



United States  
Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
January 1984  
No. 04-03

**Standard:** N/A  
**Factor:** N/A  
**Issue:** Factor Evaluation System: Use of related standard for factor extrapolation

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

This issue arose in the Office of Personnel Management's processing of a position classification appeal requiring the application of a Factor Evaluation System standard.

The appellant contended that his position should be evaluated at Level 1-8 of Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position, because the standard directly applicable to his position did not include a factor level above Level 1-7 and the language in Factor 1 of his position description closely paralleled that in Level 1-8 of the Primary Standard. The issue is whether or not the appellant's suggested evaluation approach is adequate.

### **Resolution**

In comparing the appellant's required knowledge with Level 1-8 of the Primary Standard, the Office of Personnel Management noted that his position description included some descriptive terms identical to some of those in Level 1-8. The Office of Personnel Management then compared his required knowledge with Level 1-8 of a related Factor Evaluation System standard and found that his required knowledge fell significantly short of that level. Considering and weighing *together* the comparisons with the Primary Standard and with the related standard, the Office of Personnel Management concluded that the appellant's required knowledge did not fully meet the intent of Level 1-8, and therefore, in accordance with the Factor Evaluation System instructions applicable to this situation, the Office of Personnel Management credited Level 1-7.

The Office of Personnel Management's application of the related standard in the above manner needs an explanation in view of the following prohibition from on page 6 of the Instructions for the Factor Evaluation System: "Factor levels from different FES standards may not be used in evaluating one set of duties and responsibilities." This is a general prohibition, but there is an exception prescribed on page 7 applicable to the specific situation described above. The exception provides that after the selection of a factor level by comparison with the Primary Standard, the following comparison should be made: "Compare the same level of a related FES standard (if available) to the position factor being evaluated to assure that they are equivalent in terms of overall intent." This means that the Primary Standard and the related standard (if available) should be used and considered together for this specific purpose.

Coordinated application of the general criteria of the Primary Standard and the specific criteria of the related standard, which should be more closely oriented to the work of the position being classified, provides the most reliable and fair means for evaluating a factor above or below the coverage of the directly applicable standard.