# Classification Appeal Decision

Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appellant:</th>
<th>[appellant’s name]</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agency classification:</td>
<td>Administrative Support Assistant (OA)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GS-303-5</td>
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<td>Organization:</td>
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<td>U.S. Department of the Interior</td>
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<td>OPM decision:</td>
<td>GS-303-5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Title at the discretion of the agency, with the parenthetical title of Office Automation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPM decision number:</td>
<td>C-0303-05-19</td>
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Virginia L. Magnuson  
Classification Appeals Officer  

December 31, 2002  
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]

[supervisor]

Ms. Michelle Jackson
Personnel Officer
Southeast Region
National Park Service
100 Alabama Street, SW.
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Introduction

On August 8, 2002, the Atlanta Oversight Division, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal for the position of Administrative Assistant (OA), GS-303-5, [organization], Southeast Region, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of Interior, [geographic location]. The appellant is requesting that her position be reclassified as Administrative Assistant, GS-303-6. We received a complete administrative report on September 9, 2002. The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

In November 2001, the appellant submitted an appeal to her agency requesting that her position be classified as Administrative Assistant, GS-303-6 or 7. The agency issued a decision on May 17, 2002, sustaining the existing classification.

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.

General issues

The appellant makes various statements regarding her agency’s evaluation of the duties and responsibilities of her position. In adjudicating her appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of her position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing her current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant’s statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

The appellant notes that she performs phone support and other duties for the park superintendent’s Secretary, GS-318-7, when the secretary is at lunch or needs assistance. However, section III.J. of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards indicates that the proper grade of positions is determined by evaluation of the regularly assigned work which is paramount in the position. Work which is carried out only in the absence of another employee cannot be considered paramount for grade level purposes.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to position description number [#]. The appellant’s supervisor, with the exception of reference to the need to remove Imprest Fund Cashier from the list of duties, certified the accuracy of the position description. The appellant concurred with the need to remove Imprest Fund Cashier from the list of major duties, but did not certify the accuracy of the position description. She believes that her position description does not clearly define the responsibilities performed by her position. OPM considers a position description adequate for classification purposes when it is considered so by one knowledgeable of the occupational field involved and of the application of pertinent classification standards, principles, and policies, and is supplemented by otherwise accurate, available, and current information on the organization, functions, programs, and procedures
concerned. While there are some minor tasks listed in the position description that are not being performed, we find the current position description adequate for classification.

The appellant spends 20 to 25 percent of her time engaged in activities supporting the park’s property program. She maintains controls necessary to ensure proper transmission of data and performs data input and retrieval for all of the park’s personal property, maintains control logs, and provides subsequent verification of property adjustments. She ensures that documentation and records are completed, are accurate, and are fully supportable. The appellant utilizes Federal and departmental property management regulations, policy, and procedures to determine appropriateness of actions taken on behalf of the park. She coordinates required property and weapons inventories. The appellant uses an NPS computerized software program as a database for storing and retrieving information related to specific physical park property and for generating pre-programmed reports. The appellant also prepares and executes requests for disposal or transfer of property and search for lost property and coordinates with custodians, recipients, and regional contacts as necessary.

The park operates a small (less than 10 official units) housing management program providing temporary government housing. The appellant supports this program through the use of the Quarters Management Information System. She implements annual housing rate adjustments, generates housing assignment documents and reports, and maintains housing inventory, files, and other data. The appellant also responds to routine tenant questions. The appellant estimates that this function is performed approximately 30 percent of the time, but the supervisor estimates the time at 5 percent.

The remainder of her time is divided among a variety of office support activities for the park Headquarters Office. The appellant serves as the park’s Third Party Draft agent responsible for paying the park’s routine utility bills and other requisitions related to the day-to-day operations of the facility. She screens bills and requisitions for accuracy of signature, justification, date, and account number and maintains logs. She makes travel arrangements and prepares travel vouchers. In conjunction with her duties, the appellant generates or may prepare a variety of correspondence, reports, and forms.

The appellant is responsible for all aspects of mail operations including receipt and distribution of incoming mail and preparation, dispatch, and control of all outgoing mail including packages sent through the postal service and courier services and interdepartmental correspondence. She serves as the primary point of contact for matters involving photocopying and mail equipment. The appellant maintains the centralized filing system for the park and is responsible for ensuring that all centralized file material is properly coded, cross-referenced, currently maintained, and properly charged out and returned.

The appellant reports to and receives general supervision from the Administrative Officer, GS-0341-13. She is expected to exercise independent judgment in carrying out duties and responsibilities and is expected to keep the supervisor apprised of her work accomplishments on a regular basis. Advice and assistance are provided for problems or conditions that are unusual and not covered by regulations and guidelines. The employee is expected to plan and carry out assignments independently in accordance with office standard operating
procedures and accepted agency practices. Review of the appellant’s work is in terms of accuracy and accomplishment of work objectives.

**Series and title determination**

The agency classified the appellant’s position in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303. The appellant does not disagree with the series of her position and the addition of the parenthetical “OA” to the position title.

The GS-303 series does not specify titles. Therefore, the agency may designate an appropriate title by following the guidance in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*. Because the position requires a qualified typist and knowledge of office automation equipment and software, the parenthetical designator, Office Automation (or the abbreviation OA), should be added to the title.

**Standard determination**

Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, November 1979  
Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, June 1989  
Office Automation Grade Level Evaluation Guide, November 1990  
Supply Clerical and Technician Series, GS-2005, May 1992

**Grade determination**

The GS-303 standard does not have grade level criteria. The standard instructs that positions in this series be evaluated by reference to other standards for occupations with analogous knowledge and skills. The appellant’s administrative support work is best evaluated by application of the grading criteria in the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work (the Guide). The office automation duties are evaluated by the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide (OAGEG). To ensure that the duties associated with the property program do not impact the grade, those duties will be evaluated against the Supply Clerical and Technician Series standard, GS-2005.

**Evaluation using the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work**

The Guide provides general criteria for use in determining the grade level of nonsupervisory clerical and assistance work. The Guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 to GS-7 and uses two criteria for grading purposes: *Nature of assignment* (which includes knowledge required and complexity of the work) and *Level of responsibility* (which includes supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts).
**Nature of assignment**

At the GS-5 level, the employee performs work encompassing a range of standard and nonstandard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of non-recurring problems. Work includes a variety of assignments involving different and unrelated steps, processes, or methods. The employee must identify and understand the issues involved in each assignment and determine what steps and procedures are necessary and the order of their performance. Completion of each transaction typically involves selecting a course of action from a number of possibilities. The work requires extensive knowledge of an organization’s rules, procedures, operations, or business practices to perform the more complex, interrelated, or one-of-a-kind processing procedures.

The GS-5 level is met. Comparable to work performed at this level, the appellant must have knowledge of office administration processes and procedures and the mission and operational requirements of the unit. Her responsibilities require that she ensure established procedures for the acquisition, receipt, and issuance of property identification are followed. She ensures that all documentation and records for personal property are accurate and completed within the established time frames and resolves transaction discrepancies. She applies knowledge of travel regulations in completing travel arrangements and travel vouchers. The appellant must understand invoices and requisitions sufficiently to ensure completeness of data for payment. She also uses judgment in determining which of a number of established agency administrative procedures are most suitable in coordinating the variety of activities involved in managing incoming and outgoing mail services and controlling the park’s centralized filing system and storage. Much of the work involves the application of established policies and procedures to resolve issues arising during the course of daily operations.

At the GS-6 level, work requires considerable evaluative judgment within well-defined, commonly occurring aspects of an administrative program or function. The work may involve providing direct assistance to specialists or analysts by performing a segment of their work, or it may involve responsibility for a stream of products or continuing processes based on direct application of established policies, practices, and criteria. Assignments involve a relatively narrow range of case situations that occur in a broad administrative program or function. This work typically involves identifying issues, problems, or conditions and seeking alternative solutions based on evaluation of the intent of applicable rules, regulations, and procedures. Assignments requiring evaluative judgment are narrowly focused, address a single product or action, and are relatively clear-cut. The employee usually deals with problems or situations that remain stable, and resemble past problems or situations. Assignments often involve problems or situations where there is not one absolutely correct solution, only a best or most appropriate one. Work requires practical knowledge of guidelines and precedent case actions relating to a particular program area equal to that acquired through considerable work experience or specialized training. The work also requires skill to recognize the dimensions of a problem and express ideas in writing.

The GS-6 level is not met. The work performed by the appellant does not require the considerable evaluative judgment typical of the GS-6 level. The majority of the appellant’s activities involve processes and procedures that are recurring and require that the appellant understand the issues involved with the transaction to ensure appropriateness of information.
The work, however, does not require that she interpret the intent of rules, regulations, and procedures for the purposes of seeking alternative solutions to issues. For example, her work supporting the property and housing management programs involves the use of standard database software, official “canned” reports printed from these software packages, and the use of standardized forms for inventory control, various reports, leases, etc. Standard operating procedures are available, and assignments usually involve problems or situations where there is only one correct solution. The work also does not regularly involve direct assistance to specialists or analysts by performing a segment of their work.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Level of Responsibility

At the GS-5 level, the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance on assignments that do not have clear precedents. The employee works in accordance with accepted practices and completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting goals. Extensive guides in the form of instructions, manuals, regulations, and precedents apply to the work. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines for application and adapting them according to circumstances of the specific case or transaction. A number of procedural problems may arise which also require interpretation and adaptation of established guides. Often, the employee must determine which of several alternative guidelines to use. If existing guidelines cannot be applied, the employee refers the matter to the supervisor. Contacts are with a variety of persons within and outside the agency for the purpose of receiving or providing information relating to the work or for the purpose of resolving operating problems in connection with recurring responsibilities.

The GS-5 level is met. The supervisor assigns work in terms of objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The appellant independently plans and carries out successive steps according to the specific requirements of each task. Completed work is evaluated in terms of accuracy and accomplishment of work objectives. The appellant manages the day-to-day activities of her assignments based on established policies and procedures. She uses judgment in selecting the appropriate guidelines based on the work assignment. Contacts with co-workers and the public are to exchange information and resolve problems associated with the day-today operations of the park’s Headquarters Office.

At the GS-6 level, the supervisor reviews completed work for conformance with policy and requirements. The clerical employee is recognized as an authority on processing transactions or completing assignments within a complicated framework of established procedures and guidelines, often when there are no clear precedents. This recognition typically extends beyond the immediate office or work unit to the overall organization or, in some cases, outside the organization. The employee is regarded as an expert source of information on regulatory requirements for the various transactions, and is frequently called upon to provide accurate information rapidly on short notice. Guidelines for the work are numerous and varied, making it difficult for the employee to choose the most appropriate instruction and decide how the various transactions are to be completed. Guidelines often do not apply
directly, requiring the employee to make adaptations to cover new and unusual work situations. This may involve deviating from established procedures to process transactions which cannot be completed through regular channels or involve actions where guidelines are conflicting or unusable.

The GS-6 level is not met. Although the appellant works independently, her work is evaluated in terms of accuracy and accomplishment of work objectives, and the supervisor provides guidance for issues without clear precedent. The appellant is a point of contact for her assigned functions, but her transactions and data entry do not have a complicated framework of established procedures and guidelines comparable to the GS-6 level. Guidelines are available and generally cover most aspects of the work the appellant performs, including financial adjustments for the park’s government housing program and her property control responsibilities, such as annual physical inventory of park property, lost or damaged property reports, and government vehicle accidents. They are specific enough that significant judgment and interpretation are not required. Instances requiring deviation from established procedures are infrequent and are covered by local or agency guidance or are referred to her supervisor for authoritative resolution.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Since both factors are credited at GS-5, the overall evaluation of the clerical and administrative support functions is GS-5.

**Evaluation using the GS-2005 standard**

The appellant’s property control duties occupy approximately 20 to 25 percent of her time and can be evaluated using the GS-2005 standard. The GS-2005 standard is in the Factor Evaluation Format (FES). Under the FES, positions are evaluated by comparing the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required with nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor in accordance with the factor-level descriptions. For each factor, the full intent of the level must be met to credit the points for that level. The total points assigned for the nine factors are converted to a grade by reference to the grade conversion table in the standard. A factor-by-factor analysis of the appealed work is provided.

**Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position**

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts a worker must understand in order to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skills needed to apply this knowledge.

The appellant’s position meets Level 1-3, at which employees use knowledge of standardized regulations, policies, or procedures to perform a range of standard clerical assignments and to resolve recurring problems. Most positions require familiarity with one or more automated supply databases to enter, correct, and retrieve recurring reports and to structure and retrieve specialized reports. Employees at this level maintain perpetual inventory records of nonexpendable property for the organization serviced and when property is declared excess
they verify accurate description and quantity available. When nonexpendable property is lost, damaged, or destroyed, employees prepare survey reports. At Level 1-4, employees use a thorough knowledge of governing regulations and conduct extensive and exhaustive searches for required information and reconstruct records for complex supply transactions. The appellant determines appropriateness of actions, enters and retrieves data, resolves transaction discrepancies, and coordinates tasks associated with property record keeping, transfer and disposal. There is no indication in the record that she performs the exhaustive records searches or reconstructs complex transactions such as are identified at Level 1-4. Her property accountability duties do not meet the more involved Level 1-4 property utilization functions.

Level 1-3 is credited for 350 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor considers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee’s responsibility, and the review of completed work.

The appellant’s position meets Level 2-3, the highest level identified in the standard, at which the employee functions with considerable independence in performing recurring assignments and handles problems and deviations in the work assignment in accordance with instructions, policies, and practices. The supervisor assists with unusual situations which do not have clear precedent. The appellant plans and carries out her work in accordance with procedures and practices, researches transaction discrepancies, inputs or retrieves data and generates reports, arranges for property disposal and transfer, and coordinates property inventory. She receives assistance for problems that are unusual and not covered by regulations and guidelines. Comparable to Level 2-3, the supervisor performs a general review of the appellant’s completed property program work to ensure compliance with agency policies and regulations.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

The appellant’s position meets Level 3-2 at which procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available. The employee uses judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references and procedures and in making minor deviations. The appellant performs her property management work in accordance with established guidelines and procedures that apply. At Level 3-3, work is of a problem solving or case nature and guidelines are not completely applicable or have gaps in specificity.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 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 work.

The appellant’s position meets Level 4-2 at which work consists of related steps, processes, or methods, and the employee makes decisions on what to do by recognizing the existence of and differences among a few easily recognizable situations and conditions. The appellant performs a number of related tasks in maintaining property control. She maintains property accountability records; prepares and executes requests for property disposal, transfer, etc., and coordinates associated actions; generates reports; coordinates property and weapons inventories; and ensures proper property identification and completion of documentation for personal property. The appellant’s position does not meet Level 4-3 at which work is difficult because it involves nonstandardized actions, deviations from established procedures, new or changing situations, or matters for which only general provision can be made in regulations or procedures. Our fact-finding did not identify property transactions comparable to Level 4-3.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

**Factor 5, Scope and effect**

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

The appellant’s position meets Level 5-2 at which work involves the execution of specific rules, regulations, and procedures and typically comprises a complete segment of an assignment. The work affects the accuracy, reliability, or acceptability of further processes in meeting customer requirements in supported organizations. The appellant maintains property records for the park and provides all required documentation to support acquisitions, new entries, changes, and deletions. Work impacts all park customers and other activities, such as in the transfer of property to other NPS locations. Level 5-3 is not met since problems encountered at that level require extensive fact-finding, review of information to coordinate requirements, and recommendations to resolve conditions or change procedures. The results of the work at this level affect the adequacy of local supply support operations or contribute to improved procedures in support of supply programs and operations. There is no indication in the record to indicate that the appellant performs the more extensive fact-finding identified at Level 5-3 or makes comparable recommendations.

Level 5-2 is credited for 75 points.

**Factor 6, Personal contacts, and Factor 7, Purpose of contacts**

These factors include face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogues with persons not in the supervisory chain and pertain to the reasons the contacts are made.
The appellant’s contacts equate to Level 2, at which contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization, or with members of the general public who typically are involved in supply/property functions. The appellant’s contacts are generally with park employees, regional staff, and the general public, such as recipients of excess computer property. The appellant does not normally have Level 3 contacts with individuals from outside the employing agency in moderately unstructured settings in which 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.

Level 2 is met.

The purpose of the contacts meets Level a. At this level, the purpose of contacts is to obtain, clarify, or exchange facts or information. The appellant contacts persons and organizations to exchange information, initiate inventories, and clarify discrepancies in property transactions. At Level b, the purpose of the contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or resolve operating problems. The appellant does not fully meet Level b since her coordinative actions involve an exchange of information to initiate actions or resolve individual transactions rather than to coordinate the work efforts of others or to resolve property program operations or automated system problems as intended at this level.

Level a is met.

Factors 6 and Factor 7 meet Level 2a for 45 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignments. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

The physical requirements involved in the appellant’s property duties are a match at Level 8-1. The work is primarily sedentary. It may involve some walking, standing, bending, or carrying of light items. The appellant’s property work does not require the physical exertion identified at Level 8-2, such as long periods of standing, difficult walking, recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, or other similar activities.

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 and the safety regulations required.
The work environment of the appellant’s position compares to Level 9-1. The work is generally performed in an office requiring normal safety precautions against everyday risks or discomforts.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

**Summary**

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<th>Factor</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>1. Knowledge required by the position</td>
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<td>2. Supervisory controls</td>
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<td>3. Guidelines</td>
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<td>6. and 7. Personal contacts and</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8. Physical demands</td>
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A total of 955 points falls within the GS-5 point range of 855 to 1100 in the GS-2005 standard.

**Evaluation using the OAGEG**

The OAGEG is written in the FES format. The appellant did not contest the agency’s factor determinations. We concur with all determinations except Factors 2 and 4. The agency credited Level 2-3 and Level 4-3. We disagree.

**Factor 2, Supervisory controls**

At Level 2-2, the supervisor provides general instructions for standard, preestablished, or continuing office automation tasks. The employee works independently in carrying out familiar assignments in accordance with previous instructions, standard procedures for creating documents or entering or retrieving data, and established use of software packages. Completed work is usually checked for compliance with office procedures or instructions, technical accuracy, and appearance.

At Level 2-3 assignments are given with information on general administrative changes, deadlines, and priorities. For work that has not previously been automated, the supervisor defines overall objectives. The employee works independently to plan and carry out steps for completing assignments in accordance with established office instructions and practices for office automation. When current practices or deviations in an assignment cause problems, the incumbent uses initiative to resolve them and coordinates efforts with other employees involved in or affected by the nonstandard procedures. Completed work is evaluated for
technical soundness, usefulness, and conformance with office operating requirements and needs.

The appellant’s work meets Level 2-2. The majority of the office automation assignments require entry and retrieval of information in a variety of forms using several software types. Though the employee functions very independently in utilizing the NPS computerized software programs, there is no indication in the record that this independence is exercised in performing the more difficult assignments intended at Level 2-3. There is no indication in the record that the appellant regularly performs more difficult office automation assignments requiring deviation from established procedures or automation or work not previously automated, or uses initiative to resolve problems and coordinate efforts with other employees involved in or affected by the nonstandard procedures.

Level 2-2 is credited for 125 points.

*Factor 4, Complexity*

At Level 4-2, the documents, formats, and processing functions involved require a varying number and sequence of steps and use different functions from one assignment to another. Assignments at this level involve using two or more types of software to process different types of documents, paragraphs, tables, reports, etc., that can be combined in a number of ways and that require extensive entry of data from drafts. The employee must recognize differences in existing procedures and applications and make choices from among established alternatives. Steps and procedures differ in terms of the type of software used, the type of document or specific report to be produced or edited, and the specific formatting required.

The appellant’s position meets Level 4-2. She uses several types of software including standard systems for property and housing data and generation of reports. She must recognize differences in procedures and make choices from among established alternatives. She assembles information for standard and some nonstandard reports by selecting from among established procedures for locating, retrieving, and manipulating the data to meet reporting requirements.

At Level 4-3, work involves using several types of software packages for different office needs. Assignments typically include a broad range of office automation duties. In deciding how to proceed, the employee considers many factors that are varied and that are not always clearly established. In performing the work, the employee applies judgment in considering and selecting from among many different software types in light of the range and peculiarities of the unit’s information processing capabilities and requirements. The employee regularly develops methods and procedures for office automation tasks and identifies and solves problems in existing methods or procedures.

The appellant’s position does not meet Level 4-3. The appellant uses several types of software packages for different office needs, but the type of software needed and the associated tasks are generally clear and do not require all the selection and procedural
determinations intended at Level 4-3. Our fact-finding did not determine that the appellant regularly develops methods and procedures for office automation tasks or identifies and solves problems in existing methods and procedures.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

A summary evaluation using the OAGEG follows:

Summary

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<td>8. Physical demands</td>
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<td>9. Work environment</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>740</strong></td>
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A total of 740 points falls within the range for GS-4, 655 to 850 points, according to the OAGEG grade conversion table.

Summary

The administrative and clerical work equates to GS-5. The property control duties equate to GS-5. The office automation duties equate to GS-4.

Decision

The appellant’s position is properly classified as GS-303-5. Selection of an appropriate title is at the agency’s discretion. The parenthetical title *Office Automation* is to be added to the position title.