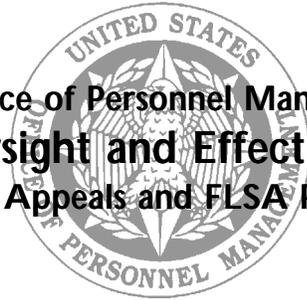


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, SW., Room 972
Atlanta, GA 30303

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

Appellant: [Appellant]

Agency classification: Supply Technician (Office Automation)
GS-2005-7

Organization: Department of Veterans Affairs

OPM decision: Supply Technician (Office Automation)
GS-2005-7

Decision number: C-2005-07-01

_____/s/
Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

10/25/99
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]

[Chief
Human Resources Management Services
Department of Veterans Affairs
Medical Center]

Mr. Ronald E. Cowles
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human
Resources Management
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Introduction

On August 9, 1999, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management, accepted an appeal for the position of Supply Technician (Office Automation), GS-2005-7, [organizational location], Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), [geographic location]. The appellant is requesting that her position be classified as Inventory Management Specialist, GS-2010-9.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General issues

On October 15, 1997, the appellant's organization submitted a proposal to the Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) that three positions, one of which was the appellant's, be upgraded. The justification given for this proposal was the increased level of complexity of inventory management operations resulting from automation and new procedures involving the distribution of materials directly to the using Services. HRMS conducted desk audits of all three positions and determined that changes in the series and title, but not the grade, were appropriate for two of the positions. As a result of the desk audit, the appellant's position was reclassified on February 13, 1998, from Inventory Management Specialist, GS-2010-7, to Supply Technician (Office Automation), GS-2005-7. The appellant disagrees with this classification on the basis that the desk audit of her position did not properly consider the full extent of her duties and responsibilities.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant and her supervisor.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to Position Description number[#]. The appellant, her supervisor and the agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant performs a variety of duties related to the inventory, budget, and acquisition management programs for the Medical Center's non-expendable equipment. The appellant's primary responsibility is management of a wide range of specialized clinical, laboratory, and other non-expendable equipment maintained on Consolidated Memorandum Records (CMR) for the [Section]. She reviews equipment requests and determines the proper classification; assigns stock numbers used to track equipment internally and ensures that this information is transmitted to the agency's National Catalog Division; maintains and updates the CMR inventory schedule to ensure conformity with Federal accounting requirements; uses the agency's automated accounting system to account for and maintain a record of the value of equipment assets; and reconciles general

ledger accounts with the Fiscal Service on a monthly basis. She is the primary point of contact through whom organizations at the Medical Center coordinate the acquisition of non-expendable equipment through purchase, loan, or lease. The appellant coordinates the testing and evaluation of equipment by the acquiring organization; works closely with the engineering staff on the installation of major equipment items requiring construction or modification of facility areas; functions as fund control approving official for items approved for purchase; and assists the pharmacy staff with receipt of controlled substances. She works closely with the various internal committees, panels, and task forces involved in the acquisition, distribution, and management of medical and laboratory equipment for the center and satellite facilities. The appellant prepares agendas for and minutes of committee meetings where equipment acquisition issues are discussed and procurement decisions are made.

The appellant works under the supervision of a Supervisory Inventory Management Specialist. She independently carries out day-to-day assignments on her own initiative using her sound judgment and extensive knowledge of agency and organizational policies, procedures, and practices related to acquiring and accounting for non-expendable equipment. Contact with the supervisor on work related issues is generally in regard to major problems or issues. The review of completed work is in terms of adequacy, accuracy, and compliance with regulations and procedures.

Standard determination

Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, May 1992.

Series determination

The agency classified the position in the Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005. The appellant contends that her position is more appropriately classified in the Inventory Management Series, GS-2010.

The Inventory Management Series includes positions involving analytical work in managing, regulating, coordinating, or otherwise exercising control over supplies, equipment, or other material. The work includes one or more phases of material management including initial planning, provisioning and requirements determination, acquisition and distribution, accountability, and ultimate issue for consumption, retention, or disposal. The work requires knowledge of acquisition processes, automated records and control systems, material substitution criteria, and storage, issue, and disposal processes.

The Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, includes positions involved in supervising or performing clerical or technical supply support work necessary to ensure the effective operation of ongoing supply activities. It requires knowledge of supply operations and program requirements and the ability to apply established supply policies, day-to-day servicing techniques, regulations, or procedures.

The GS-2005 standard identifies several areas which should be reviewed to assist in arriving at a determination to place a position in the Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, or in a series covering supply specialist functions (e.g., GS-2010, Inventory Management). The areas identified are (a) the duties and responsibilities of the position, including the supervision received; (b) the knowledge and abilities required to perform the work; and (c) the recruitment sources, career ladder, and needs of management.

Examples are given to illustrate the ways in which the duties of supply technicians and those of supply specialists differ:

1. Supply technicians generally follow established methods and procedures which have been developed by supply specialists and management personnel.

Supply specialists are responsible for planning and developing the supply system, programs, or services, and for developing, adapting, or interpreting operating methods or procedures.

2. Supply technicians perform assignments (1) requiring less extensive knowledge of programs, operations, or organizations serviced; and (2) requiring a limited knowledge of item characteristics or technical uses of items of supply or equipment.

Supply specialists perform assignments requiring a deeper knowledge and understanding of programs and the needs and operations of organizations serviced. They (1) must apply a knowledge of present or proposed programs, program changes, work operations, work sequences and schedules; and (2) must have a greater knowledge of the technical characteristics or properties of supply items to plan and forecast inventory needs under changing technological or program requirements.

3. Supply specialists at grades GS-5/7 may perform work similar to that of a supply technician, but do so in a trainee or developmental capacity -- on the basis of their capacity to analyze a variety of work situations, then interpret and apply instructions and related data in preparation for higher level work assignments.

The appeal record shows that the appellant performs her assignments following established procedures and processes which have been developed by supply specialists and higher level management personnel. The record also shows that the appellant possesses an understanding of the organization's supply program as it relates to its operations. However, this does not equate to the in-depth knowledge required of supply specialists in order to plan and forecast inventory needs under changing technological or programmatic requirements. The appellant is not responsible for planning and developing the supply system, nor does she apply the level of judgment based on the possession of analytical ability and a theoretical or conceptual understanding of supply principles and techniques described for supply specialists. Consequently, we find that the appellant's position does not require the extensive knowledge base and does not perform duties which would require the exercise of the

level of judgment and analytical ability found in supply specialist positions. Instead, the appellant's work requires a knowledge of supply operations and program requirements, and the ability to apply established supply policies, day-to-day servicing techniques, regulations, or procedures to ensure the effective operation of ongoing supply activities. Such work is covered by the Supply Clerical and Technician Series GS-2005 defined on page 1 of the GS-2005 standard.

The appellant's position is properly classified in the Supply Technician Series, GS-2005.

Title determination

Supply Technician is the title authorized for all GS-5 level positions and above. The parenthetical title (*Office Automation*) is added since the position requires a qualified typist, as well as skill in the use of office automation equipment.

Grade determination

SUPPLY TECHNICIAN DUTIES

The GS-2005 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required *and* applied. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 1-4.

At Level 1-4, the highest level described for this factor in the standard, the work requires a thorough knowledge of governing supply regulations, policies, procedures, and instructions applicable to the specific assignment. Employees use this knowledge to conduct extensive and exhaustive searches for required information; reconstruct records for complex supply transactions; and/or provide supply operations support for activities involving specialized or unique supplies, equipment, and parts such as special purpose laboratory or test equipment, prototypes or technical equipment, parts and equipment requiring unusual degrees of protection in shipment and storage, or others that are unique to the organization's mission or seldom handled. This knowledge is also used in positions performing routine aspects of supply specialist work based on practical knowledge of standard procedures, where assignments include individual case problems related

to a limited segment in one of the major areas of supply management (e.g., cataloging, inventory management, excess property, property utilization, or storage management).

Comparable to Level 1-4, the appellant has a thorough knowledge of and uses a number of supply regulations, policies, procedures, and instructions on supply operations involving purchasing, managing inventory, and accounting for specialized equipment and parts used in a hospital environment. This knowledge is also used by the appellant in establishing and maintaining extensive management, repair, and accounting/fiscal records and documents required for moderate to high cost non-expendable office, medical, and laboratory equipment. She must be familiar with and skilled in maintaining and updating the consolidated equipment inventory records. The appellant must also be proficient in the use of automated systems such as the Automated Engineering Management System (AEMS), Medical Equipment Repair System (MERS), and Fixed Asset Package (FAP) through which equipment initial costs, present market value, etc., are tracked. The information in these systems is also used to make decisions regarding the useful life of equipment owned by the Medical Center and in prioritizing purchases of new equipment. She must have a good understanding of the organizations she services, as well as of how the various aspects of the supply process (i.e., purchasing, receiving, delivery, etc.) impact them.

Many aspects of the appellant's duties compare to the second illustration under Level 1-4. She reviews equipment acquisition requests to ensure that items reflected agree with those approved by the Equipment Committee and Center Director; conducts market surveys or studies to determine the most cost effective acquisition method (e.g., purchase, lease, or on loan from another facility) and provides this information to the Equipment Committee. She also coordinates activities involving equipment reported as being defective or recalled by manufacturers with the engineering staff and using organizations; prepares and coordinates activities involving small lot sales or the transfer to other facilities of excess or obsolete equipment turned in by using organizations; prepares procedures for and participates in scheduled inventories of equipment; and reviews records, processes reports, and coordinates investigations related to lost, stolen, or damaged government property.

The appellant handles problems requiring more extensive searches and involving procedures that may deviate from the standard processes and require her to be resourceful and persistent. The professional staff members at the center have frequent contacts with manufacturer and vendor representatives who have a vested interest in their products being purchased. In compiling data on medical equipment under consideration for purchase by the Equipment Committee, the appellant has to ensure that all pertinent information is provided to the committee. For example, she encountered an instance where a particular piece of equipment was recommended by a vendor's representative and was placed on the center's list of potential purchases. During her research, she discovered that the piece of equipment had not yet been certified by the Food and Drug Administration. This information was immediately relayed to the facility equipment committee as time for spending equipment funds was rapidly approaching and a decision had to be made regarding alternatives.

There is no evidence in the appeal record to support responsibilities exceeding this level.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

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 extent of review of completed work. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 2-3.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard, the supervisor makes assignments by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and assists the employee with unusual situations which do not have clear precedents. In some circumstances, the employee works independently from the supervisor or specialist in a remote location. Contact with the supervisor is infrequent, although usually available by telephone and periodic on-site visits. Continuing assignments are usually performed with considerable independence. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps and handles problems and deviations in the work assignment in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices in the occupation. Completed work is usually evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and conformity to policy and requirements. The methods used are not usually reviewed in detail.

Level 2-3 is met. The appellant works under the supervision of the Supervisory Inventory Management Specialist who provides assignments in terms of expected objectives, priorities, and deadlines that must be met. She functions with considerable independence in performing the work of her position and receives minimal supervision. The appellant is expected to resolve problems that may be encountered during the course of her day-to-day work. Matters involving non-expendable equipment which present major problems and/or significant issues requiring a decision above the appellant's level are referred to the supervisor.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate that this level is exceeded.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3 - Guidelines:

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 3-3.

At Level 3-3, the highest level described for this factor in the standard, guidelines are similar to the next lower level, but because of the problem solving or case nature of the assignments, they are not completely applicable or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines such as policies, regulations, precedents, and work directions

for application to specific cases or problems. The employee analyzes the results of applying guidelines and recommends changes.

Level 3-3 is met. The guidelines available to the appellant include Federal Property Management Regulations, VA and Federal acquisition and procurement regulations, supply regulations, and a variety of directives, internal policies and procedures, automated systems manuals, etc., governing the bulk of the supply activity at her installation. Although available guidelines are normally applicable to the work performed and to the situations encountered by the appellant, problems periodically arise as a result of some gap in standard procedures or an unexpected deviation in the system. The supervisor stated that the appellant, due to her experience and knowledge of supply policies and regulations, is allowed to make deviations in guidelines to resolve issues related to the work without consulting her. The only condition placed on the appellant is that she remain within the scope of her authority.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate that this level is exceeded.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 4 - Complexity:

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 4-3.

At Level 4-3, the highest level described in the standard, the work involves unusually complicated or difficult technical duties involving one or more aspects of supply management or operations. The work at this level is difficult because it involves actions that are not standardized or prescribed; deviations from established procedures; new or changing situations; or matters for which only general provision can be made in regulations or procedures. This typically involves supply transactions which experienced employees at lower grades have been unable to process or resolve, or which involve special program requirements for urgent, critical shortage items requiring specialized procedures and efforts to obtain. The employee decides what needs to be done depending on the analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment, and the chosen course of action may have to be selected from many alternatives. Decisions are based largely on the employee's experience, precedent actions, and the priority assigned for resolving the particular problem. The methods and procedures used vary based on the circumstances of each individual case. The work involves conditions and elements that the employee must identify and analyze to discern interrelationships with other actions, related supply programs, and alternative approaches.

Level 4-3 is met. The appellant has responsibility for the resolution of a wide range of problems related to various aspects of non-expendable equipment supply management. She must analyze each individual case, identify any problem areas, and determine which course of action will most

likely resolve the problem. She relies on her experience and knowledge of precedent actions in many situations to determine the most probable cause of the problem and the potentially most expedient solution. Her knowledge and understanding of the interrelationship of supply actions, as well as supply programs, is important in reaching a resolution to many problems. She must maintain a high degree of flexibility in coordinating work and issues related to equipment in light of changes in agency policies and funding allocations related to acquisition, changes made by the center's management officials, and the demands of internal organizations and satellite facilities.

The appeal record contains no indication that this level is exceeded.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect:

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work (i.e., purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 5-3.

At Level 5-3, the highest level described for this factor in the standard, the work involves dealing with a variety of problem situations either independently or as part of a broader problem solving effort under the control of a specialist. Problems encountered require extensive fact finding, review of information to coordinate requirements, and recommendations to resolve conditions or change procedures. The employee performs the work in conformance with prescribed procedures and methods. The results of the work affect the adequacy of local supply support operations, or they contribute to improved procedures in support of supply programs and operations.

Level 5-3 is met. The appellant independently resolves a variety of problems associated with the supply process. The problems can involve extensive fact finding and numerous contacts with vendors, transportation companies, manufacturers, engineering staff, supply personnel, agency level organizations responsible for major equipment acquisitions, etc. The appellant must understand the full range of processes and procedures involved in acquiring, accounting for, and managing non-expendable equipment, as well have a thorough understanding of the agency's and facility's goals and objectives as they relate to equipment acquisition and management. The work performed by the appellant impacts the well being of patients through the efficient and timely acquisition of necessary equipment.

The appeal record contains no evidence to indicate that this level is exceeded.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts:

Factor 6 assesses face-to-face as well as telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. In General Schedule occupations, the purpose of personal contacts, Factor 7, ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, and objectives. The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for Factor 7 must be the same contacts as those that are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6. The agency credited Level 3 for Factor 6, and Level b for Factor 7.

Persons Contacted

At Level 3, the highest level described in the standard, contacts are with individuals from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting (i.e., the contacts are not established on a routine basis, the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact). Typical of contacts at this level are supply employees in other departments or agencies, inventory item managers, contractors, or manufacturers.

Level 3 is met. The appellant's routine contacts include co-workers in her organization, employees and staff of satellite facilities serviced by her organization, staff of other VA medical centers, and officials, medical staff, and researchers at her center and [a nearby university]. She also has routine contacts with members of the engineering staff, support staff in services at the center, individuals at higher echelon agency organizations, representatives and technical support employees of manufacturers and vendors, and employees of other Federal agencies. The contacts with individuals outside the appellant's agency are moderately unstructured in that they are made to gather information on equipment being considered for acquisition by the center. Relatively long periods of time may pass between purchases of particular items, and the repeat contacts with the same individuals or commercial concerns are not made on a routine basis. The role and extent of the authority of the appellant and the persons contacted are established during the course of the contact.

Purpose of Contacts

At Level b, contacts are for the purpose of planning, coordinating, or advising on work efforts or to resolve operating problems by clarifying discrepancies in information submitted by serviced organizations, resolving automated system problems causing erroneous transaction records, or seeking cooperation from others to resolve complicated supply actions.

Level b is met. The purpose of the appellant's contacts is typically to obtain and exchange information, coordinate work processes, and resolve problems related to non-expendable medical equipment used by the various services at the Medical Center and satellite facilities. She ensures that required supply and inventory management related records and fiscal documents are properly maintained and reflect correct information; coordinates scheduled physical inventories with the

services to which equipment was issued; and ensures that official inventory records are reconciled when equipment discrepancies are found. The appellant performs monthly general ledger account reconciliations with Fiscal Service staff; coordinates the transfer of excess/surplus equipment to other VA facilities or disposition through small lot sales; arranges equipment deliveries with manufacturers and vendors; and coordinates the on-site installation of equipment with the center engineering staff prior to its delivery.

The combination of Level 3 for *Contacts* and Level b for *Purpose* equates to 110 points according to the table in the standard.

Factor 6 and Factor 7 are credited with Level 3b for 110 points.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands:

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed upon the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 8-1.

Level 8-1 requires some physical effort, such as standing, walking, bending, or sitting.

Level 8-2 requires above average physical ability to walk around or over building materials, excavation sites, and heavy equipment found at construction sites or similar areas. The employee visits such sites on a regular and recurring basis.

Level 8-1 is met. The work performed by the appellant is primarily sedentary in nature and the majority of the work is done while seated. The work requires some walking, standing, bending, and lifting during the course of bar coding, inspecting, and conducting inventories of equipment.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9 - Work Environment:

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required. The agency evaluated this factor at Level 9-1.

At Level 9-1, the employee performs work in an office setting involving everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions.

At Level 9-2, the work involves moderate level of discomfort during visits to sites away from the office. The employee may be required to wear protective clothing (e.g., hardhat, goggles, gowns, or boots) when visiting construction sites, laboratories, or other areas.

Level 9-1 is met. The majority of the appellant's work is performed in an adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated office setting. The work involves periodic visits to warehouses, storage areas and patient service areas at the center to inventory equipment. The observance of normal safety precautions such as safe work practices with office equipment, avoidance of trips and falls, and observance of fire regulations is typically all that is required of the appellant while carrying out assignments.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
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. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	3b	110
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	1520

A total of 1520 points falls within the range for GS-7, 1355 to 1600 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-2005 standard.

OFFICE AUTOMATION DUTIES:

The appellant uses a personal computer to produce a variety of correspondence, spreadsheets, and other materials in performing her work. These activities require that she be a qualified typist. The office automation work is evaluated against the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, which is also written in the FES format. These duties do not impact the grade of the position, therefore, only a summary evaluation follows:

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-1	25
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	1a	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	740

A total of 740 points falls within the range for GS-4, 655 to 850 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the Guide.

Summary

This position combines supply duties graded at GS-7, and office automation duties graded at GS-4. The position is properly graded at GS-7, which is the highest level of work performed.

Decision

The position is correctly classified as Supply Technician (Office Automation), GS-2005-7.