

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

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

**Agency classification:** Management and Program Assistant  
GS-344-7

**Organization:** [section]  
Assistant Chief of Staff – Recruiting  
[area] Recruiting Region  
Marine Corps Recruit Depot  
[city and state]

**OPM decision:** Program Assistant  
GS-344-7

**OPM decision number:** C-0344-07-03

/s/ Jeffrey Sumberg

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Jeffrey Sumberg  
Associate Director  
Merit System Audit and Compliance

1/11/10

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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 (Introduction)*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision changes the title of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 5 CFR 511.702. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing a revised position description and Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Dallas Oversight and Accountability Group.

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant's name and address]

[union representative's name and address]

[servicing HR office names and addresses]

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## **Introduction**

The Atlanta Oversight and Accountability Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal on May 20, 2009, from [appellant's name]. [Appellant's name] is assigned to the [section], Assistant Chief of Staff/Recruiting (ACS/Recruiting), Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD), [area] Recruiting Region, at [city, state]. The position is currently classified as Management and Program Assistant, GS-344-7, but the appellant believes it should be classified as Administrative Officer, GS-341-11. The agency's initial administrative report (AAR) was dated June 3, 2009, and a copy provided to the appellant on June 6, 2009. Because of workload considerations, the Dallas Oversight and Accountability Group assumed responsibility for adjudication of the appeal from the Atlanta Office on September 14, 2009. We received the final information to complete the AAR on September 23, 2009. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

## **Background**

In his appeal letter, the appellant states the ACS/Recruiting had two civilian billets available and wished to combine and upgrade them because of difficulties in hiring and retention. A proposed position description (PD) was forwarded to the [city] Human Resources (HR) Office for review. The PD was classified as Management and Program Assistant, GS-344-7 and the appellant was assigned to the position. The appellant disagreed with the local HR Office's classification determination and filed a classification appeal with the Department of Defense's Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS). The January 16, 2009, CPMS decision sustained the current series, title and grade level.

## **General Issues**

The appellant occupies a civilian position in a largely military organization. Military assignments are governed by the "rank-in-the-person" concept, in contrast to the Federal General Schedule (GS) position classification system which is position-based. Under the GS, the grade of a position is based on the difficulty and complexity of work and the qualifications required to perform the work vested in the position. As a former active-duty military recruiter, the appellant believes the experience he gained in his prior capacity should be a factor in determining the grade of his current position. The appellant's former rank and extent of his military experience are not determining factors in the position classification process. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's personal qualifications only to the extent they were required to perform his current duties and responsibilities.

## **Position Information**

MCRD [city] is one of two Marine Corps recruit processing and basic training facilities in the United States. The [area] Recruiting Region is responsible for in-processing and basic training of all female recruits in the United States and all male recruits in the [area] Region of the country. The ACS/Recruiting serves on the staff of the Commanding General for the MCRD [city]. The ACS/Recruiting oversees such functions as recruitment operations including enlisted, officer, and prior service recruitment; recruitment liaison; and administrative functions such as

quality assurance, management information, etc. The Recruit Liaison Section (RLS), also identified on documents as the “Quality Assurance Branch,” supports the Recruit Training Battalions by providing quality control interviews, acting as liaison between the Recruit Training Regiment and Recruiting Districts, initiating inquiries into possible fraudulent and erroneous enlistments, and performing other related recruitment program oversight and support functions. The RLS also manages data input and data extraction activities in support of quality control activities for the [area] Recruiting Region. These data are used to determine best practices from well-functioning recruiting stations and to initiate investigations and disciplinary actions against recruiting stations when warranted.

The appellant’s position is officially supervised by the ACS/Recruiting, a Colonel. However, the appellant’s daily activities are directed by the Recruit Liaison Officer (RLO), a Captain, who also oversees a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Section Chief, four NCO military interviewers, and an NCO quality control position. The PD states the incumbent executes a multi-faceted scope of administration and management services (i.e., recruit quality control, management analysis, and office support services administration.) It lists ten tasks, including planning and assigning work; providing advice and instructions to employees on work and administrative matters; providing management leadership by coordinating the section’s administrative functions; administering processes for temporary additional duty orders within the Defense Travel System; maintaining files; managing reports and forms; updating the Quality Control Information System (QCIS); maintaining personnel, policy, and procedural records; and routing and delivering correspondence.

During our fact-finding interviews, the appellant, the RLO, and ACS/Recruiting each stated the primary purpose of the appellant’s position is processing “discharge packages” which occupies 70 to 75 percent of the appellant’s time. The Administrative Section, a separate office under the direction of the ACS/Recruiting, compiles discharge packages for all recruits who do not successfully complete basic training at MCRD. The packages are forwarded to the RLS where the appellant reviews the packages for completeness and compliance with a variety of regulations. If he finds a package is incomplete or is unable to determine the cause of the discharge, the appellant requests additional documentation and clarification as necessary, enters the discharge data into the QCIS database, and codes each package with a “detectable” code explaining the reason the recruiting activity was not successful. The appellant also provides a characterization of the nature of the reason for the discharge. The appellant compiles raw data charts based on the input of these detectable codes and provides verbal summaries to the ACS/Recruiting. He provides his interpretation of problems discovered in the data to the ACS/Recruiting. The appellant’s initial analysis and raw data are used by the ACS/Recruiting to make management decisions.

The PD also lists several tasks which both the appellant and RLO characterize as occupying less than 20 percent of the total combined work time of the position. These include assigning work (which consists of requesting information from recruiting stations), providing counsel and leadership (based on the appellant’s lengthy service in the active duty Marine Corps), serving as approver for travel and temporary duty orders, managing documents, and routing correspondence.

The appellant's official PD, number [number], and other material of record furnish additional information about the appellant's duties and responsibilities and how these are performed. While the initial portion of the PD is somewhat overstated, it is adequate for classification purposes, and we incorporate this information into our decision. We conducted telephone audits with the appellant on October 15, 2009, and the RLO and ACS/Recruiting on October 20, 2009. We contacted the appellant on October 21 and 22, 2009, and the RLO on October 26, 2009, for follow up information. In reaching our classification decision, we carefully considered all the information from these interviews and the other information of record furnished by the appellant and the Human Resources Satellite Office, MCRD [city].

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

The appellant proposes his position be classified to the Administrative Officer Series, GS-341, a two-grade interval series which covers positions where the paramount qualifications required are extensive knowledge of management principles, practices, and methods. The GS-341 series requires skill in integrating management services such as helping management identify its financial, human resources, and material needs and problems; developing budget estimates and justifications and overseeing budget execution; advising on and negotiating contracts, and cooperative agreements; counseling management in developing and maintaining sound organizational structures, improving management methods and procedures, and effectively using money, materials, and personnel. Intrinsic to administrative management work is an understanding of the relative importance of various operations within the organization and a "generalist's" management skills encompassing overarching aspects of administration. An Administrative Officer's duties may encompass budget administration, personnel management, and other aspects such as procurement and property management, with no single functional area forming the basis for paramount skills required.

To decide the proper series, we must first determine whether the work performed by the appellant is one-grade interval administrative support or a two-grade interval administrative in nature. Some tasks are common to both types of occupations, and it is not always easy to distinguish between one-grade interval and two-grade interval positions. Guidance on distinguishing between one-grade and two-grade interval work is available in the *The Classifier's Handbook*.

Support work usually involves proficiency in one or more functional areas or in certain limited phases of a specified program. Employees performing support work follow established methods and procedures. They have specific boundaries narrowly restricting their work. They use a limited variety of techniques, standards, or regulations. Support work involves handling problems which are often recurring and have precedents, limiting the breadth and depth of knowledge required, complexity of problem solving, applicability of guidelines, and closeness of supervisory controls.

In contrast, administrative work primarily requires a high order of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of (1) the functions, processes, theories, and principles of management, and (2) the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information. Administrative work also requires skill in applying problem solving techniques and skill in

communicating both orally and in writing. Administrative positions do not require specialized education, but they do involve the types of skills (i.e., analysis, research, writing, and judgment) typically gained through college-level education or through progressively responsible experience.

The appellant's work is routine in nature, following set procedures and methods. While the workload varies considerably depending on the quality of the incoming discharge packages and the number of recruiting errors found, the work itself is essentially unchanging. The paramount knowledge required is an in-depth comprehension of the recruiting process and the regulations governing the process. Unlike work characteristic of two-grade interval administrative work, the appellant's work does not require he understand the interrelationship of his work to other functional areas of the organization. The appellant's intensive knowledge of the specifics of the recruit function allows him to more quickly and accurately complete his duties, but does not rise to the type or level of knowledge required by two-grade interval work.

The appellant bases much of his appeal rationale on his analysis and process improvement activities. The PD of record addresses this type of work as well. The appellant and RLO state the appellant spends approximately two to five percent of his work time on analysis and process improvement activities. The *Introduction* states that work must meet all three of the following criteria to be grade controlling: (1) the work must be officially assigned on a regular and continuing basis; (2) it must be a significant and substantial part (that is occupying at least 25 percent of the employee's time) of the overall position; and (3) the higher-level knowledge and skills needed to perform the work would be required in recruiting for the position should it become vacant. As the analysis and process improvement activities do not meet all three criteria, these duties cannot be considered grade controlling or control the series of the position.

The PD states the incumbent, "Develops, analyzes, and reviews procedures and controls for controlling and managing files, directives, forms, records and office automation. Analyzes, develops, and implements policies, systems, and procedures for the maintenance of personnel, policy, and procedural records." The example of these duties provided during our telephone interviews was converting file storage methods from hard copy to electronic format. This was a change initiated by the appellant and approved by the supervisor which affected document storage between the RLS and the recruiting stations. This change is one aspect of the files management process. It applies readily available technology used by many organizations typical of one-grade interval records maintenance work and does not fully meet the intent of two-grade interval process improvement work. This type and level of analysis is directly addressed at Level 1-4 in the GS-344 position classification standard (PCS): "They devise ways to improve directives by simplifying, consolidating, or eliminating them."

We reviewed a sample of reports produced by the appellant. The appellant, the RLO, and the ACS characterized these reports as typical of the type of analysis the appellant regularly performs. Work samples provided by the appellant consist of raw data extracted from databases and arranged in tables or spreadsheets for use by the ACS and other high level officials within the recruit function of the USMC. There is no evidence of analysis or review of the data in these reports. We find the PD overstates the duties. The record shows the appellant verbally summarizes information regarding the character of problems seen in the collected data, and his

opinion as to why recruiting errors occurred, but he does not apply theories and principles of management or make management decisions based on that summary information. We find these duties are performed in support of the ACS/Recruiting's making of management decisions, not management decisions made by the appellant.

The *Classifier's Handbook* states positions should be classified to the occupation which best represents the main purpose for the existence of the position, usually reflected as the paramount knowledge or experience required to do the work. After careful review of the material of record and interviews we conducted, we find the main purpose of the appellant's position is to *support* the ACS/Recruiting in making management decisions, by application of the appellant's extensive practical knowledge of United States Marine Corps (USMC) regulations and of the recruit function.

The Management and Program Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-344 PCS states employees in this series perform one-grade interval clerical and technical work in support of management and/or program analysis. They provide objectively based information to managers and apply clerical or technical methods and techniques to support program effectiveness. Employees in this series primarily perform routine, procedural, or standard assignments in support of analytical work. They may review requests, compile and distribute reports, and prepare charts, graphs, and narrative reports for use by higher-level employees. Some employees in this series complete limited, uncomplicated, management or program analysis or segments of larger analytical projects. The ACS/Recruiting reports the primary purpose of the appellant's position is to provide management information with which to make decisions about maintaining and improving the quality of recruiting activities. While the appellant spends much of his time on compiling and clarifying information from files and entering the information in data bases, we find the primary purpose of these activities is to support management in analyzing the information collected. We therefore classify the position in the Management and Program Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-344. As the work is primarily involved in supporting program analysis, the appropriate title is Program Assistant.

### **Grade determination**

The GS-344 PCS uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are assigned for each of nine factors. The total is then converted to a grade level by use of a grade-conversion table provided in the PCS. Under the FES, each factor-level description demonstrates the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. 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, if a factor is evaluated above the highest factor level published in the PCS, the factor is evaluated by reference to the primary standard (PS) and other related FES standards.

In his appeal letter, the appellant states he agrees with all the levels assigned to the factors by CPMS except for Levels 1-4, 2-3, and 5-3. Using the PS, the appellant believes his position should be appropriately credited at Levels 1-7, 2-5, and 5-6. After careful review of the record, we concur with CPMS' evaluation of the undisputed factor levels and will limit further evaluation to those factor levels in dispute.



## ***Evaluation using the GS-344 PCS***

### ***Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position***

This factor covers the nature and extent of information or facts the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, policies, procedures, principles, regulations, and practices) and the extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge.

At Level 1-4, the highest level described in the PCS, the work requires knowledge of an extensive body of management and/or program analysis technical rules, guidelines, regulations, and precedents. It also requires knowledge of basic objectives and policies governing management or program operations. Some work requires skill in applying basic data gathering methods, some also apply knowledge of standard processes for evaluating management or program operations, and some use writing skills to prepare reports. Employees may apply this knowledge to individual, nonstandard technical assignments. Assignments may involve limited aspects of higher level work. In one illustration, employees may use this knowledge to track progress in meeting objectives and use of resources, and prepare reports for higher level employees describing problems that are recurring or causing significant delays or costs.

Comparable to Level 1-4, the appellant uses extensive knowledge of the recruit function and, at times, researches military and Marine Corps orders and regulations to determine whether the discharge packages are complete and properly coded. The process is generally routine and normally follows clear-cut steps covered by pre-established methods, procedures, and guidelines such as *Guidebook for RS Operations*, Volume III, Appendix C; *Instructions for Completion of Record of Military Processing*; and forms DD 4, DD 214, and DD 1966, which are extensive and detailed. Problems can typically be resolved by following past precedents. Situations for which no precedent or guidelines exist are referred by the appellant to the RLO, who may, in turn, refer non-routine inquiries to the ACS.

The appellant's work contains some aspects of nonstandard work, in that he is required to characterize the reasons for the nature of discharge and provide initial analysis of why certain errors may have occurred. Extensive review of each package and judgment about the information in the packages is required to make coding decisions. Like at Level 1-4, the appellant uses knowledge of both the recruiting function and of the basic objectives and policies governing recruit operations in making these judgments. The ACS/Recruiting and RLO both state the judgments and analyses the appellant provides are the paramount functions of the position. The appellant's work requires a comprehensive knowledge of the recruit function and a high degree of skill and accuracy in entering data, coding packages, requesting information to complete incomplete discharge packages, and correcting errors in those packages, as necessary. Comparable to illustrations at Level 1-4, the appellant, based on this knowledge, is able to provide preliminary analysis to the ACS/Recruiting as to why particular problems are occurring and summaries of trends found in the data. This information is used as a basis for further study and decision making. We find these activities to fully meet but not exceed Level 1-4.

The appellant proposed crediting Level 1-7 and chose the PS as the basis for his rationale. The PS establishes factor levels in broad conceptual terms and may not be used alone to classify a position. To point rate a factor that fails to meet the lowest or exceeds the highest level in an FES PCS, the PS factor level must be compared with the same level of a related FES standard and the decision documented. Level 1-5 of the PS describes knowledge such as that typically acquired through pertinent education or experience of the basic principles of a professional or administration occupation and skill to carry out elementary assignments, operations, or procedures. We chose the GS-361 Equal Opportunity Assistance PCS as the appropriate closely related PCS since it describes one-grade interval work within the same Occupational Group as the GS-344 series, the GS-300 Administrative, Clerical, and Office Services Group. At Level 1-5, this PCS discusses having a thorough and detailed practical knowledge of a complex body of equal employment regulations, procedures, precedent decisions and applying them in specific situations to answer complex technical questions or to solve technical problems routinely handled by the office. It requires skill in fact finding and analysis to identify relevant information, relate the information to the problem, summarize information, and decide when information is sufficient to answer the questions, compare facts with principles, and write a summary of findings. Illustrative assignments include assisting specialists in conducting on site investigations and counseling employees believing they have a complaint by interviewing, explaining the complaint process, assist in finding alternative means of solving the problem, etc.

The appellant's work does not meet Level 1-5. The judgment required in coding the discharge packages is based on experience and intense knowledge of a narrow band of subject matter, not broad concepts and analytical techniques typical of administrative work. The initial analysis the appellant provides to the ACS/Recruiting pertains to one small part of the overall recruit function. The appellant's preliminary analysis, based on the discharge information, is provided to the higher level staff members who make the technical determinations typical at Levels 1-5 and higher. His work does not meet Level 1-5 or approach the level proposed by the appellant.

Based on the preceding analysis, Level 1-4 and 550 points are credited.

#### *Factor 2, Supervisory Controls*

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

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the PCS, the supervisor defines objectives, priorities, and deadlines for projects or assignments and assists the employee with unusual situations or problems. The employee plans and carries out projects and assignments, handling problems and deviations in accordance with instruction, policies, previous training, or accepted practices. Work is reviewed for technical soundness, appropriateness of conclusions, consistency, relevance of support material, and compliance with policies and requirements. Methods used are not reviewed in detail.

The RLO confirms he provides little input on work schedules, objectives, and priorities to the appellant because of the generally recurring nature of the tasks involved. We find there is little need for oversight of scheduling or priorities due to the routine nature of the appellant's work

and schedules imposed by higher-level management. While both the RLO and the appellant report fluctuation in the workload, both characterize the nature of the overall duties as routine and unchanging. Like at Level 2-3, in the area of employee responsibility, we find most of the appellant's work is carried out with little direct supervision. The appellant regularly resolves questions and deviations from usual situations in coding discharge packages based on his broad practical program knowledge and by researching extensive, mostly applicable guidelines. Like Level 2-3, when problems occur, the appellant may discuss the questions with either the military interviewers or the RLO. Questions requiring interpretation of policy and deviations from policy are referred to the ACS/Recruiting. The appellant's work is reviewed for consistency and compliance with policy, not for the details of how the work is accomplished. The supervisory controls over the work fully meet, but do not exceed Level 2-3.

The appellant proposes crediting Level 2-5 because he is the "subject matter expert," works independently, and interprets policy on his own. At this level, the PS indicates supervision is provided as only as administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The employee is typically delegated full technical responsibility for independently planning, designing, and carrying out programs, projects, studies, or other work. Factor 2 is designed to measure not only the degree of independence with which the employee operates, but also the *extent of the responsibility* inherent in the assignment. Within this context, implicit at Level 2-5 is a significant degree of *program management* responsibility, i.e., authority over the use of funds and personnel. The employee is responsible not only for individual performance of certain assigned tasks, but also for the overall conduct of a broader program or function. This program or function must be of sufficient size and scope to permit the implementation of new systems or projects requiring consideration of funding and staffing needs.

When considering Level 2-5, the availability of a technically qualified supervisor must be considered. The existence of such a position in the management chain, while not in itself conclusive, makes Level 2-5 highly unlikely. When such a position exists, the supervisor generally exercises substantial program control, such as analyzing policies from higher authority and determining their effect on the program; formulating and issuing policy statements governing the program; establishing procedures to provide for management needs and ensure efficient operations; exercising normal supervisory control, including planning and assigning work, setting priorities, and giving program guidance.

The appellant's judgment on most coding decisions and preliminary analysis of coding errors is technical in nature. These are not program management decisions and do not rise above Level 2-3. As discussed in the *Classifier's Handbook*, it is not just the degree of independence that is evaluated, but also the degree to which the nature of the work allows the employee to make decisions and commitments and to exercise judgment. Many clerical employees perform their work with considerable independence and receive very general review. This work is evaluated, however, at the lower levels of this factor because there is limited opportunity to exercise judgment and initiative. The narrow scope of the appellant's decision-making responsibilities and the relatively extensive guidelines provided for making those decisions make closer supervision unnecessary but, as discussed in the *Classifier's Handbook*, do not serve to raise the factor above Level 2-3. The appellant neither interprets policy on his own nor does he resolve conflicts which affect overall mission functions as expected at Level 2-4 of the PS.

Since Level 2-4 is not approached and the appellant works under multiple levels of technically qualified supervision, consideration of Level 2-5 is precluded.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

*Factor 5, Scope and Effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work (i.e., purpose, breadth, and depth of assignments) and the effect of the work products and services both inside and outside the organization. The appellant believes because the current PD states that issues discovered locally are of major importance to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command, this factor should be credited at Level 5-6.

At Level 5-3, the highest level described in the PCS, the purpose of the work is to plan and carry out assignments or projects which improve the efficiency and productivity of organizations or program operations. Employees use established methods and criteria to study and recommend solutions for resolving conventional problems or questions. The work affects design of organizational structures and workflow, evaluation and improvement of program efficiency, use of management staff and resources; and design or use of management or program operations. Some work affects management of administration or information systems throughout a range of offices or organizations.

Like at Level 5-3, the primary purpose of the appellant's position is to collect and code data in support of improving the recruit function of the [area] Recruiting Region for male recruits and nationwide for female recruits, and to assist with the administrative management of the RLS. The appellant consolidates the QCIS data base and provides the data and a basic interpretation of this information to his supervisor for use in making management decisions. That is, the appellant provides the basic data and a *preliminary* assessment of situations where the recruitment process was not successfully completed. Higher level officials provide the in-depth analysis and make recommendations/decisions to resolve problems which exceed Level 5-3. The decisions made by the ACS/Recruiting may be used to initiate investigations to resolve questionable practices or to make changes to methods used at various recruiting stations in the [area] Recruiting Region which may affect the immediate organization or in some cases, the [area] Recruiting Region. It is these higher level positions, and not the appellant's position, whose work exceeds Level 5-3. The appellant's rationale, i.e., he surfaces potential issues, may not affect or control the evaluation of this factor since it is intended to measure the direct impact of work products of the position being evaluated. In this regard, the impact the appellant attempts to credit to his position may only be credited to higher-level positions in his program who determine the program's course of action after in-depth study of the potential issues surfaced by the appellant as discussed previously.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

*Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. & 7. Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts	2-b	75
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
<i>Total</i>		1485

A total of 1485 falls within the range of GS-7 (1355-1600) on the grade conversion table.

**Decision**

The position is properly classified as Program Assistant, GS-344-7.