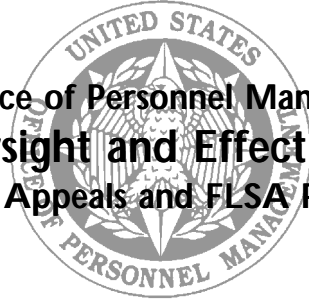


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

Classification Appeal Decision
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Personnel Clerk (Office Automation)
GS-203-04

Organization: [division]
[installation]
Indian Health Service
Department of Health and Human Services
[city, state]

OPM decision: Personnel Clerk (Office Automation)
GS-203-04

OPM decision number: C-0203-04-01

/s/

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

8/30/99

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]

[address of servicing personnel office]

Director of Personnel
Indian Health Service
Parklawn Building
Room 4B-44
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Introduction

On April 8, 1999, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant]. His position is currently classified as Personnel Clerk (Office Automation), GS-203-04. However, he believes its classification should be at a higher grade. He works in the Personnel Branch, [appellant's organization], Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, [city, state]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

In November 1997, a specialist with the [appellant's higher level organization] conducted a desk audit of [the appellant's] position. As a result, the position was downgraded from the GS-07 level to the GS-04 level. Subsequently, [the appellant] appealed the grade of his position to the Indian Health Service, which sustained the GS-04 grade. He then continued his appeal with OPM.

Position information

The appellant works at [an organization] with nearly 500 employees, consisting of medical, administrative, maintenance, and support staff. The workforce consists of Civil Service and Public Health Service Commissioned Corp employees. The appellant's work unit, the personnel office, is comprised of two personnel specialists, two personnel clerks (including the appellant), and one supervisory personnel management specialist, to whom the appellant reports. The appellant works on a two-person team, comprised of himself and a staffing/classification specialist (the team leader).

The appellant performs work in several areas, including training, staffing, injury claims, travel and relocation expenses, and miscellaneous clerical tasks. The appellant spends approximately 45 percent of his time working in the training area. He provides information about training courses to the workforce, reviews training request documents for accuracy and completeness, ensures employees have current individual development plans each year, coordinates the arrangements for training courses, processes payments for training fees, ensures training evaluations are completed, and provides advice to supervisors and managers in training matters.

The appellant spends approximately 20 percent of his time in the staffing area. He supports the staffing/classification specialist by preparing and distributing vacancy announcements; setting up and closing out recruitment folders; determining completeness of applications; screening applications for proper documentation from status candidates, excepted service candidates, and veterans' and Indian preference candidates; and preparing non-select letters.

The appellant spends approximately 15 percent of his time with injury claims. This involves his reviewing injury claims for completeness and accuracy before submission to the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP), advising employees and supervisors on injury claims, maintaining files for each claim, and providing information to OWCP. The appellant spends approximately 10 percent of his time working on relocation and travel expenses for those newly hired by the [organization]. This involves his determining reimbursement entitlements for

relocation or first-duty assignments and figuring travel costs and expenses related to per diem rates, shipment of household goods, house hunting, storage, and other miscellaneous travel expenses. Lastly, the appellant spends about 10 percent of his time doing miscellaneous work such as providing information on employee benefits, giving information on the Indian Health Service Scholarship program, providing new employee orientations, filing, fingerprinting, ordering supplies, and serving on committees.

According to the appellant's supervisor and team leader, the appellant's position is recently receiving more training in the staffing area. The plan is for this and other new aspects of the appellant's position to be developed more in the future. This may explain why the appellant's official position description (PD) contains information about his major duties and the knowledges required for the job that is inaccurate at the present time. Although the PD describes duties such as preparing certificates, explaining veterans preference and the "rule of three" to supervisors, and providing information to supervisors and employees on the performance management system, we did not find this work being accomplished by the appellant at this time. Also, we did not find, as stated in the "Knowledge Required by the Position" section of the PD, that the appellant's position requires knowledge to determine minimum eligibility for a variety of clerical and technical occupations and grade levels, or to evaluate and document the relative value of individual qualifications using specified rating factors.

Series, title, and standard determinations

The GS-203 Personnel Clerical and Assistance Series includes all positions the primary duties of which are to supervise, lead, or perform: (1) clerical work requiring substantial knowledge of civilian personnel terminology, requirements, procedures, and functions to process documents, prepare recurring personnel reports, explain personnel procedures, maintain master personnel and organizational records, and provide miscellaneous clerical support in personnel-related units; and (2) limited technical work requiring substantial practical knowledge of one or more civilian personnel management specialties such as staffing, employee relations, and classification. The appellant does not contest the series of his position. We agree that the GS-203 is the appropriate series.

Based on guidance provided in the GS-203 standard, the title of the appellant's position is Personnel Clerk. The guidance explains that personnel clerks process documents (e.g., applications for employment, training forms, etc.), prepare recurring personnel reports, explain personnel procedures, and provide miscellaneous clerical support in personnel-related units. In this work, the clerks complete forms with information, resolve factual discrepancies, and describe established steps for making applications. They may have many options in doing the work because of the wide variety of kinds of information and transactions or the interrelatedness of different procedures. However, the work is governed by clear requirements and specific conditions. The parenthetical title of Office Automation is appropriate for the appellant's position, since his work involves significant knowledge and use of office automation systems.

The office automation aspect of the appellant's work is not grade controlling, and therefore is not addressed further in our decision. Part I of the GS-203 standard is used to determine the grade of the position.

Grade determination

The GS-203 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which uses 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 aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the clerk must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply those knowledges.

Level 1-3 requires knowledge of a body of standardized personnel rules, procedures, or requirements to perform or explain a range of clerical procedures in support of one or more personnel specialty or program areas and to resolve recurring problems. The following are examples:

- knowledge of procedures, requirements, and terminology related to employee development activities to process training requests and training contracts, maintain records of monies spent for various kinds of training, arrange for travel, and compile periodic training reports.
- knowledge of a body of standard procedures for Federal employee benefits to perform a range of clerical duties such as explaining the basic features of plans and time limits for filing for health insurance.
- knowledge of procedures, requirements, and terminology related to recruitment and staffing activities to explain merit promotion procedures, procedures for reinstatement or transfer to another Federal agency, and job vacancies for which applications are being accepted; and determine the number of eligibles to certify for vacancies.

Level 1-4 requires knowledge of an extensive body of personnel rules, procedures, or operations to perform a wide variety of interrelated or nonstandard personnel clerical work and resolve a wide range of problems. The following are examples:

- knowledge of recruitment sources and probabilities of candidates being available; alternative staffing regulations, processes, and related documentation requirements; and locally established staffing priorities and practices.

- knowledge of evaluation techniques and staffing principles to screen applications by determining if minimum requirements are met, and to evaluate the relative value of individual qualifications using specified factors to place applicants in rank order.
- knowledge of employee development principles to select trainees on the basis of relatedness of subject matter to the mission of the organization, ascertain that employees have prerequisites for courses, revise questionnaires to survey employees, and interview interns at various stages of development to verify progress and determine problems.
- knowledge to process a variety of unique official personnel actions such as assignments or details to State governments or foreign countries, and to deal with a variety of special appointments and programs.

The level of knowledge required for the appellant's position is equivalent to level 1-3. The appellant must have a knowledge of standardized requirements, procedures, and rules relating to the various areas of his work. Within each area, he resolves recurring problems. The appellant must be knowledgeable of standard training procedures and requirements to ensure training requests are accurate and complete, to coordinate various aspects of training with vendors and instructors, and to process payment documents related to training fees and travel expenses. This matches the illustration given at level 1-3. In two instances, the appellant initiated plans for having specific training courses at the [organization]. The appellant must be knowledgeable of standard staffing principles and requirements to screen applications for documents that prove an applicant's status or eligibility for veterans' and Indian preference. In one instance, the appellant made basic eligibility determinations on applications for a lower graded job vacancy. The appellant's work with injury claims also requires knowledge of standard rules and procedures to advise employees and supervisors on the appropriate forms to be filled out and actions to be taken. His work with relocation and travel expenses for new employees involves knowledge of travel regulations and procedures to make determinations about one's eligibility for entitlement to reimbursement and payment of travel expenses. By way of cross-referencing, work of this nature is discussed at level 1-3 of the Job Family Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work.

The knowledge required of the appellant's position does not fully meet level 1-4. Although he is involved with work in a variety of areas, he is not required to have knowledge of an extensive body of rules and procedures that deal with nonstandard work. His work is covered by standard procedures and rules. The work does not involve him spending time to resolve a wide variety of problems. The appellant's work does not match the work illustrated at level 1-4. Although initiating plans for training courses and making basic eligibility determinations are more equivalent to level 1-4, this kind of work does not happen routinely for the appellant and therefore does not characterize a significant part of his work at this time.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

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

At level 2-2, the highest level described in Part I of the standard, the supervisor provides a continuing assignment, initially indicating what is to be done, quantity expected, deadlines, and priority of work. The supervisor provides additional, specific instructions for new, difficult, or special projects. The clerk uses initiative in carrying out recurring assignments using established procedures and standard methods of operation. The clerk contacts the supervisor for assistance when established rules or practices do not appear to apply. The supervisor assures that finished work is accurate and in compliance with instructions. Work products are usually reviewed for conformance to instructions and spot-checked for accuracy.

The supervisory controls over the appellant's position meet level 2-2. The supervisor and the staffing/classification specialist provide a general indication of what is to be accomplished, the deadlines, and the priority of the assignments. The appellant independently carries out his work by following established procedures, but refers unusual situations and those not covered by guidelines to the supervisor or specialist for a decision or advice. While the appellant's work involving workers' compensation, training, and relocation expenses does not receive a detailed review by the supervisor, his staffing work receives a close review by the staffing/classification specialist for accuracy and compliance with procedures.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At level 3-2, the highest level described in Part I of the standard, guidelines are available, such as work samples, instructions on personnel forms being processed, health benefits brochures, job vacancy or training course announcements, agency directives, technical manuals, and local policies. The clerk selects the proper guidelines according to circumstances of the specific case. This may include determining which of several alternatives to use. Situations to which existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations are referred to a higher grade member of the staff.

The appellant's guidelines meet level 3-2. The available guidelines include agency policies and procedures; OWCP manuals and procedures; training policies, instructions, and catalogues; the Federal Travel Regulations and Joint Federal Travel Regulations; travel order documents; Commissioned Corp and Civil Service guides; tariff schedules; vacancy announcement inventories; and staffing procedures and guides. The appellant selects appropriate guidelines which apply to his work. The guides provide enough specific information for the appellant to complete most of the work. Those matters which require significant deviation from the guidelines are referred to the supervisor or to the staffing/classification specialist.

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 4-2, the work consists of various related steps, processes, or methods in a personnel function. For example, a clerk at this level may maintain one or more registers of eligibles by screening applications for completeness, preparing notices of rating, selecting candidates to certify, and auditing returned certificates. Decisions regarding what needs to be done involve various choices requiring the clerk to recognize the existence of and differences among clearly recognizable situations. Actions or responses differ in factual ways depending upon the variety of organizations served, the variety of positions filled, and similar factors.

At level 4-3, the work consists of different and unrelated processes and methods such as is normally required for a full range of official personnel actions for a block of assigned organizations. Decisions regarding what needs to be done involve many considerations in a variety of different situations which require different processing treatment.

The complexity of the appellant's position is equivalent to level 4-2. The appellant performs work in a few distinct areas, such as training, staffing, workers' compensation, and relocation expenses. The work in each of these areas involves decisions based on a set range of rules or steps or the consideration of clearly defined situations. For example, in dealing with training requests, the appellant decides if documents are accurate and complete by considering a set of appropriate responses. In doing work related to workers' compensation, the appellant gives advice and ensures appropriate documentation by considering situations clearly delineated in the appropriate rules and guidelines. The work related to staffing is accomplished through a series of related steps and decisions are made based on clearly defined rules.

The complexity of the position does not meet level 4-3. Although he performs a variety of work, based on his knowledge of several different areas, the intricacy of the steps involved and the level of analysis needed to make decisions are not equivalent to that described at level 4-3. The work does not involve decisions that have to be made after the consideration and identification of numerous alternatives or conditions.

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 work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At level 5-2, the highest level described in Part I of the standard, the purpose of the work is to apply or explain personnel rules, practices, or procedures in performing an assigned block of

clerical work or in serving as the principal clerk for a unit. The work product or service usually affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes. For example, clerical procedures in support of an employee development unit involve the clerk following established procedures for screening training requests, controlling training and career development funds, and providing information regarding the availability of specific courses, numbers of employees completing training, or how to prepare training requests.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work are equivalent to level 5-2. He is the principle person responsible for handling training, workers' compensation, and travel and relocation expense matters. His staffing work is in support of the specialist, who performs the more technical matters of recruitment and placement. The appellant's work involves his assuring that these matters are documented and processed in an accurate manner, in conformance with established practices and rules. His work impacts several further processes, such as the accuracy of training requests and payments for training, the accuracy of workers' compensation claims submitted to OWCP, the reliability and accuracy of reimbursement expenses for new hires, and the facilitation of the staffing process.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

At level 6-2, the highest level described in Part I of the standard, personal contacts are generally with all levels of employees, supervisors, union representatives, and administrative staff in the organization served. Also, contacts may be with members of the general public in a moderately structured setting, e.g., with applicants inquiring about Federal job opportunities, training vendors, or health insurance carriers.

The appellant's personal contacts fully meet level 6-2. He has contact with all levels of employees and supervisors in the [organization]. He also has contacts with OWCP staff, training vendors, and [higher level organizational] staff.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

This factor covers the purpose of personal contacts, which may range from factual exchanges of information to resolving problems affecting the efficiency of personnel operations.

At level 7-2, the highest level described in Part I of the standard, clerks regularly initiate personal contacts and follow through on work efforts to resolve minor problems or obtain cooperation of others. For example, a clerk at this level will resolve or clarify factual discrepancies in personnel or organizational designations or codes or rectify processing problems involving pay of employees.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts meets level 7-2. He is responsible for contacting the appropriate sources in resolving problems related to inaccurate training request or payment documentation or incomplete information pertaining to workers' compensation claims. He also coordinates with training vendors in setting up training courses for the center.

Factor 8, Physical demands

As at level 8-1, there are no special physical demands required of the appellant's position. The work is primarily performed while sitting, although movement around the office is common.

Factor 9, Work environment

As at level 9-1, the appellant's work environment involves everyday risks and discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical in office settings.

Summary

In summary, we have evaluated the appellant's position as follows:

	Factor	Level	Points
1	Knowledge Required of Position	1-3	350
2	Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3	Guidelines	3-2	125
4	Complexity	4-2	75
5	Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6	Personal Contacts	6-2	25
7	Purpose of Contacts	7-2	50
8	Physical Demands	8-1	5
9	Work Environment	9-1	5
TOTAL POINTS			835

A total of 835 points equates to the GS-04 grade level, in accordance with the grade conversion table provided in the GS-203 standard.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Personnel Clerk (Office Automation), GS-203-04.