



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
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Standard: [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#) (April 1993)
Factor: Factor 5, Difficulty of Typical Work Directed
Issues: (1) Alternative Method for Second- and Higher-Level Supervisors
(2) Calculating Base Level

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management oversight division's adjudication of an appeal. The appellant occupied a Supervisory Electrical Engineer, GS-0850-12, position in a medium size military installation. The position was a Division chief in the Public Works Department. The Division consisted of three branches. The appellant stated that he spent 50 percent of the time in "second-level supervisory efforts over non-supervisory GS-11" level work, and that the alternative base level methodology should result in crediting the position at Level 5-6 (800 points). He also stated that his position should be credited with a "supervisor-employee relationship" with the owners, managers, CEO's, and/or project managers of Architect/Engineer and service contractors because "it makes no difference that the contractor's working level employee is a laborer, I am dealing with the contractor's top management in a second-level supervisory role."

Resolution

(1) Alternative Base Level Methodology

The oversight division found the approved organizational structure consisted of approximately 107 staff years of civilian employee work, 11 of which were intermittent (less than a full staff year) and 20 staff years of base support contractor work. Assuming each subordinate nonsupervisory position performed grade controlling work 100 percent of the time (and basing nonsupervisory work performed by supervisors on the position descriptions of record), the

oversight division found the subordinate workload consisted of 5.75 staff years of GS-11 grade level and 11 staff years of GS-9 level work under the direction of two first-level supervisors. The oversight division determined that the contractor owner, manager, CEO, and project manager workload was specifically excluded from base level consideration because the work was supervisory, i.e., supervising the nonsupervisory contractor work performed for the activity.

The appellant stated that professional architect and engineer design fees typically represented 10 percent of total contractor cost. Based on the average annual contracts controlled by the Division, the oversight division concluded that the architect and engineer work would not exceed three additional staff years of GS-11 and two additional staff years of GS-9 grade level work. Based on the significant delegation of authority and freedom from supervision present in the GS-11 position descriptions of record (certified by the appellant as current and accurate), the use of those positions to review the architect and engineer work performed for the activity, and the existence of a subordinate supervisory position over the GS-11 work, the oversight division concluded the record did not support the appellant's contention that he devoted 50 percent or more of his work time overseeing the GS-11 grade level work performed for the Division. Based on the two subordinate supervisors over the GS-9 grade level work of the Division, and the level of independence vested in the GS-9 grade level positions themselves (certified as current and accurate by the appellant), the oversight division also concluded the appellant did not devote 50 percent of his work time overseeing work at or above the GS-9 grade level. It concluded, therefore, that the alternative base level methodology was not applicable to the position.

(2) Calculating Base Level of Work

The oversight division found the in-house staff and base support contractor work, without fully calculating the amount of work performed by the 11 intermittent positions, resulted in a total of approximately 102 staff years of nonsupervisory civilian and ongoing base support contract work. The oversight division also concluded the 21.75 staff years of GS-9 and GS-11 grade level and equivalent work did not meet the 25 percent of workload criteria required to control the evaluation of Factor 5. It also determined that it could not limit consideration of contractor workload, as proposed by the appellant, to the professional work performed for the installation. Rather, it had to consider all work performed under contract reflective of ongoing Division functions, including construction, maintenance, and repair trades work, which further decreased the percentage of workload evaluable at and above the GS-9 grade level.

Based on a review of the Federal Wage System work performed at the activity, the oversight division concluded that, when combined with GS-9 and GS-11 grade level work, there was sufficient WG-10 level work to meet the 25 percent criteria of Factor 5. Observing that while it was not possible to make a direct correlation between the two pay systems for General Schedule and Federal Wage System positions, the oversight division concluded the work performed at the WG-10 level did not exceed that performed at the GS-7 grade level. It also concluded that Electrician, WG-2810-10, work was typical and representative of the WG-10 building, utility, grounds, and equipment trades work performed within the Public Works Department and for

major contractor performed functions. It compared the complexity of work assignments, skills and knowledge, and responsibility typical of journey level Electricians, WG-2805, jobs in installing, modifying, maintaining, troubleshooting, and testing complete electrical systems and equipment to the Engineering Technician, GS-7, review of designated portions of plans submitted by contractors for interior electrical wiring of residential and office plans for the technical accuracy and adequacy of light, power, illuminations, loads, conductor size, switches, controls, and other equipment selected by the contractor.

The oversight division concluded WG-10 electrical work was not inherently more complex than GS-7 engineering technician work. Thus, without attempting to equate Federal Wage System and General Schedule grades, the oversight division concluded the representative Federal Wage System work performed within the Division did not provide a basis for crediting a higher level than GS-7 as the base level of work applicable to the appellant's position resulting in the crediting of Level 5-4 (505 points).