



# United States Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
May 2001  
Article No. 26-01

**Standards:** N/A  
**Factor:** N/A  
**Issue:** Distinguishing between one-grade and two-grade interval work

## **Identification of the Classification Issue**

Case #1: The appellants' position was classified in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303. The appellants received notifications of pension plan terminations. They reviewed these documents for completeness, accuracy, and timeliness and input the information into a database, which applied edit checks to determine if the information fell within predetermined parameters. If the information failed edit checks, the appellants contacted the submitters to obtain additional or corrected information. The appellants rejected documents based on two clearly-defined coverage exclusions, and issued standard letters to submitters in response to a limited number of circumstances indicated in the documents. They believed that their work required interpreting the governing laws and regulations in order to process documents and to advise submitters on additional information required, and that their position should, therefore, be classified to the two-grade interval Pension Law Specialist Series, GS-958.

Case #2: The appellant's position was classified in the Management and Program Analysis Series, GS-343. She monitored a hotline operation, receiving written and telephonic complaints, questioning callers to obtain basic information about the incidents being reported, and preparing written summaries of the allegations for referral to the investigative staff. She believed that her position required substantial analytical and writing skills and thus warranted a higher grade.

## **Resolution**

Case #1: OPM found that the appellants' work was properly classified in the GS-303 series. Their work was governed by a processing manual that prescribed the steps to be taken in reviewing documents. The actual legal and regulatory requirements that directly pertained to their work were clearly stated within the manual. The appellants conveyed these requirements to submitters and applied them in their processing work. However, they applied the commonly accepted interpretations of these requirements and in no circumstances were authorized to make independent determinations of the meaning or intent of law or regulations.

Case #2: OPM found that the appellant was engaged exclusively in one-grade interval work. Her duties did not require a high order of analytical ability, substantial knowledge of the principles and practices of investigative work, or highly-developed writing skills. For telephonic complaints, she questioned the callers only to the extent necessary to obtain basic information related to the incidents being reported, such as names, dates, and locations. She did not have the authority to screen complaints, except for those clearly not under her agency's purview. Her writing was limited to preparing one-paragraph summaries of the complaints for insertion in boilerplate transmittal letters. Her work provided support to the investigative staff but did not otherwise contribute directly to the investigations themselves. Therefore, OPM found that the work was in effect a processing operation and was properly classified in the Compliance Inspection and Support Series, GS-1802.

### **“Back to the Basics”**

Guidance on distinguishing between one-grade and two-grade interval work is contained in both the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards* and the *Classifiers Handbook*. In making this distinction for an individual position, the characteristics and requirements of the work must be closely examined, as well as management's intent in establishing the position.

Link to [C-0303-05-13](#)  
[C-1802-09-01](#)