



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
June 1985  
No. 06-05

**Standard:** [Job Grading Standard for Supervisors \(WS\)](#)  
**Factor:** Factor II, Level of Work Supervised  
**Issue:** Determination of level of work supervised that reflects the difficulty and complexity of the overall work

**Although there have been several revisions of the Job Grading Standard for Federal Wage System Supervisors, the discussion in this article is still valid.**

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management review which led to a classification appeal.

An agency had classified a Warehouseman Foreman, WS-6907 position at the WS-06 grade level based on the presence of two WG-06 Warehouse Worker positions under the foreman's supervision. An Office of Personnel Management regional office, however, downgraded the foreman's position to WS-05 because it considered that just 2 out of a total of 24 subordinate positions did not represent the level of work supervised that reflected "the difficulty and complexity of the overall work operations," in accordance with Factor II, Level of Work Supervised, of the Job Grading Standard for Supervisors (WS). The agency appealed the decision based on the concept of "regular and recurring" work at the WG-06 level and the supervisor's own "exercise of the scope of skills, knowledges, and abilities typical of the WG-6 grade level."

### **Resolution**

In the appeal decision, the Office of Personnel Management observed that Factor II does not impose a specific minimum number or percentage of employees to justify acceptance or rejection

of the grade of the highest level nonsupervisory employees for credit as the level of work supervised. While the standard includes the observation that the grade of the highest level nonsupervisory employees usually is credited, it is mitigated by the admonition that "Care must be used to make certain that the grade of the subordinate jobs really reflect the level and complexity of the work operations supervised and their effect on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisor's position." The standard also provides guidance for a situation involving an equal amount of work in different occupations at different grade levels. This example would not have been necessary if all that had been intended is that the highest grade of regular and recurring work be used. The Office of Personnel Management did not intend that the existence of regular and recurring subordinate work at a higher grade should automatically justify crediting that grade as the level of work supervised. The grade of the higher grade subordinate positions may have been based on duties performed for a distinct minority of time. Thus, supervision of a small number of the higher grade positions would result in a minimal amount of supervision extended over a minimal amount of work at the higher level. This cannot be regarded as justification for determining that the higher grade jobs necessarily "reflect the difficulty and complexity of the overall work operations supervised."

Apart from the question of establishing the level of work supervised from either the actual or constructed grades of subordinates, there remains the question of whether the duties and responsibilities of the supervisor can be used to establish the level of work supervised for supervisory grade-determination purposes. However, this factor (Factor II) concerns only the level of work performed by subordinates. It is not intended to credit "supervisory" responsibility over the level of the supervisor's own personal contributions to work accomplishment. Such personal contributions should be graded, as appropriate, by the application of nonsupervisory job grading standards. Factor II is intended to measure the supervisory responsibility only, i.e., the effect of positions supervised on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisor's position.

The concept of the highest grade "regular and recurring" work controlling the grade of wage grade positions cannot be used to justify awarding a supervisory position a higher grade based on subordinate work having a less-than-significant effect on the difficulty and responsibility of the supervisory position (refer to the Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions, Volume 1, No. 4, dated January 1984). On page 2, the Office of Personnel Management pointed out that while there "is no specific percentage-of-time requirement for duties controlling the grade of the job," . . . "special care should be exercised if the percentage devoted to the highest-grade duties is low (e.g., 15 percent)." Still greater care is required in the grading of supervisory positions which may devote a small percentage of their time to the supervision of the higher grade subordinate positions.

The decision of the Office of Personnel Management regional office was affirmed. The correct classification of the position was Warehouseman Foreman, WS-6907-05.