

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: Secretary (OA)
GS-318-8

Organization: [office]
[installation]
Department of the Navy
[city and State]

OPM decision: Secretary (OA)
GS-318-8

OPM decision number: C-0318-08-01

Linda J. Kazinetz
Classification Appeals Officer

September 18, 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:

[servicing personnel officer]

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Introduction

On April 19, 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 Secretary (OA), GS-318-8, in the [office], [installation], Department of the Navy, in [city and State]. [Appellant] requested that her position be classified as Administrative Assistant, GS-341-9. This appeal was accepted and decided under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

An on-site position audit was conducted by a Washington Oversight Division representative on August 16, 2001, including an interview with the appellant's supervisor, [name]. 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 Secretary (OA), GS-318-8, on October 5, 2000.

General Issues

The appellant has stated that some of her duties were formerly performed by a GS-11 public affairs specialist. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, in classifying the appellant's position, these duties were evaluated on their own merits. The grade level of the employee to whom they were previously assigned has no bearing on this determination.

Position Information

The appellant performs a wide range of clerical and administrative duties to support the operations of the [office] and reports directly to the director of that office. She also administratively supports two smaller offices ([organizational names]), and assists the Deputy Technical Director's staff through the coordination of VIP visits and tours. Her duties include but are not limited to: keeping the supervisor's calendar, scheduling appointments without prior approval, gathering background materials, and following up on action items; screening the supervisor's email messages, handling administrative matters on her own initiative and referring others to the program staff as appropriate; reviewing outgoing correspondence for format and clearances; attending meetings on new administrative requirements, briefing the staff, and taking any necessary follow-up actions; initiating required actions in response to safety inspections, new training mandates, etc.; developing the supervisor's travel itineraries and coordinating his travel plans with outside parties; preparing, coordinating, and tracking personnel actions; and coordinating and consolidating status reports. Duties associated with coordinating VIP visits and tours are described below within the context of the grade evaluation.

The appellant has been a member of the station's Professional Development Council for the past three years and was elected as its chairman for the past year. Membership on this council is open to non-supervisors in grades GS-8 and above as a developmental opportunity. Each year the council selects a "corporate project" that it will produce from among nominations submitted by

various station components. Membership on the council is voluntary and is limited to 16 employees. Applicants are screened and selected for vacant slots by the current membership.

In order for a given set of duties to be considered in classifying a position, the duties must be assigned by management and actually performed by the employee. Additionally, duties may be grade-controlling only if they constitute at least 25 percent of an employee's time, and if the higher level skills needed to perform the duties would be required in recruiting for the position. In this case, the appellant's activities on the Professional Development Council are voluntary, akin to other employees' participation in professional societies or networking organizations. This work is not assigned by management, nor is it a requirement of her position. It is intended as a career development activity, not a promotion opportunity, since membership is of temporary duration and is not determined on the basis of formal merit promotion procedures. Therefore, the appellant's activities on the Council cannot be considered in the classification of her position.

The same general considerations apply to the appellant's participation on the Workforce 2010 group. The appellant has been assisting in the development of a new employee tracking checklist, wherein she helped develop a questionnaire, administered it to 12 new employees, and went through the current orientation process and reported her observations. This is not an actual requirement of her position, it is a limited duration project rather than a continuing responsibility, and it does not consume 25 percent of her time.

Series Determination

The appellant's position is properly assigned to the Secretary Series, GS-318, which covers positions that serve as the principal clerical and administrative support position in the office to which assigned.

The position is not classifiable to the Administrative Officer Series, GS-341. That series includes positions in which the employees are responsible for providing or obtaining a variety of *management* services (e.g., personnel, budget, finance, contract administration, information technology) essential to the direction and operation of an organization. Positions in this series typically include such duties and responsibilities as: helping management to identify its financial, personnel, and material needs and problems; developing budget estimates and justifications and making sure that funds are used in accordance with the operating budget; counseling management in developing and maintaining sound organization structures, improving management methods and procedures, and seeing to the effective use of personnel, money, and materials; collaborating with personnel specialists in finding solutions to management problems arising out of changes in work which have an impact on jobs and employees; and advising on and negotiating contracts, agreements, and cooperative arrangements with other government agencies, universities, or private organizations.

The appellant does not perform any duties of this nature. She prepares personnel action requests and coordinates their submission and completion. She explains new administrative requirements to the office staff (e.g., DoD guidance on foreign travel, use of government travel cards, filing of financial disclosure forms.) She occasionally purchases new office equipment as needed

(software, printers, copiers, etc.) These are typical secretarial duties involving the provision of *support* rather than *management* services to the organization.

Title Determination

The prescribed title for positions in this series is Secretary. The parenthetical addition of (OA) to the title is appropriate, as the position requires knowledge of office automation systems and full typing qualifications.

Grade Determination

The position was evaluated by comparing the duties to criteria contained in the standard for the Secretary Series, GS-318, dated January 1979. This standard is 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 standard. 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.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor is expressed in terms of two elements, Work Situation and Knowledge Type. Work Situation refers to the complexity of the organization served which affects the extent of office rules, procedures, operations, and priorities the employee must apply to maintain a proper and smooth flow of work within the organization and between organizations. Knowledge Type measures the nature and extent of information the employee must understand in order to do the work, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

Work Situation

At Work Situation B, the staff is organized into subordinate segments which may be further divided. Direction of the staff is exercised through intermediate supervisors, and the subordinate groups differ from each other in such aspects as subject matter, functions, relationships with other organizations, and administrative requirements. There is a system of formal internal procedures and administrative controls, and a formal production or progress reporting system. Coordination among subordinate units is sufficiently complex to require continuous attention. Also included at Work Situation B are organizations that have extensive responsibility for coordinating work outside of the organization, when the external coordination requires procedures and administrative controls *equivalent to* those described above for this level.

The appellant provides secretarial services to components which are not individually large enough to support Work Situation B but which, viewed in the aggregate, have different functions, external relationships, and administrative needs comparable to a typical Work

Situation B organization. In addition, the appellant has extensive and continuing responsibility for coordinating work outside the organization through her coordination of VIP visits and tours, satisfying the alternate criteria for Work Situation B.

At Work Situation C, in addition to the conditions described in Work Situation B, the staff is augmented by various staff specialists in such fields as personnel, management analysis, and administration. The organization is typically divided into three or more subordinate levels, with several organizations at each level. In addition, the organization typically has one of the following conditions, increasing the knowledges required by the work: (1) the program is interlocked on a direct and continuing basis with the programs of other agencies or organizations, requiring constant attention to extensive formal clearances and procedural controls; (2) the program is directly affected by conditions outside the organization which vary widely in nature and intensity and require frequent organizational, procedural, or program adjustments in the organization; (3) there is active and extensive public interest or participation in the program which results in the supervisor spending a substantial portion of the time in personal contacts outside the organization.

In this work situation, the organizations are large enough to have multiple subdivisions and to support their own full administrative staffs. The GS-318 standard includes several benchmark job descriptions for positions at varying grade levels that serve as illustrative work situations. They describe both the duties performed and the factor level assignments. In the three benchmarks where Work Situation C is assigned, the organizations depicted include a district office with over 1,000 employees, a research and development center with approximately 1,800 employees, and a large hospital affiliated with two schools of medicine, each of which has staff providing dedicated administrative support. Although these benchmarks are intended as general guides, the organizations supported by the appellant do not approach this level of size or complexity. Further, this work situation describes extensive programmatic relationships between the organization supported and other agencies or organizations that *directly affect* the work of the secretary and increase the knowledges required by the work (e.g., by requiring extensive formal clearances and procedural controls or significant public contacts.) In the appellant's case, although the organizations supported have these types of interrelationships, they do not significantly impact the appellant's work in the sense of imposing additional knowledge requirements on her job or requiring her to establish formal administrative controls between her organization and outside parties.

Knowledge Type

The knowledge required by the appellant's position matches Knowledge Type III. Positions at this level require knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff sufficient to perform non-routine assignments such as: independently noting and following-up on commitments made at meetings and conferences by staff members; shifting clerical staff in subordinate offices to take care of fluctuating workloads; or locating and summarizing information from files when this requires recognizing which information is relevant. At this level, the secretary is fully responsible for coordinating the work of the office with the work of other offices, and for recognizing the need for such coordination in various circumstances.

This accurately characterizes the nature of the appellant's work and her role in the office. The appellant must know the policies and priorities of the supervisor in order to independently handle virtually all of the administrative matters that arise and to coordinate the work of the office with the work of other offices (e.g., in obtaining administrative services, arranging meetings, and conveying information.)

The position does not meet Knowledge Type IV. Positions at this level must have, as a continuing requirement, a basic foundation of administrative concepts, principles, and practices sufficient to perform independently such duties as: eliminating conflict and duplication in extensive office procedures; determining when new procedures are needed; systematically studying and evaluating new office machines and recommending acceptance and rejection of their use; and studying the clerical activities of the office and subordinate offices and recommending a specific restructuring of the way activities are carried out. Positions at this level also require comprehensive knowledge of the supervisor's policies and views on all significant matters affecting the organization, to perform such duties as developing material for the supervisor's use in public speaking engagements, and briefing staff members or outside parties on the supervisor's views on current issues affecting the organization (e.g., the supervisor feels that a proposed reorganization would increase the effectiveness of the program because it reduces some administrative burdens.) The standard notes that *Work Situation B rarely involves application of Knowledge Type IV.*

This knowledge type can only be supported by very large organizations, where the supervisor has a sizable staff and subordinate structure and significant representational responsibilities. The appellant provided no examples of work she has performed that is equivalent to the duties described above in any respect.

Work Situation B in combination with Knowledge Type III equates to Level 1-4.

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 2-4 (the highest level described under this factor.) At that level, the supervisor sets the overall objectives of the work, and the secretary and the supervisor develop the deadlines and work to be done. The standard describes several duties as typical of those performed at this level. These consist of the following: noting commitments made by the supervisor during meetings and arranging for the staff to implement them; reviewing correspondence for policy departures or conflicts with previous correspondence and resolving these problems before presentation to the supervisor; in addition to independently arranging conferences, also arranging for a subordinate of the supervisor to represent the organization; drafting letters of acknowledgement, commendation, notification, etc., on his/her own initiative, e.g., after reviewing publications for program

citations; ensuring that official social obligations are met, such as arranging luncheons, issuing invitations, and providing for protocol requirements; obtaining information on specialized subject matter that is scattered in numerous documents or must be obtained orally from several sources; and preparing administrative or procedural notices or instructions to the staff on his/her own initiative. These types of duties would normally be found in offices at high organizational echelons with supervisors who have many official programmatic and social commitments or in extremely large organizations where the supervisor delegates considerable authority to the secretary to take actions on his/her behalf.

The [organizational name] is a staff office reporting directly to the Commanding Officer, and the [organizational name] is considered a Command level program office. The appellant assumes a considerable degree of responsibility in handling virtually all administrative matters affecting these offices, and has the additional responsibility of coordinating VIP visits to the station. Analogous to the above Level 2-4 assignments, the appellant performs the following duties: scheduling meetings for the supervisor independently, including other staff members as appropriate, obtaining relevant material from technical staff, noting subsequent action items, and scheduling follow up meetings with others as needed; reading all of the supervisor's emails, handling administrative items on her own initiative, forwarding program matters to the appropriate staff, and following up with them on required actions; and attending administrative meetings for department-level secretaries and briefing the office staff on changes and requirements. In coordinating VIP visits and tours, the appellant is responsible for scheduling and arranging all aspects of the visit, including developing and coordinating the agenda, assembling welcome packages and safety gear, setting up meeting rooms and equipment (e.g., audiovisual equipment, laptops), coordinating with other nearby DoD facilities, arranging transportation, and making luncheon arrangements. She stays available for the duration of the visit to greet the visitors if they arrive early, provide any other needed administrative services, and generally ensure that the visit proceeds smoothly. The appellant carries out these duties very independently based on her understanding of program objectives and requirements.

Level 2-4 is credited.

450 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 include a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices which are not completely applicable to the work or are not specific and deal with matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than with procedural concerns. For example, they may include decisions made by the supervisor in cases that are similar, but not completely analogous. The secretary applies and adapts guidelines, such as regulations or the supervisor's policies, to specific problems for which the guidelines are not completely applicable.

Most of the appellant's duties are undertaken on her own initiative in response to the administrative needs of the office. For example, she screens all of the supervisor's emails to

intercept those items that she can handle herself or that relate to administrative concerns, and forwards to the appropriate staff those items that relate to their program areas that she feels do not require the supervisor's personal attention, and follows up on their completion. She gathers information in response to data calls, presents it to the appropriate program manager, keeps others informed on the status of the response, and tracks the due date to ensure that it is met. As another example, she keeps track of noteworthy activities within the office and gets input from the staff for the biweekly Command staff meetings, and coordinates all inputs to the office's monthly status report, to include reviewing the submissions for accuracy. These require knowledge not only of clerical and administrative priorities in the office, but also of program priorities and the supervisor's particular interests and concerns.

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 (the highest level described under this factor.) At that level, the secretary performs a number of duties comparable to the following: preparing one-of-a-kind reports from information in various documents when this requires reading correspondence and reports to identify relevant items, and when decisions are based on familiarity with the issues involved and the relationship between the various types of information; and setting up conferences requiring the planning and arranging of travel and hotel accommodations based on knowledge of the schedules and commitments of the participants. Decisions regarding what needs to be done and how to accomplish it are based on the secretary's knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the supervisor and staff, and involve analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment. The chosen courses are selected from many alternatives.

The appellant performs a wide variety of assignments, many of which require analysis of the particular issues or needs involved. For example, in coordinating VIP visits and tours, she considers the purpose and level of the visit in determining what to include on the agenda and what additional material to provide (e.g., program summaries). Although the general processes may be similar, considerable judgment must be exercised to accommodate the unique requirements of each situation.

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 carry out specific procedures. Duties frequently appearing at this level include: serving as liaison between the supervisor and subordinate units; consolidating reports submitted by subordinate units; and arranging meetings involving staff from outside the immediate office. The work affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes.

The purpose of the appellant's work is to carry out the administrative processes of the office. The appellant serves as liaison between the supervisor and the program managers, consolidates monthly status reports, and arranges meetings between the supervisor and other station managers. The work affects the ability of the staff to accomplish their work through the provision of essential support services.

The position does not meet Level 5-3. Positions at that level serve offices that clearly and *directly* affect a wide range of *agency* activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. The secretary at this level modifies and devises methods and procedures that significantly and consistently affect the accomplishment of the mission of the office. The secretary identifies and resolves various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization.

The primary purpose of the appellant's position is to carry out specific processes rather than to devise and modify administrative procedures to be implemented by other secretarial staff.

Level 5-2 is credited.

75 points

Factor 6, Personal Contacts

This factor includes face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain. The relationship between Factors 6 and 7 presumes that the same contacts will be evaluated under both factors.

The appellant's personal contacts match Level 6-3. At that level, contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting, for example, the contacts are not established on a routine basis, requiring the secretary to identify and locate the appropriate person to contact. The appellant has substantive contacts with individuals from outside the station in connection with coordinating VIP visits and tours.

The position does not meet Level 6-4. At that level, contacts are with high-ranking officials from outside the employing agency at national or international levels (e.g., Members of Congress, leading representatives of foreign governments, presidents of large national or international firms, nationally recognized representatives of the news media, presidents of national unions, State governors, or mayors of large cities) in highly unstructured settings. The appellant has no contacts of this nature.

Level 6-3 is credited.

60 points

Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

This factor covers the purpose of personal contacts ranging from factual exchange of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints and objectives.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts is consistent with Level 7-2 (the highest level described under this factor), where contacts are for the purposes of planning and coordinating work or resolving operating problems.

Level 7-2 is credited. 50 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	2-4	450	
Guidelines	3-3	275	
Complexity	4-3	150	
Scope and Effect	5-2	75	
Personal Contacts	6-3	60	
Purpose of Contacts	7-2	50	
Physical Demands	8-1	5	
Work Environment	9-1	5	
	Total	1620	

The total of 1620 points falls within the GS-8 range (1605-1850) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Decision

The appealed position is properly classified as Secretary (OA), GS-318-8