This request was made by email on October 31, 2005. The [activity] report indicated that two of the employees were assigned to Payroll Specialist, GS-501-11, position description (PD) [number]; and two were assigned to a Financial Program/Cost Analyst, GS-501-11, PD [number] position. The review found four of the five major duties of PD [number] did not apply to the unit or the work assigned to the employees. The report stated these duties pertained to analyzing and evaluating efficiency and effectiveness of operating programs and organizations, while the incumbents were concerned with matters of pay setting, entitlements, back pay, and allowances issues. The [activity] recommended the four specialists be reassigned to PD [number] as Human Resources Specialist (Compensation), GS-201-11, and forwarded the report to CBP Headquarters. The four employees and their supervisor were informed by email, through the [activity], on December 15 any reassignment from the GS-501 series to the GS-201 series would be delayed until a commercial activities study (A-76) was completed and similar positions were reviewed. CBP Headquarters agreed the Financial Program/Cost Analyst PD [number] was totally inappropriate and that personnel actions were to be taken to reassign the two employees to the same PD [number], Payroll Specialist, GS-501-11, as the appellant and a second employee. The appellant subsequently filed an appeal with OPM.

General issues

The appellant and her supervisor stated during the audit that the work done in the Payroll Section is similar to that performed by other Payroll Sections within CBP, those offices have converted their payroll specialists to GS-201 positions and upgraded them. By law, a classification appeal decision is based on comparing the appellant's current duties and responsibilities to OPM position classification standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to the standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's current duties to other positions, which may or may not be classified correctly, as a basis for deciding an appeal.

Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify positions based on comparison to OPM standards and guidelines. However, the agency also has primary responsibility for ensuring its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers her position so similar to others that they warrant the same classification, she may pursue the matter by writing to her agency's HR headquarters office. She should specify the precise organizational location, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as the appealed position, the agency must correct the classification of the positions to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to the appellant the difference between the appealed position and the others.

Position information

The initial administrative report, dated April 5, 2006, provided and evaluated PD [number], dated May 5, 1997. It also included a personnel action document denoting the appellant's official PD as number [number], dated June 1, 1995. Consequently, we asked CBP headquarters to resolve the discrepancy. On April 11, they provided PD [number] and a certification from the appellant's supervisor that stated:

The position description for Payroll Specialist, GS-501-11 (I&NS) is no longer a true reflection of the duties and responsibilities that are performed. The duties required of this position are more accurately described in the position Human Resources Specialist/Compensation GS-201-11/12 (DHS).

That GS-12 PD describes major duties and responsibilities including providing comprehensive HR management advisory and technical services on substantive organizational functions and work practices in the assigned area. These include identifying, evaluating, and recommending to management appropriate HR interventions to resolve complex HR problems and issues; developing new or modified HR work methods, approaches, or procedures; and developing and delivering briefings, project papers, staff reports, and correspondence to managers to foster understanding and acceptance of findings and recommendations.

The [activity]-HRD classification report, dated November 21, 2005, evaluated PD [number]. It stated that the duties and responsibilities "essentially remained intact" but it was classified in 1997, prior to the issuance of the GS-201 classification standard with a compensation specialty. The report then states:

Many of the duties and responsibilities outlined in the Payroll Services Specialist, GS-501-11 PD were applicable to legacy I&NS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] but are no longer supportable, however, one basic duty remains intact.

That duty is serving as an expert in time and leave administration. The CBP headquarters evaluation agreed with that determination.

The appellant bases her disagreement with her PD on the statements in the [activity] report. She also states that her primary function is the performance of work that involves analyzing, interpreting, developing, and/or interpreting laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidance involving subject matter areas within compensation administration and advising management on the use of compensation flexibilities to help recruit, manage, and retain employees.

A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or job by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the work that makes up the duties and responsibilities performed by the employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision classifies a real operating position, and not simply the PD. Therefore, this decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision.

On May 12, 2006, we conducted an on-site position audit and interviewed the appellant's first-line supervisor. During the interview, the supervisor stated the duties and responsibilities in PD number [number] are accurate and that serving as a systems administrator for various payroll systems referred to in PD [number] and pulling requested reports are no longer valid duties. However, she still believes that the standard PD for HR Specialist (Compensation), GS-201-12, better describes the job.

We have considered the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency. Based on the record, we find the primary difference between PD [number] and PD [number] involves serving as systems administrator for various payroll/time and attendance automated systems used by the I&NS Region. These duties are no longer performed. Although outdated, PD [number] does include the major duties assigned to the appellant and we hereby incorporate it by reference into this decision. The agency should prepare an updated PD to reflect assignment to the current agency and the duties and responsibilities as currently performed by the appellant.

The Payroll Section consists of the following positions: a Supervisory Payroll Specialist, GS-501-12; three Payroll Specialists, GS-501-11 (one vacant); one Payroll Specialist, GS-501-9; and two Human Resources Assistants (Compensation), GS-203-7. The unit is responsible for the administration and implementation of payroll function and policy. It serves approximately 8,500 employees in the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by resolving a wide variety of payroll issues and problems. Work assignments are generally made by geographic area.

The record indicates the appellant serves as an expert in time and leave administration, providing guidance and assistance to field offices and to the pay technicians when complex issues arise. She responds to inquiries from local/field staff concerning adjustments to pay and/or leave problems, and making adjustments to employee leave records for corrections and transfer-in of leave. The supervisor estimates the appellant spends approximately 50 percent of her time on back pay issues, 25 percent on requests

for waivers and hearings, 15 percent on researching questions, and 10 percent on Office of Workers Compensation Program (OWCP) issues.

The appellant discussed and provided examples of requests for buy-back of leave used during an OWCP injury. She will receive the employee's request, calculate/verify the leave and payment amounts, sign as payroll specialist, and forward the case to the supervisor for forwarding to the Department of Labor. She provided an example and discussed her role in processing EEO and court settlement agreements which she feels are her most complex and important work. In the example, a quality step increase was granted retroactively and an amount of leave was to be restored. She had to calculate the back pay and interest, adjusting the salary and step to reflect the award, and restore the annual leave. The appellant signed the funding request, the supervisor approved it, and compliance is reported through channels to the EEO office and ultimately to the National Finance Center (NFC) for payment.

The supervisor indicated that when an employee receives a billing; i.e. Notice of Intent to Offset Salary, because of a pay processing error, the appellant will complete an investigation report form. The appellant said that the system identifies the processor of the action. She will contact that individual to determine the cause of the overpayment. She will advise the affected employee on how to request a waiver or a hearing. Information on the request is compiled in the report form that is based on requirements of 5 USC 5584, 31 CFR Part 900, 31 USC 3711, and Department of Justice Order 2120.4E to approve a compromise. Based on information and responses to questions, a recommendation is made to approve or deny the request. The appellant makes the initial recommendation which goes through supervisory channels with the final decision made by the Bureau's Chief Financial Officer.

The appellant provides training as needed for new time and attendance clerks. She answers questions from employees, timekeepers, supervisors, managers, and staff personnel on rules, regulations, procedures, etc., related to time and attendance, back pay, retroactive payments, salary offsets, overseas allowances, and post differentials. She occasionally prepares proposed responses to Congressional inquiries to explain such things as payroll actions affecting an employee or the status of actions being corrected and may be assigned to carry out special projects not related to the day-to-day processing/resolving of time and attendance problems. In the example provided, the supervisor indicated that Headquarters requested the [activity] and another payroll office to assist in tasks related to a FLSA case won by a group of Immigration Officers. The staff had to obtain records of personnel actions, request pay listings, contact employees, calculate payments, and prepare the listing for NFC payment.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency has determined the title and series of the position as HR Specialist (Compensation), GS-201, and the appellant and her supervisor agree. The Job Family Position Classification Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-200, states that the GS-201 series covers two-grade interval

administrative positions that manage, supervise, administer, advise on, or deliver human resources management products or services. The compensation specialty includes work that involves analyzing, interpreting, developing, and/or implementing laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidance involving subject matter areas within compensation administration (e.g., pay and/or leave administration) and advising management on the use of compensation flexibilities to help recruit, manage, and retain employees. These positions require as their paramount qualifications an understanding of the relationship of compensation to management problems and to personnel management objectives, methods, and procedures; analytical ability; and knowledge of the principles, practices, and techniques of compensation management.

Two-grade interval specialist work within the GS-200 Group involves the exercise of analytical ability, judgment, and application of a substantial body of knowledge of principles, concepts, and practices applicable to one or more areas of personnel management. While specialized education is not required of these positions, they do involve the type of skill (analysis, research, writing, and judgment) typically acquired in a college education or through progressively responsible experience. Employees engaged in this work are concerned with analyzing, evaluating, modifying, and developing the basic programs, policies, and procedures that affect human resources management within an organization.

The GS-201 compensation specialty is intended for HR specialists whose services include compensation administration and analysis, salary and wage administration, and advice to management in developing and implementing compensation strategies that will ensure the effective recruitment, management, and retention of a high-quality and diverse workforce. HR Specialists (Compensation), just above the basic entry level, typically provide advice and assistance to managers and employees on basic pay, overtime or leave entitlement questions or problems; interpret and apply pay rules and regulations to analyze employee and payroll information to identify and resolve pay-setting errors or discrepancies; **and** analyze pay and leave laws and regulations to assist in developing guidance and other informational and training materials for managers and employees.

At full performance levels, (e.g., GS-11 and 12), they typically advise management, employees, and union officials on work scheduling and hours of work requirements and flexibilities (including alternative work schedules) and premium pay entitlements associated with various work scheduling scenarios (e.g., overtime, night or Sunday pay); estimate the payroll costs that may be incurred from various work scheduling options; provide advice on employee grievances and claims involving pay and leave entitlements; *and* analyze regulations to develop operating procedures or processes for an organization's alternative work schedule, leave bank and leave sharing, and/or recruitment, relocation, and retention incentive programs.

Classification decisions are based on the duties and responsibilities of the position, qualifications required, purpose of the work, and management's intent in designing the position. While the appellant, her supervisor, and her agency believe the duties are best classified under the GS-201 series, we do not agree.

The appellant and her supervisor, in discussing the duties she performs, provided no evidence of the kinds of work described above and that show the depth of knowledge required to integrate the organization's mission with the theories and principles involved in creating and maintaining an effective compensation program. Instead, the appellant provided, and the supervisor confirmed, many examples of one-grade interval support work such as: processing back leave for OWCP purposes, back pay awards and settlements, retroactive manual pay adjustments and personnel actions, salary offsets, debts, and waiver and hearing requests, and responding to questions concerning entitlement to overseas allowances and post differentials. She provides time and attendance training as required for new T&A clerks by explaining established pay and time and attendance policies and procedures, and resolving factual discrepancies. The advice given to employees and supervisors responds to such questions as an individual's entitlement to cost of living allowances, locality pay, law enforcement officer and/or administratively uncontrollable overtime (AUO) pay. Both the appellant and supervisor agree that she does not develop any operating procedures. This work is done at higher levels in the organization. Both indicated that examples such as estimating payroll costs for various work scheduling options are considered "budget issues" that their office does not perform. Most of the work performed involves adjusting pay and leave accounts for individual employees to correct errors. This work requires practical knowledge gained through experience and/or specific training in the application of applicable laws, regulations, and procedures. The duties described involve only case-by-case processing without the programmatic responsibilities, analysis for systemic problems, or the management advisory responsibilities typical of two-grade interval work covered by the GS-201 series.

The appellant's current PD places the position in the GS-501 series. In order to be classified in this series, the work of the position must be of a two-grade interval nature which performs, supervises, or manages administrative work of a fiscal, financial management, accounting or budgetary nature and cannot be classified to another more specific professional or administrative series in the Accounting and Budget Group, GS-500. Administrative work involves analytical ability, judgment, discretion, and personal responsibility, and the application of a substantial body of knowledge of principles, concepts, and practices applicable to one or more fields of administration or management.

By contrast, technical work depends more upon extensive experience and training in the practical aspects of a field where the employee can, for example, relieve a higher graded accountant or auditor of the more routine tasks involved in their disciplines. An example of technician work may include routine or repetitive problems that have only one correct answer and that are solved by applying clear-cut rules such as performing repetitive arithmetic computations or making comparisons between two or more sets of facts. The appellant's work does require a high degree of technical skill, care, and precision, but does not require the analytical judgments and the application of the substantial knowledge of administrative work in the financial management field required for two-grade interval work.

The appellant's duties are covered by the Civilian Pay Technician Series, GS-544, as described in the JFS for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work, GS-500C (JFS 500C). This series includes positions that involve the determination of pay, the maintenance of payroll records, and the completion of related reports pertaining to civilian employees of the Federal Government, and/or with the establishment, maintenance, review, and disposition of time and leave records for civilian employees of the Federal Government. The work requires (1) substantial knowledge of civilian pay and/or leave rules, regulations, procedures, programs, and systems requirements, and (2) usually, knowledge of those civilian personnel rules and regulations that affect pay.

Civilian Pay employees perform clerical and technician work resulting in the bi-weekly or monthly determination of pay for civilian employees. They examine personnel actions, pay changes, and employee requests and make appropriate changes to master records that serve as a basis for pay and leave computation and affect the disbursement of pay. They answer requests from and provide advice to employees, supervisors, financial management specialists, and to personnel specialists on rules, regulations, and procedures relating to pay. Some employees post, examine, compute, and balance hours on time and leave records and other required bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports. They also answer questions on leave regulations, procedures, and balances. Some employees may make collections not specifically related to pay and leave, maintain retirement records, or process health benefits forms.

Some civilian payroll employees post, examine, balance, compute, and extract data from the records, and prepare a variety of reports or vouchers. They are responsible for the accuracy of the authorization documents that affect the propriety of pay as well as for the accuracy of computations. They verify employees' taxes, retirement, health benefits, life insurance, union dues, thrift-saving plan (TSP), and saving bonds. These employees determine eligibility for pay and benefits based on such factors as the type of appointment and pay plan involved, the tour of duty, and the location of employment.

Typical of positions classified in the GS-544 series, the appellant is responsible for resolving automated master file records problems. She provides guidance and assistance to field offices and to other pay technicians on complex pay and leave questions. She processes pay and leave documents and answers questions on pay and leave regulations and procedures. Thus, the appellant's position is covered by the GS-544 series. Civilian Pay Technician is the basic title for all nonsupervisory positions GS-5 and above processing pay and/or leave documents or maintaining pay and related records. The JFS 500C contains grade level criteria for evaluating positions, which we have applied below.

Grade determination

The JFS 500C uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) that employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard or guide 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. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

Factor 1 measures the nature and extent of information or facts which a technician 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 that knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, knowledge must be required and applied.

At Level 1-5, in addition to the knowledge required at Level 1-4, the work requires a broad, in-depth practical knowledge of financial management (e.g. payroll) technical methods, transactions, techniques, precedent cases, and procedures to resolve especially difficult or sensitive problems. The technician must have knowledge of the interrelationships of various systems applications and computer file systems and content. At this level, the technician requires knowledge of related financial regulations (e.g. payroll) and rulings covering diverse types of transactions to typically function as a technical authority for the resolution of an extensive range of issues or problems.

The knowledge required by the appellant's assignments meets, but does not exceed, Level 1-5, the highest level described in the JFS. Like Level 1-5 and its illustrations, the appellant resolves difficult and sensitive problems and functions as a technical authority for the resolution of a wide range of issues or problems involving pay issues. She works with the HRD Systems manager in resolving difficult and unusual pay issues requiring manipulation of data either not in the agency system or accessible under restricted circumstances. The bureau she services, ICE, is a combination of two former agencies as well as their payroll systems. In some instances, payroll records pre-date the legacy agency's use of the NFC, i.e., the Department of Justice payroll system, and require extensive searches. Employees include a large number of investigators that receive law enforcement and other special pay, and work irregular hours on a variety of shifts. Some of their work involves foreign locations and Department of State regulated overseas allowances. She must reconstruct pay amounts for processing EEO and court settlements which may involve retroactive pay and resultant adjustments to various other aspects of pay. She also gathers the information needed to process requests for waivers of overpayment or requests for hearings. The system identifies the processor responsible for the overpayment. She must then contact that person to determine the reason for the payment error and request answers to standard questions based on legal and regulatory guidance. Based on those answers, she makes initial recommendations for supervisory and higher level approval. Final approval is made by the Headquarters Financial Officer. The appellant produces reports through various automated systems. The work performed by the appellant meets the criteria for resolving difficult problems requiring knowledge of the interrelationships of various pay systems as described and illustrated at Level 1-5.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-5 and 750 points are credited.

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.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor or other designated employee assigns work with standing instructions on objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance for unusually involved situations. At this level, the technician processes the most difficult procedural and technical tasks or actions and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, previous practices or accepted practices. The supervisor or designated employee evaluates completed work for overall technical soundness and conformance to agency policies, legal or system requirements. Completed work is reviewed by sampling in a quality review system and/or spot checked by the supervisor or senior worker for results and conformity to established requirements and deadlines. The methods used to complete the assignment are seldom reviewed in detail.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 2-3 which is the highest level described in the JFS. Like Level 2-3, the appellant processes the most difficult procedural and technical tasks or actions, and thus is confronted with handling deviations from established procedures as described at this level. She operates with a high degree of independence in answering customer questions, explaining systems, pay, and leave actions, prioritizing work, following procedures, and planning and carrying out the successive steps of work operations. The supervisor provides guidance when problems with a higher degree of difficulty are encountered, but does not routinely review the appellant's work. The supervisor stated that she reviews and signs work for further review at higher levels, such as recommendations for waivers or hearings. The appellant has signatory authority for her routine work, such as adjustments to correct individual pay discrepancies.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-3 and 275 points are credited.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-2, a number of established procedures and specific guidelines in the form of agency policies and procedures, Federal codes and manuals, specific related regulations, precedent actions, and processing manuals are readily available. The employee must use judgment to select the most appropriate procedures to use or to select among alternatives.

At Level 3-3, the guidelines are the same as Level 3-2 but because of the complicating nature of assignments, they lack specificity, frequently change, or are not completely applicable to the work requirements, circumstances or problems. The employee uses judgment to interpret guidelines, adapt procedures, decide approaches and resolve specific problems. The employee analyzes the results of applying guidelines and recommends changes.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 3-3 which is the highest level described in the JFS. The appellant's guidelines include NFC, DHS, and bureau payroll and time and attendance manuals, and automated system documentation. She also uses Comptroller General decisions, title 5 U.S.C., and CFR parts 550 and 551, and other pay and leave guidance on the OPM Web site. The appellant uses these to obtain the latest information pertaining to payroll and leave issues. The guidelines are extensive and are frequently revised due to system, legislative, or regulatory changes. As at Level 3-3, she uses significant judgment in selecting appropriate guidelines, determining the intent of various guidelines, and adapting procedures to resolve individual employee case issues. For instance, she may need to devise alternate ways of obtaining information to calculate back pay when old systems are no longer available.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-3 and 275 points are credited.

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 4-4, typically the work may require analysis, development, or testing of a variety of established techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives and arrive at decisions, conclusions, or recommendations. One example describes an employee's interpreting and testing user-defined specifications to modify an automated accounting system requiring broad knowledge of the technical functions, program objectives, and impact of the changes on other functions, processes, and requirements. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include assessing unusual circumstances or conditions, developing variations in approach to fit specific problems, or dealing with incomplete, unreliable or conflicting data. The work requires originality to determine, develop or otherwise make correct and accurate interpretations regardless of the technical difficulties encountered. The employee must sort complicated factual information and apply a variety of methods to resolve issues. The work requires making decisions, devising solutions, and taking actions based on program knowledge.

Level 4-4, the highest level described in the JFS, is met. The work performed typically requires analysis of a variety of established techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives and arrive at decisions, conclusions, or recommendations. The appellant is faced with making decisions in situations involving unusual circumstances, or where data is incomplete, unreliable, or conflicting. Like Level 4-4, the work the appellant performs typically allows her to use originality to determine, develop, or otherwise make correct and accurate interpretations regardless of the difficulties, such as when she must develop an estimate of back pay that will be acceptable to an opposing counsel when records cannot be found.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-4 and 225 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

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

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to apply conventional practices to treat a variety of problems in financial management transactions. The employee treats these or similar problems in conformance with established procedures. The work affects the quality, quantity, and accuracy of the organization's records, program operations, and service to clients. For example, the work may affect the economic well-being of employees being serviced or compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

The work meets but does not exceed Level 5-3 which is the highest level described in the JFS. As at that level, the purpose of the work is to apply conventional practices to treat a variety of payroll problems. Like Level 5-3, this work affects the quality, quantity, and accuracy of the section's records, the operation of their program, and their service to their clients.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-3 and 150 points are credited.

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

Factor 6 covers the types of regular and recurring personal contacts that occur with persons not in the supervisory chain. Factor 7 covers the purpose of personal contacts that may range from factual exchanges of information to resolving problems affecting the efficient operation of the office.

Personal Contacts

At Level 6-2, contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. For example, contacts may be with personnel in other functional areas. Contacts also may be with employees in other agencies who are providing requested information or members of the general public in a moderately structured setting, e.g., individuals explaining reasons for delay or attempting to expedite actions.

At Level 6-3, contacts are with members of the general public. Examples given are representatives of others such as attorneys, accountants, public action groups, or congressional staff members making inquiries on behalf of constituents. The contacts are not recurring or routine and the purpose, role, and authority of each party must be established each time in order for the employee to determine the nature and extent of information that can be discussed or released.

The appellant's position meets Level 6-2, but falls short of Level 6-3. Like Level 6-2, her contacts are primarily with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. She deals with various ICE employees including attorneys, special agents-

in-charge, administrative officers, program managers, union officials; and analysts at NFC and ICE and CBP headquarters. She has limited contacts with non-Federal people such as attorneys and arbitrators. She indicated that attorneys may call for a case status. The primary contacts essential for successful performance of the work are at Level 6-2.

Purpose of Contacts

At Level 7-b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan and coordinate actions to correct or prevent errors, delays, or other complications occurring during the transaction cycle. At Level 7-c, the purpose of the contacts is to persuade individuals who are fearful, skeptical, uncooperative or threatening to provide information, take corrective action, and accept findings in order to gain compliance with established laws and regulations.

Level 7-b is met. The purpose of the appellant's contacts is to gather the necessary information to correct or change employee pay records to reflect changes/adjustments made to ensure that employees are paid correctly.

Level 7-c is not met. While the appellant deals with personal and sensitive issues, the purpose of her contacts does not typically include situations which involve the degree of fear or lack of cooperation described at Level 7-c.

Factor 6 is evaluated at Level 6-2 and Factor 7 at Level 7-b. By reference to the chart on page 27 of the standard, that combination results in a total of 75 points credited for these factors.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

The 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.

We find that the appellant's level of physical demands is comparable to Level 8-1. Similar to Level 8-1, the only level for this factor described in the JFS, the appellant's work is sedentary, and no special physical demands are required. However, occasional walking, standing, or bending is required.

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1, and 5 points are credited.

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 regulations required.

We find that the appellant's work environment is comparable to Level 9-1, the only level for this factor described in the JFS. Similar to Level 9-1, the appellant works in an office

setting involving everyday risks or discomforts where normal safety precautions are required.

This factor is evaluated Level 9-1, and 5 points are credited.

Summary

Our comparison of the appellant's current duties and responsibilities to the nine FES factors reflected in the JFS for GS-500C results in the following:

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-5	750
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6 & 7. Personal contacts/Purpose of Contacts	2b	75
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total Points		1760

The position is credited with 1760 points falls within the GS-8 range (1605-1850). in the JFS grade conversion table. Thus, this position is properly graded at the GS-8 level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Civilian Pay Technician, GS-544-8.