



# United States Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
December 2001  
Article No. 27-02

**Standard:** [Mail and File, GS-305 \(May 1977\)](#)  
**Factor:** N/A  
**Issue:** Series determination

## **Identification of the Classification Issue**

The appellants' position was classified as Processor, GS-1101-4. The appellants distributed incoming mail and used automated systems to find addresses for outgoing mail. The agency considered classifying the positions to the Mail and File series, GS-305, but selected the General Business and Industry series, GS-1101, with the rationale that the work required subject-matter knowledge of the organization's programs. Their underlying reasons were to maintain organizational homogeneity in classification within the organization and to provide nominal qualifying experience for employees in the mail unit to allow them to compete for other positions at the field activity. The appellants believed that their position should be classified at a higher level.

## **Resolution**

During its review, OPM found that the appellants spent a considerable amount of their time searching for correct addresses for outgoing mail. These efforts were often intensive and required understanding and using a proprietary computer system and sometimes tasking other offices, including bureau field offices, in the identified geographic area. The work required knowledge of the missions, functions, and operations of bureau offices and personnel. However, OPM concluded that the mission of the appellant's unit, as specified in its mission statement, was to process mail. Regardless of the tools utilized to accomplish this goal, processing mail was the reason for the existence of the organization. Although the position required knowledge of the organization's structure and functions, OPM found that the primary purpose of the work was expressly included in the coverage of the GS-305 series. OPM changed the series of the appellants' position from GS-1101 to GS-305.

### **“Back to the Basics”**

The *Classifier's Handbook* states that a position should be classified to the occupation that best represents the main purpose for the existence of the position, usually reflected as the paramount knowledge or experience required to do the work. This is often manifested in the mission of the organization in which the position is located. When a position is clearly identifiable with one occupational series, it should be classified to that series. Although the normal line of progression for the position in either the immediate or broader organization may be considered, series selection should not be used to artificially provide qualifying experience for essentially dissimilar work.

**Link to [C-0305-04-01](#)**