U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

Chicago Field Services Group
230 S. Dearborn, DPN-30-6
Chicago, IL 60604-1687

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant:	[appellant]
Agency classification:	Computer Assistant GS-335-8
Organization:	Base Supply Computer Operations Section Management and Systems Flight [station] [Air National Guard] Department of the Air Force [city and state]
OPM decision:	Computer Assistant GS-335-8
OPM decision number:	C-0335-08-01

/s/ Manuela Martinez

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Manuela Martinez
Classification Appeals Officer

May 15, 2003

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Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[appellant]
[address]
[city and state]

Supervisory Personnel Management Specialist
U.S. Air Force
Air National Guard
[location]
[address]
[city and state and zip code]

Director of Civilian Personnel
HQ USAF/DPCC
1040 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1040

Chief, Civilian Policy
HQ USAF/DPFC
U.S. Department of the Air Force
1040 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1040

Director, Civilian Personnel Operations
HQ AFPC/DPC
U.S. Department of the Air Force
550 C Street West, Suite 57
Randolph Air Force Base, Texas 78150-4759

Chief, Classification Appeals
Adjudication Section
Department of Defense
Civilian Personnel Management Service
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200
Arlington, Virginia 22209-5144

Introduction

On January 13, 2003, the Chicago Field Services Group, formerly the Chicago Oversight Division, of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from Ms. [appellant]. On January 28, 2003, we received the agency's appeal administrative report. The appellant's position is currently classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-8. She believes that it should be classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-11. The appellant works in the Base Supply Computer Operations Section, Management and Systems Flight, [location] [location] Air National Guard, Department of the Air Force, [location] Air National Guard Base, [state]. We have accepted and decided the appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

Background information

The appellant appealed to her agency and received its decision in August 2002 which sustained the classification as Computer Assistant, GS-335-8. She believes that her program analysis and data base maintenance work have not been properly credited based on application of the position classification standard (PCS) for the Computer Assistant Series, GS-335. The appellant takes issue with factors one through seven. She believes the Accuracy Statement signed by her and her supervisor further clarifies and shows a variety of duties that should be evaluated at a higher grade level.

A representative of the Chicago Field Service Group conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on April 8 and 10, 2003. A telephone interview with her immediate supervisor was also conducted on April 11, 2003. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the audit, the interview findings, and all information of record provided by the appellant and her agency, including her current work assignments, examples of the types of problems solved, and position description (PD) of record. Both the appellant and her supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official PD, number 01019.

General issues

The appellant points to her PD and Accuracy Statement to support her appeal. A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or job by an official with the authority to assign work. A position is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the actual duties and responsibilities currently assigned by management and performed by the employee. An OPM appeal decision classifies a real operating position, and not simply the PD. This decision is based on the work currently assigned to and performed by the appellant and sets aside any previous agency decision. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM PCS's and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we will consider the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

Position information

The Base Supply Computer Operations Section is supervised by a Supervisory Computer Operator, GS-332-9. In addition to the appellant, it is staffed by four Computer Operators, GS-332-7; two Supply Clerks, GS-2005-4; and one Computer Assistant, GS-335-7. The section supports the supply data needs for the [state] Air National Guard, eight satellite Air National Guard (ANG) bases and six Geographically Separated Units (GSUs) each of which reports to one of the ANG bases. All are located in the eastern and mid-western portions of the United States.

The appellant serves as a point of contact (POC) for resolving the more complex errors and problems with the Standard Base Supply System (SBSS) and related systems and the products of those systems. The SBSS operates on a mainframe computer that functions as the primary or "host" database which is used for storing and retrieving supply information or data from various Air Force installations and accounts for supplies and equipment at the base level. The mainframe performs multi-programming on a single partitioned processor. With the SBSS, personnel can track every item in the supply system through standardized programs and procedures. The system provides base activities with their supply needs and accounts for supplies, equipment, POL (petroleum, oils and lubricants), munitions, and clothing.

The SBSS is the main supply management system that interfaces with the Cargo Movement Operations System (CMOS), the Supply Interface System (SIFS), the Core Automated Maintenance System (CAMS), the Air Mobility Command Maintenance Management Information System (G081), the Standard Asset Tracking System (SATS), and the Automated Scheduling Program System (ASP). Each of these systems is resident on a separate single processor computer. The appellant has responsibility for preparing computer schedules to process a number of programs and jobs; writing programs to generate specialized data and reports; maintaining several user accounts; and resizing database capacity for new accounts. The primary purpose of her position is to identify, analyze, and resolve programming and database problems reflected in user complaints and computer products generated by the SBSS and associated systems mentioned above, which it uses to input and output information. The appellant's PD and other material of record furnish more information about her duties and responsibilities and how they are performed and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency determined that the appellant's position is properly classified to the Computer Clerk and Assistance Series, GS-335, and titled as Computer Assistant. The appellant does not disagree with the series and title determination. Based on our review of the record, we concur with the agency's assignment of series and title to the appellant's position. The directly applicable published GS-335 PCS must be used for grade determination.

Grade determination

The GS-335 PCS uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are evaluated on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. For a position to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level.

The appellant did not take issue with her agency's crediting of Levels 8-1 and 9-1. Based on our analysis of the record, we concur with and have so credited the position. Our analysis addresses Factors 1 through 7.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts the employee must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge.

Comparable to Level 1-5, the appellant uses knowledge of data content and output options for a variety of administrative and technical program applications to identify, research, and resolve problems or errors that occur, and provides guidance and instructions to users who require assistance. For example, she will identify the relational edit that requires a certain form of data and adjust the database to correct the flawed data or correct other relational incompatibilities between data entered. She performs these functions on the SBSS and its six associated systems. As discussed above, the appellant serves as the point of contact to users of the SBSS who encounter program and database problems. The appellant runs programs that generate error listings. She evaluates program error listings to correct or reprocess programs as needed. She ensures that related systems such as the CAMS, SIS, CMOS, etc. are integrated with the SBSS and are available and in the correct processing mode. In supporting these systems, he determines the cause of system errors generally using trial and error methods. She determines ways for prevention of errors and shares this information with supervisors and provides additional user instruction or training. The appellant also develops and controls job streams and schedules jobs and programs for the system. She accepts, modifies, and rejects work requests when preparing new or projected schedules. She adjusts processing times for scheduled jobs due to holidays or other downtime and determines when jobs can be omitted without adversely affecting the mission. This is consistent with Level 1-5 where the employee uses knowledge of data content and output options for a variety of program applications and knowledge of time sharing, remote job entry, batch and demand processing.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 1-6. While the work performed by the appellant does involve monitoring, diagnosing, and resolving error and problem conditions the work does not involve a wide range of analytical and diagnostic methods, procedures, and principles typical

of Level 1-6. Work at this level is typically requires extensive knowledge of at least one multi processor computer system and several single processor computer systems in addition to the knowledge applied at lower levels. In contrast, the appellant's work involves maintaining seven single processor systems. The computer knowledge required by the appellant's work is limited by the presence of her supervisor and the Field Assistance Branch (FAB), the 24 hour a day point of contact for Air Force computer system trouble calls. These resources are available to assist in resolving the more difficult, complex problem or error conditions involving an extensive knowledge of computer equipment, internal computer processes, applications and utility programs, and magnetic media or the wide range of analytical and diagnostic methods, procedures and principles requiring the application of knowledge above Level 1-5.

Level 1-5 is credited for 750 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 2-3, the highest level described in the PCS. Consistent with positions at Level 2-3, the appellant's supervisor assigns work in terms of objectives, priorities, deadlines or requirements.   The appellant plans and carries out successive steps for scheduling jobs, researching, and resolving data base problems or errors. The appellant informs her supervisor of results and only refers unusual situations to him. The appellant often deviates from instructions or develops procedures for handling computer problems or errors or to improve database processing. Typical of Level 2-3, the appellant's supervisor reviews completed assignments for conformity to policies and procedures.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 3-3, the highest level described in the PCS.   Consistent with Level 3-3, the appellant has Air Force and base policies and procedures available that define most work methods and procedures.   Additionally, she references the Field Assistance Branch (FAB) intranet website which has a question and answer section. However, some requirements such as support of hand held terminals and portable printers and applications such as the ASP system are new. Processing requirements can vary with products that are requested or with the type of information that is desired. The appellant must use her judgment in selecting and adjusting the best methods or combination of methods to fulfill requests. She must modify guidelines to adjust to new or conflicting requirements and adapt to new hardware and software capabilities and needs.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

Comparable to Level 4-3, the appellant performs a variety of tasks involving discrete methods and procedures. The appellant's work requires continual efforts in resolving program and database problems, and consolidating schedules for different computer systems into a comprehensive operating schedule. The appellant manages a number of satellite bases and GSU accounts within the SBSS. She ensures that the system is available and in the correct processing mode for users, adjusts the processing of scheduled jobs due to downtimes, and determines when jobs can be omitted. Occasionally jobs abort the system and the appellant researches console reports to determine what phase the program was conducting before the system is reset or jobs are reprocessed. The appellant writes programs to retrieve database information for customers and downloads files to produce specialized or classified information.

Level 4-4 where problem solving duties involve a wide range of problems or errors and the decisions regarding what needs to be done include assessing unusual circumstances or conditions is not met. This is not descriptive of the duties she performs on a regular and recurring basis. Her supervisor and the FAB are available to assist in resolving the more complex problem or error conditions. The appellant's supervisor is responsible for identifying, analyzing, diagnosing and revolving complex problems that cannot be resolved by those he supervises including those involving hardware and software malfunctions, operating systems, storage media and devices and interrelationships between host computer systems and remote access and teleprocessing terminals. The appellant's supervisor is responsible for developing any new or revised operating procedures for the section.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work (i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 5-3, the highest level described in the PCS. Consistent with positions at Level 5-3, the appellant serves as the branch POC where she provides support to customers at the host base as well as satellite bases that are too difficult for the lower graded section employees to resolve. Although the solutions that she devises are not always covered by standardized procedures, the system problems she resolves are conventional to data processing such as rejects of data due to missing required, related data or data incompatibility discovered in relational edits during batch processing of actions. She answers technical questions about job controls and schedules. As found at level 5-3, the work affects the efficiency of processing services to the host, tenant, and field units.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face and telephone contacts and other dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain essential for successful performance of the work and which have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the work performed. It considers what is required to make the initial contact, the level of difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place, e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities. The PCS instructs that the same contacts will be evaluated for both Factor 6 and Factor 7.

The appellant's position fully meets and does not exceed Level 6-2, the highest level described in the PCS. Consistent with positions at Level 6-2, the appellant's regular and recurring contacts include base supply personnel, the FAB and central office specialists, and employees of the satellite bases and GSUs. The setting, authority, and variety of the appellant's contacts are typical of those at Level 6-2 where contacts are structured and routine and the role of each participant is readily determined.

Level 6-2 is credited for 25 points.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

This factor describes the purpose of the contacts identified under Factor 6. The purpose of contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives. The personal contacts, which serve as the basis for the level selected for this factor, must be the same as the contacts identified under Factor 6.

The purposes of the appellant's contacts meet and do not exceed Level 7-2, the highest level described in the PCS, where the purposes of contacts are to plan or coordinate changes in requirements or priorities or to participate with users in planning and coordinating new or modified requirements. The appellant's regular and recurring contacts are made for the purpose of planning or coordinating changes in program schedules, assisting customers with system inquiries, training system users, resolving system problems or errors, and for providing instructions on new policies.

Level 7-2 is credited for 50 points.

Summary

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-5	750
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275

4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts and	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
Total		1,685

A total of 1685 points falls within the GS-8 grade level point range of 1,605-1,850 points in the PCS's Grade Conversion Table.

Decision

The position is properly classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-8.