



## United States Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
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**Standard:** [Civil Engineering, GS-0810](#) (June 1966)  
**Factor:** Part II, Planning and Design  
**Issue:** Crediting for novel or non-routine features

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in a position classification appeal decided by the Office of Personnel Management. The appellant was a General Engineer, GS-0801-11, and had appealed to have his position upgraded to GS-12. He was a project engineer for the construction, alteration, or renovation of buildings used for research, development, and administrative functions. Projects involved some novel or nonroutine design problems. He believed these nonroutine problems warranted classification to GS-12.

### **Resolution**

The position was evaluated in part by use of the Civil Engineering standard, GS-0810. It was acknowledged that the assigned projects were not routine in the sense of being limited to design criteria common to conventional office buildings or residences. Specifically, the incumbent designed facilities for research, including laboratories that experimented with various carcinogenic agents which had to be carefully controlled. This initially seems similar to "projects of highly specialized nature, such as facilities to house and support scientific experimentation and systems development operations," as described at the GS-12 level of the standard. However, the projects did not require new approaches, advanced technology, or the use of "state-of-the-art" equipment. Accordingly, problems could not be characterized as "obscure," nor did they require the use of "inconclusive or variable data." The projects were found to be typical of GS-11, which involves independent responsibility for projects requiring application of standard engineering theory and practices. The standard illustrates GS-12 as the level responsible for defining criteria and technically reviewing specifications for highly specialized projects. The design of facilities to

house scientific activity does not *alone* substantiate GS-12. The work must necessitate "novel mechanical and electrical equipment systems, requiring highly 'customized' housing, foundations and utilities."