



United States
Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
November 1981
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Standard: [Grade Level Guides for Classifying Investigator Positions, GS-1810/1811](#)
Factor: N/A
Issue: Determining representative period (work cycle)

Identification of the Classification Issue

The Office of Personnel Management centralized and decided appeals from several GS-11 and GS-12 Criminal Investigators from various regions of an agency. All requested a higher grade.

The appeals posed a broad classification question extending beyond specific grade criteria in the Grade Level Guides for Classifying Investigator Positions, GS-1810/1811. The question may arise regarding many types of positions, but it is particularly important in the classification of Criminal Investigator positions, as shown in the following section. The question was:

What period of time should be examined to identify the investigative cases that are to be regarded as representative of the positions for the purpose of grading? (An underlying principle is that actual duties take precedence over a position description and case summaries; therefore, they should be carefully ascertained.)

It should be noted that the "cycle of work" can vary from agency to agency, or even within a given agency. Classifiers must therefore exercise judgment in determining the "cycle of work" for a given position.

Resolution

Regarding the representative period for determining the nature of duties and responsibilities for classification purposes, there is no specific or categorical answer. Recognizing this, the Office of

Personnel Management proceeded to identify the significant aspects of the appealed positions and apply general classification principles to develop an answer.

Some cases are protracted, sometimes requiring more than a year, and many of these require substantially full-time effort. As a result, it is not uncommon for one or two cases to occupy virtually all of an Investigator's work time for several months, a year, or even more. Also, cases which appear to be of a level of complexity appropriate for the positions at the time of their assignment frequently become more complex or less complex because of unpredictable variables largely beyond the agency's control or other variables peculiar to the Investigator and his development of the cases (usually the level of responsibility varies correspondingly). Sometimes cases known to be above or below the level of complexity appropriate for the positions are assigned to meet organizational objectives and needs, and to fully utilize the available investigator staff. As a result, the level of complexity and responsibility, i.e., grade level, of cases being handled is sometimes above and sometimes below the grade level of the positions.

Because of the variations or fluctuations in the grade level of assigned cases, it would not be feasible or reasonable to base the grade of the positions on the grade of the case or cases assigned at the time of the classification examination or assigned for only a limited period in the past. In view of the above, the Office of Personnel Management determined that a sufficient period of time to yield adequate information about the representative nature of cases assigned to the appeal positions is substantially more than one year.