

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

Washington Oversight Division
1900 E Street, NW., Room 7675
Washington, DC 20415-6000

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

Appellant: [name]

Agency classification: Management Assistant
GS-344-7

Organization: [battalion]
[command]
Department of the Army
[city and country]

OPM decision: GS-303-7
(title discretionary)

OPM decision number: C-0303-07-07

Linda J. Kazinetz
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Classification Appeals Officer

August 31, 2001
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a classification 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 the conditions and time limits specified in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, sections 511.605, 511.613, and 511.614, as cited in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

Appellant:

[name]

Agency:

[Civilian Personnel Operations Center]

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Introduction

On April 10, 2001, the Washington Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who is employed as a Management Assistant, GS-344-7, in the [battalion], [command], Department of the Army, in [city and country]. [Appellant] requested that her position be classified as Administrative Services Specialist, GS-301-7 (target GS-9.) This appeal was accepted and decided under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

A telephone audit was conducted by a Washington Oversight Division representative on July 23, 2001, and a telephone interview with the supervisor, [name], on August 24, 2001. This appeal was decided by considering the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description, [number], classified by the servicing personnel office as Management Assistant, GS-344-7, on October 21, 1998.

Position Information

The appellant provides a variety of administrative support services to the battalion. She reported that her time is approximately evenly divided among budget, personnel, and general administrative duties. These duties are addressed below within the context of the evaluation.

Series Determination

The appellant's position includes a mixture of duties classifiable to the Budget Clerical and Technician Series, GS-561, the Human Resources Assistance Series, GS-203, and the Secretary Series, GS-318. The GS-561 work is the highest grade level work performed. The Classifier's Handbook (dated August 1991) provides guidance on classifying mixed-series positions. It instructs that for most positions the grade-controlling work determines the series. However, when the work of the position falls into more than one occupational group, other factors, such as the main purpose of the position, the paramount knowledge requirements, and the recruitment sources, must be considered.

The appellant's position is properly classified to the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, which covers clerical or assistant positions involving either specialized work for which no series has been established, or mixtures of work where the individual occupational series do not provide adequate avenues for recruitment. In the appellant's case, none of the associated series adequately represent the full requirements of the position for recruitment purposes.

The position is currently classified to the Management and Program Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-344, which covers support work in management and program analysis. This is not appropriate as the appellant spends only a very minor portion of her time (no more than five percent) on work related to manpower management, i.e., preparing reports to the brigade on staffing changes to the battalion's table of distribution and allowances (TDA).

The appellant requested that her position be classified to the Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series, GS-301, which is the two-grade interval counterpart series to the GS-303 series.

In order for the position to be classified to this series, the appellant would have to be performing a mixture of two-grade interval work in two or more separate occupational series. In her case, the work she is performing would have to be classifiable to the Budget Analysis Series, GS-560, and the Human Resources Management Series, GS-201. Neither series applies to her work.

The GS-560 series covers work in budget administration that requires knowledge and skill in the application of laws, regulations, policies, methods, and techniques of budgeting. It involves such functions as preparing detailed analyses and estimates of funding needs; analyzing the relative costs and benefits of alternative program plans; preparing allotments and sub-allotments of funds for distribution to program managers; checking the propriety of obligations and expenditures; and providing guidance concerning the legal and regulatory aspects of the acquisition and use of funds for program and administrative purposes. The appellant maintains the battalion's ledger and certifies expenditures based on whether there is money available in the appropriate account. This is a procedural rather than an analytical function in that it does not involve developing cost analyses, distributing allotments on a time-phased or other basis, or authorizing expenditures and the discretionary use of funds based on interpretations of law and regulations. Rather, it is consistent with the GS-561 series, which covers clerical and technical support work in budget administration that requires the application of administrative rules, regulations, and procedures associated with recording, reporting, processing, and keeping track of budgetary transactions.

The GS-201 series covers work involved in the administration and delivery of human resources management products or services, such as classifying positions and recruiting for candidates; screening applicants for qualifications; providing guidance to employees on retirement, health and life insurance, injury compensation, and other benefits; advising managers on matters related to conduct and performance; and administering labor agreements. The appellant serves as personnel liaison between the battalion and the brigade; initiates, coordinates, and tracks personnel actions; and maintains personnel files. She provides basic information to employees and supervisors on personnel processes and requirements, but she does not actually carry out any of these processes, and the brigade and the servicing Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) remain the sources of authoritative personnel advice and consultation. The work is consistent with the GS-203 series, which covers work in human resources management involving such functions as processing documents, explaining procedures, and maintaining records.

Title Determination

Since there are no titles prescribed for the GS-303 series, the agency may construct an appropriate title.

Grade Determination

There are no published grade level criteria for the GS-303 series. The appellant's budget duties were evaluated using the Job Family Standard for Clerical and Technical Accounting and Budget Work, GS-500. Her personnel duties were evaluated using the Job Family Standard for Assistance Work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-200. The appellant's secretarial duties were not separately evaluated since they would not serve as a potential basis for a higher grade.

Both the GS-500 and the GS-200 standards are written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are to be assigned for each of the following nine factors, with the total then being converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standards. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position 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, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level.

Evaluation using the GS-500 standard

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information an employee must understand in order to do the work, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

The knowledge required by the appellant's position matches Level 1-4. At that level, work requires knowledge of a body of budget regulations and practices related to the specific function, including such work as assembling, reviewing, and maintaining complex transactions, such as balancing accounts, developing control records, verifying the accuracy of data, adjusting dollar amounts by line item and object class, and preparing reports on the status of funds. An example of Level 1-4 work provided in the standard is as follows:

Employees review and verify the validity of requisitions for supplies, services, printing, and equipment. They review and approve travel and training orders and requests for personnel actions. They record overtime usage. They calculate funds for current and cumulative manpower by using staffing reports and overtime reports. They perform a variety of special assignments involving the collection, analysis, and reporting of data for budget purposes.

This matches the appellant's assignment in that she maintains budget records for the battalion, to include three major categories covering expenses for travel, supplies, and services; military exercises, training, and deployment; and medical TDY. She reviews and certifies all fund requests, deducts the amounts from the appropriate categories, balances the ledger daily for transmission to the brigade, and responds to brigade inquiries regarding the propriety of expenses.

The position does not meet Level 1-5. At that level, work requires broad, in-depth practical knowledge of accounting or other financial management technical methods, procedures, and precedents to resolve especially difficult or sensitive problems. Employees typically use knowledge of financial regulations and rulings covering diverse types of transactions to function as a technical authority for the resolution of an extensive range of issues or problems, e.g., resolving difficult reconciliations or accounting transaction problems.

The appellant works at the basic operating level of the organization, wherein she records expenses and transmits them to the brigade for review. The organizational level of her position does not afford her the opportunity to be resolving problems in the financial management system or reviewing transactions prepared by others for discrepancies.

Level 1-4 is credited.

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 review of completed work.

The level of responsibility under which the appellant works is comparable to Level 2-3 (the highest level described under this factor.) At that level, the employee works under standing instructions but receives guidance on unusually involved situations. The employee independently processes the most difficult actions and handles problems in accordance with instructions or accepted practices. Work is reviewed for overall soundness and may be spot checked for conformance to requirements, but the methods used are not reviewed in detail.

Correspondingly, the appellant works independently within the established system and is responsible for the technical accuracy of her products. Work is reviewed for overall acceptability and proper clearances.

Level 2-3 is credited.

275 points

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

The guidelines used by the appellant match Level 3-3 (the highest level described under this factor.) At that level, guidelines are not completely applicable, requiring the use of experienced judgment to decide approaches and resolve problems.

The appellant must use judgment in determining the proper fund categories to charge various expenses. This is not always entirely clear as the categories overlap to a certain extent, requiring interpretation of guidelines and comparison with related precedents.

Level 3-3 is credited.

275 points

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of the tasks or processes in the work performed, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The complexity of the appellant's work is comparable to Level 4-3. At that level, the work involves performing various budget or financial management duties involving different processes and methods. The employee carries out the work by identifying the problem or issue, obtaining additional information, and considering previous similar actions.

The appellant is assigned several budget-related responsibilities, including assisting in the development of annual budget requests, reviewing and certifying fund requests, ensuring that sufficient funds are available, and maintaining and balancing the operating ledger.

The position does not meet Level 4-4. At that level, the work involves more varied and complex transactions and problems. For example, the work may involve examining complex and unusual transactions requiring substantial research and thorough understanding of a wide variety of transactions and accounts. The standard specifies that this level is creditable *only when factor level 1-5 has been assigned*, which is not applicable in this case.

Level 4-3 is credited.

150 points

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work match Level 5-2. At that level, the purpose of the work is to perform a full range of budget or financial management assignments covered by well-defined procedures and regulations. The work affects the adequacy of the budget or financial management function and the accuracy of further processes performed by related personnel in various organizations. It also affects the reliability of the organization's financial support services provided to users or customers.

The purpose of the appellant's work is to perform all of the budget-related procedural tasks of the battalion. The work affects the adequacy of the larger budgetary function and the accuracy of further budget processes carried out at the brigade level. It also affects the reliability of budget support services provided to battalion personnel.

The position does not meet Level 5-3. At that level, the purpose of the work is to treat a variety of problems in budget or financial management transactions. The work affects the quality, quantity, and accuracy of the organization's records, program operations, and service to clients, e.g., the integrity of the overall general ledger or the amount and timely availability of money. The standard notes that *only a few positions will be evaluated at this level*.

The purpose of the appellant's work is to review and record expenses, not to resolve problems detected in either the system or in transactions processed by others.

Level 5-2 is credited.

75 points

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

These factors include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain, and the purpose of those contacts. The relationship between Factors 6 and 7 presumes that the same contacts will be evaluated under both factors.

Persons Contacted

The appellant's position matches paragraph 2, where contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. This credits the appellant's contacts with budget staff at higher organizational levels. Paragraph 3 is not met, where contacts are with attorneys, contractors, public action groups, or congressional staff members. The appellant has no contacts of this nature.

Purpose of Contacts

The appellant's position matches paragraph b, where the purpose of contacts is to plan and coordinate actions. Paragraph 3 is not met, where contacts involve persuading others who are uncooperative or threatening.

Level 2b credited.

75 points

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work situation.

The position matches Level 8-1, which covers sedentary work.

Level 8-1 is credited.

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 position matches Level 9-1, which describes a typical office environment.

Level 9-1 is credited.

5 points

Summary

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge Required	1-4	550
Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
Guidelines	3-3	275
Complexity	4-3	150
Scope and Effect	5-2	75
Personal Contacts/ Purpose of Contacts	2b	75
Physical Demands	8-1	5
Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		1410

The total of 1410 points falls within the GS-7 range (1355-1600) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Evaluation using the GS-200 standard

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the Position

The appellant's duties are covered under Level 1-2, where work requires knowledge of basic human resources rules, procedures, and operations sufficient to perform such routine support tasks as initiating personnel actions, completing forms and applications for actions or benefits, maintaining personnel records, and providing routine information. Level 1-3 is not met, where work involves providing a full range of support to human resources specialists in one or more specialties such as staffing, classification, or employee benefits, e.g., processing personnel actions, screening job applications for basic eligibility, or preparing initial retirement annuity estimates. Because the appellant does not work in a human resources office or an organization with delegated personnel management authority, she does not have the opportunity to perform the types of duties expected at this level.

Level 1-2 is credited.

200 points

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

The appellant performs this work under basically the same degree of supervision as the budget work described above.

Level 2-3 is credited.

275 points

Factor 3, Guidelines

The appellant uses guidelines similar to Level 3-2, which include work samples, references, and operating procedures and manuals. As at that level, she must use judgment in locating and

selecting the appropriate guidelines, referring questions to higher-graded staff (i.e., at the brigade level.) Level 3-3 is not met, where guidelines lack specificity and require adaptations by the employee, and where the employee devises more efficient methods for procedural processing and resolves problems referred by others. In the human resources arena, there are no instances in which the appellant would be adapting guidelines or devising processing methods. The tasks that she carries out are relatively limited (e.g., preparing personnel action requests, maintaining personnel files, providing information on prescribed procedures) and thus do not afford the opportunity for modifying procedures.

Level 3-2 is credited.

125 points

Factor 4, Complexity

The complexity of the appellant's work is consistent with Level 4-2, where work consists of related steps, processes, and standard explanations of methods or programs, and where the employee uses factual information and recognizes different processes required to assist customers. This accurately characterizes the appellant's work, which consists of a limited number of procedural tasks and providing routine information to supervisors and employees. Level 4-3 is not met, where work consists of different and unrelated steps in accomplishing human resources assignments and processes, such as evaluating applications and ranking applicants for a variety of lower-grade positions, providing information and assistance to employees concerning intricate employee benefits provisions, or reviewing training requests for eligibility and selecting course substitutions. The appellant does not carry out any actual personnel processes, but rather coordinates with the brigade in requesting such actions or obtaining information.

Level 4-2 is credited.

75 points

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

The scope and effect of the appellant's work meet Level 5-2, where work involves the performance of routine tasks, such as ensuring completeness of forms and ensuring that basic regulatory requirements are met, maintaining files, distributing and tracking personnel action requests, and providing basic information on benefits, training courses, or the results of employment/promotion requests. At this level, work affects the accuracy and reliability of further human resources functions within the organization and the accuracy of employee records, pay, benefits, and other personnel data. The appellant performs routine assignments similar to these, and her work, through the submission of personnel action requests to the brigade, affects the accuracy of further, technical human resources processes. Level 5-3 is not met, where the work involves carrying out limited aspects of technical personnel processes (e.g., rating and ranking job applicants, explaining benefits options based on analysis of individual cases, preparing and presenting classroom instruction for basic subjects), and where the work directly affects the quality of human resources operations and the social and economic well being of the serviced population. The appellant's role is coordinative in nature and thus does not have this degree of direct effect on the actual conduct or outcome of personnel processes.

Level 5-2 is credited. 75 points

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

The appellant's contacts match Level 2 (contacts with staff from outside the immediate office and with the general public, such as job applicants), and Level B (where purpose of contacts is to coordinate work and resolve operating problems.)

Level 2B is credited. 75 points

Factor 8, Physical Demands, and *Factor 9, Work Environment*, are identical to the GS-500 evaluation above.

Summary

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge Required	1-2	200
Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
Guidelines	3-2	125
Complexity	4-2	75
Scope and Effect	5-2	75
Personal Contacts/ Purpose of Contacts	2B	75
Physical Demands	8-1	5
Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		835

The total of 835 points falls within the GS-4 range (655-850) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Decision

Since the highest grade level work performed by the appellant is GS-7, the appealed position is properly classified as GS-303-7, with the title at agency discretion.