Standards: All
Factors: Extrapolation and cross-series comparisons
Issue: Evaluating positions above the highest level

Identification of the Classification Issue

An appellant in a position classification appeal requested the use of different standards to
determine the grade level of her position because the directly applicable standard did not provide
specific grade level criteria above the current level of her position. In another case, a personnel
office had used several standards to evaluate limited portions of an appellant's duties and
responsibilities. In each case, the Office of Personnel Management had to determine whether
extrapolation of the grade-level criteria of the applicable standard or application of other series
standards should be the primary determinant of the grade of a position.

Resolution

Often the applicable series provides guidance for evaluation through a statement permitting
extension of the criteria with the application of sound position classification judgment. Standards
in the Factor Evaluation System format provide that the primary standard be used to evaluate
factors of positions that significantly exceed the factor descriptions contained in the standard.
The Office of Personnel Management's publication Classification Principles and Policies states:

. . . in most cases the published standard for a series will furnish the best guidance
for evaluating positions classifiable within the series but which are above or below
the grade range provided by the standard, or which are in other specializations not
covered by the standard. In these instances, then, the published standards for the
series in which the position is classified should normally serve as the first point of
reference, with other standards being used primarily to corroborate or reinforce the initial evaluation.

Thus, official Office of Personnel Management guidance emphasizes the primary importance of extrapolation of the applicable standard in recognition of the fact that other series standards have limited applicability and are intended for positions with differing qualification requirements.

As to the case involving the use of several series standards, Office of Personnel Management guidance requires comparing positions with the entire pattern of the grade-level characteristics as set forth in the standard. Therefore, a part of one standard cannot be used without applying the entire standard. While cross-series comparisons can sometimes be useful, the use of too many additional standards places too much emphasis on duties that are not paramount in influence or weight and duties that do not consume a substantial portion of time.

The applicable series standards are best because they are based on the appropriate knowledges, skills and abilities. While sound classification judgment is required to determine how much a position exceeds the highest level described, it should be understood that to credit even just one additional level requires that the duties, responsibilities and qualification requirements "substantially and significantly" exceed the printed grade-level criteria. (See General Introduction, Background and Instructions for the position classification standards.)