United States
Office of Personnel Management

Standards: **Computer Clerk and Assistant, GS-335** (February 1980)
Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200 (May 2001)
Information Technology Management, GS-2210 (May 2001)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Distinguishing between computer assistance and information technology (IT) administrative work

Identification of the Classification Issue

OPM received appeals from two employees, in separate agencies. In Case #1, the position was classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9. The appellant agreed with the grade level, but believed that her position was covered by the Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210. In Case #2, the position was classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-7. The appellant believed that the position should be classified as a GS-2210-09 using the Job Family Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200.

Resolution

Case #1: The appellant provided technical support to computer users linked to local area network (LAN) systems at two agency installations within the serviced geographic area. She assisted them in resolving operating problems involving network hardware and software issues, installed external and internal devices and peripherals, and set up software and parameters according to systems specifications. She managed home pages for field sites by monitoring the currency of information uploaded and correcting routine technical problems. The appellant coordinated the overall design and implementation of individual Web pages for placement on the

geographic area's Intranet, including determining how best to display information on the Web page.

While the standard for the GS-2210 series includes specialized positions in network, Internet, and customer support services, the appellant's GS-9 position did not require an in-depth knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods sufficient to plan, analyze, design, develop, test, configure, implement, and maintain the agency's network systems nor its Internet/Intranet systems and activities. The work did not require knowledge sufficient to furnish comprehensive customer support functions and services to the extent described in the GS-2210 standard. Typical of GS-335 work, the appellant used established methods and procedures in the form of written technical guidance. If she encountered a technical problem that could not be resolved by applying standard operating procedures, she sought assistance from higher graded specialists in the activity or from computer/software vendors. OPM sustained the agency's series determination as Computer Assistant, GS-335.

Case #2: The appellant primarily provided hardware support to a team of IT specialists in a medical center. The activity used a variety of commercially available personal computers (PC's) and equipment in work areas that used commercial off-the-shelf software. Typical tasks involved configuring and placing PC's, including installing the operating system, peripheral devices with their respective software drivers, and related equipment. The work included handling requests for additional memory by determining user needs, freeing up disk space by deleting software and/or adding memory based on specific PC model requirements. The appellant handled help desk problems, e.g., PC is slow, and questions on standard software package functions using established troubleshooting techniques. The work included limited mainframe support duties, such as adding or deleting user accounts.

Typical of the GS-335 series, the appellant's GS-7 position assisted IT specialists in work requiring knowledge of hardware, peripheral devices, and memory storage and provided computer support to users through networks by discussing information requirements with users and giving advice on how to access the data. In contrast, GS-2210 equipment work focuses on system architecture, including defining system hardware requirements. These functions were performed by higher graded positions at the activity and in the agency. OPM sustained the agency's series determination as Computer Assistant, GS-335.

"Back to the Basics"

While help desk and Internet/Intranet support services are important functions, positions that assist customers and resolve problems in accordance with established procedures do not meet the paramount knowledge criteria for coverage by the GS-2210 series and are specifically excluded from the GS-2200. In distinguishing between specialist and assistant work, it is important to consider the characteristics, knowledge, and skills requirements of the duties. When dealing with borderline situations, one must consider management's intent in establishing the position, the organizational relationships of the position within the work unit, and the nature of the functions and activities performed.

Link to C-0335-07-02
       C-0335-09-03