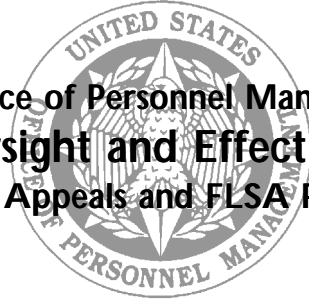


U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness  
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Atlanta Oversight Division  
75 Spring Street, SW, Suite 972  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3109

**Classification Appeal Decision**  
**Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [Appellants]

**Agency classification:** Housing Clerk (Office Automation)  
GS-303-4

**Organization:** [U.S. Marine Corps]

**OPM decision:** GS-303-5  
(Title to be determined by the agency to include  
Office Automation)

OPM decision number: C-0303-05-08

/s/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathy W. Day  
Classification Appeals Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
7/21/98  
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).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

### **Decision sent to:**

[Appellants]

[Installation Human Resources Director]

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Director, Civilian Human Resources Office  
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## **Introduction**

On March 27, 1998, the Atlanta Oversight Division, U. S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted a group classification appeal for the position of Housing Clerk, GS-303-4, [organizational location, U.S. Marine Corps]. The appellants are requesting that their position be reclassified to Housing Management Assistant, GS-1173-5 or 7.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

## **General issues**

The appellants have made several attempts to reclassify and upgrade their position. Several audits were conducted by the agency. The last audit determined the position description to be inaccurate. The position description was rewritten to accurately reflect the work being performed and then reevaluated and reclassified. However, only the series was changed, and the GS-4 grade was retained. The appellants, supervisor and agency have certified the accuracy of the official position description but disagree with the audit findings. The appellants believe that their position should be classified in another series and upgraded to be consistent with other housing positions within the agency and the Department of Defense which they believe contain similar duties and responsibilities but are classified differently. They have requested a consistency study or review be performed.

The appellants furnished a proposed position description that they believe better describes the work they are performing. However, under 5 CFR 511.607(b)(1), the class, grade, or pay system of a position to which the employee is not officially assigned by an official personnel action is not reviewable or appealable.

The appellants make various statements about the agency and its evaluation of their position. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing the appellants' current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellants' statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

To help decide the appeal, an Atlanta Oversight Division representative conducted telephone audits of the appellants' position. The audits included interviews with the appellants, the current and former supervisors, the manager and commanding officer who is delegated classification authority for the position. In reaching our decision, we considered the audit findings and all the information furnished by the appellants and the agency, including the official position description of record.

## Position information

The appellants are assigned to Position Number [#]. The appellants, supervisor and agency have certified the accuracy of the position description.

We found the position description to basically describe the assigned duties. However, the supervisory controls do not accurately reflect how the work is reviewed. For example, the position description states that the supervisor routinely checks completed assignments for compliance with applicable instructions and timeliness. The supervisor provides additional instructions on sensitive matters and may occasionally be called in to explain regulatory or policy issues to customers, but the appellants are responsible for carrying out the assignment and resolving problems. The only work routinely checked are the computations for Basic Allowance for Quarters entries. The supervisor checks and certifies allowances for accuracy. Overall, only a random cursory review of completed assignments is performed by the supervisor.

In addition, the administrative report states that management's intent is for the supervisor or higher grade employee to handle non-routine and controversial counseling. During our interview with the supervisor, she stated that the appellants do handle some non-routine matters because of the client's personal situation or various circumstances that affect eligibility for housing assignments and terminations. Since the description of each position must be kept up-to-date and include information about the job which is significant to its classification, the position description must be amended to reflect the correct supervisory relationship, as well as the percentage of time the appellants handle non-routine/controversial matters.

A brief description of the work follows:

The appellants perform a variety of housing assignments, termination and referral services for military and civilian families reporting to the installation. They interview applicants to determine housing eligibility and entitlements; assign or terminate occupancy of government quarters, mobile home spaces and recreational vehicle spaces; and counsel residents regarding movement of household goods, relocation policies and procedures. They process housing applications and maintain, update and distribute occupancy and utilization lists, files, and records. They also provide technical assistance and training to new employees who are learning the process.

The appellants schedule and maintain calendars of appointments for 8 area managers covering 2764 government quarters, 76 mobile home spaces and 5 recreational vehicle lots over 10 geographical areas. They provide technical assistance to area managers, communicate with other offices to resolve complicated issues, assemble data and facts, check facts for accuracy and evaluate information. They also participate in special studies or reviews and gather statistical data for reporting of past and current operations and maintenance expenditures. The appellants input

and retrieve data on housing applicants, prepare a variety of regular and special reports, and use data to answer correspondence which can be used as the basis for recommendations, interpretations, and decisions by a higher level housing specialist. They also type a variety of correspondence and forms. The position requires a qualified typist.

The appellants work under the general supervision of the Division supervisor who assigns work in terms of objectives, priorities and deadlines. Additional instructions are provided on sensitive or unusual situations. The appellants independently plan and carry out assignments. They answer a variety of routine and non-routine questions, handle customer complaints and resolve problems as they arise. Problems not resolved by the appellants are referred to the supervisor. The supervisor performs a cursory review of work for compliance with established practices. However, basic allowance entry computations are routinely checked for accuracy and certified by the supervisor.

### **Series determination**

The agency placed the position in the Miscellaneous Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-303. The appellants believe their position should be classified in the Housing Management Series, GS-1173.

The GS-1173 series covers positions the duties of which are (1) to manage or assist in managing one or more family housing projects, billeting facilities, or other accommodations such as transient or permanent individual and family living quarters, dormitory facilities and restructured occupancy buildings including adjacent service facilities and surrounding grounds; and/or (2) to administer, supervise, or perform work involved in the evaluation of housing management programs, the development of administrative procedures, and the provision of technical assistance to onsite housing management. Positions in this occupation require a variety of housing management and administrative knowledges and related practical skills and abilities in such housing activities as: operations and maintenance, procurement of services, cost management and financial planning, assignments and utilization, occupancy changes and periodic inspections, scheduled and special requirement surveys, new construction and improvements, control of furnishings and equipment, master planning, and management-tenant relations.

The appellants are not involved in the evaluation of housing management programs as described above. Therefore, we have limited our discussion to the management of housing projects and facilities as it relates to the appellants' position. The knowledges required to manage housing projects and facilities are directly related to the work processes that comprise housing management operations. The basic work processes in managing housing operations involve onsite responsibility of the housing project or facilities. For example, the housing manager would be responsible for: conducting housing requirements surveys; identifying and reporting deficiencies that require construction, renovation, modernization or other corrections and improvements; planning for operation, maintenance, repairs, alterations, and improvements; translating plans and programs into financial requirements; applying funds and staff resources to the operation and maintenance of the housing facilities; controlling the issuance and repair of furnishings and equipment;

monitoring the assignment and use of housing units; renting and leasing of housing units and periodic adjustments of rates as required; inspecting; monitoring staff funds and utility conservation programs; administering local housing referral activities and services; developing cooperative dealings and mutual interests between housing occupants and the neighboring communities and civic agencies and developing and maintaining harmonious relationships among the tenants and the housing project personnel; maintaining working relationships with other organizational entities which perform a function for, or a service to, the housing operation; monitoring contractual services performed; and promoting and encouraging cooperative achievement of common goals with municipal authorities, local officials, and community groups.

The basic work processes associated with the appellants' assignments are clerical procedures associated with processing applications for assignment or termination of government housing. Although they provide referral services to applicants for non-government housing, this work is limited to providing or obtaining information on non-government housing to applicants and does not require a variety of housing management and administrative knowledges related to the technical requirements of managing military housing operations. Per exclusion #2 in the GS-1173 series, positions limited to clerical functions such as preparing financial statements and reports, maintaining housing applicant waiting lists, processing housing applications and requests for maintenance or repair work, and providing information and assistance to military and civilian employees of Federal agencies and departments in locating housing are excluded from coverage in the GS-1173 series and are classified in the appropriate series within the GS-300 Group, General Administrative, Clerical, Office Services Group.

Within the GS-300 Group, there is no specific series that covers clerical housing duties and responsibilities. The Miscellaneous Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-303, includes positions the duties of which are to perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. The work requires knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization and involves application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. We find the appellants' position is properly placed in the GS-303 series.

### **Title determination**

The GS-303 series does not specify titles. Therefore, the agency may designate an appropriate title by following the guidance in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. The position is properly classified as a GS-303, with the title at the agency's discretion. The parenthetical title *Office Automation* must be added to the title to identify the qualification requirements for typing and office automation skills.

## Standard determination

Miscellaneous Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-303, January 1979.  
Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, June 1989.  
Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, November 1990.

## Grade determination

The Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work provides general criteria for use in determining the grade level of nonsupervisory clerical and assistance work. The guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 through GS-7 and uses two factors for grading purposes: *Nature of Assignment* (which includes the elements knowledge required and complexity of the work) and *Level of Responsibility* (which includes the elements of supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts). The Guide requires the consideration of weaknesses as well as strengths in matching work to the grade level criteria.

## CLERICAL DUTIES

### *Nature of Assignment*

At GS-4, work consists of performing a full range of standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems and of related steps, processes, or methods which require the employee to identify and recognize differences among a variety of recurring situations. Actions to be taken or responses to be made differ in nature and sequence because of differences in the particular characteristics of each case or transaction. In addition to knowledge of how to carry out procedures, the work requires some subject-matter knowledge of an organization's programs and operations; or of a type of business practice such as maintaining inventory records and replenishing supplies; or of a body of standardized rules, processes, or operations. These knowledges are needed to determine what is being done, why the action is being taken, and how it must be accomplished.

At GS-5, work consists of performing a full range of standard and nonstandard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of nonrecurring problems. Work includes a variety of assignments involving different and unrelated steps, processes, or methods. The employee must identify and understand the issues involved in each assignment and determine what steps and procedures are necessary and the order of their performance. Completion of each transaction typically involves selecting a course of action from a number of possibilities. The work requires extensive knowledge of an organization's rules, procedures, operations, or business practices to perform the more complex, interrelated, or one-of-a kind clerical processing procedures.

At GS-6, work typically entails processing a wide variety of transactions for more than one type of assigned activity or functional specialization. Assignments are subject to different sets of rules, regulations, and procedures. Such issues must be examined that a course of action has substantive

impact on the outcome of the assignment. Work requires comprehensive knowledge of rules, regulations, and other guidelines relating to completing assignments in the program area assigned. This knowledge is usually attained through extensive, increasingly difficult, and practical experience and training in the subject-matter field. The work also requires ability to interpret and apply regulatory and procedural requirements to process unusually difficult and complicated transactions.

The GS-5 level is met. Although the appeal record shows that management's intent is that the appellants perform routine and noncontroversial assignments, based on our findings, the shift in staff and workload demands requires the appellants to deal with standard and some nonstandard assignments. The GS-9 Housing Specialist has been officially detailed to another position for two years, and the GS-7 Referral Assistant is in the field the majority of the time with a heavy inspection and survey workload. Although the supervisor provides additional information to handle sensitive or unusual cases, the appellants have developed a sufficient knowledge of housing requirements, regulations and policies to make determinations based on a variety of different circumstances. They must recognize and select the most appropriate guidelines, recognize when deviations or actions require referral to the supervisor, or make minor adjustments as appropriate to the situation. For example, they answer questions such as the feasibility of a home business in government quarters, tenant alterations to property, as well as cases where changes in housing assignment are caused by marital problems, deployment or when there are dual active military status couples in one household. They also answer questions on relocation policies, procedures and conditions under which the resident may remain in government quarters and resolve complaints about specific assignments. In addition, the appellants compute complex base allowances based on eligibility determinations or recompute and adjust allowances when changes in eligibility status occur or when soldiers fail to notify them of changes in family status. They also provide technical assistance to area managers for documenting housing requirements, regulations and policies during check-in, pre-termination and termination inspections.

The referral services are limited to obtaining or providing information on available housing, rents, local and state housing requirements, leases and military clauses, movement of household goods, geographical locations, local community facilities and schools. Similar to GS-4, the referral work is routine and is accomplished in accordance with clearly established guidelines and procedures.

The GS-6 level is not met. The appellants' assignments are limited to the processing of housing assignments and termination transactions and referral services which do not involve the breadth of assignment intended at this level. The work is covered by established department guidelines and supplemented by agency and installation orders, manuals, and instructions covering one specialized area of housing operations and administration. Unusually complex problems are referred to the supervisor.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.



### *Level of Responsibility*

At GS-4, the supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments. The employee uses initiative to complete work in accordance with accepted practices. Unusual situations may require the assistance of the supervisor or a higher level employee, and the completed work may be reviewed more closely. Procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures. The employee makes minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in specific cases. The employee has contact with co-workers and those outside the organization to exchange information, and in some cases to resolve problems in connection with the immediate assignments.

At GS-5, the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance on assignments which do not have clear precedents. The employee works in accordance with accepted practices and completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting goals. Extensive guides in the form of instructions, manuals, regulations, and precedents apply to the work. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines for application and adapting them according to circumstances of the specific case or transaction. A number of procedural problems may arise which also require interpretation and adaptation of established guides. Often, the employee must determine which of several alternative guidelines to use. If existing guidelines cannot be applied, the employee refers the matter to the supervisor. Contacts are with a variety of persons within and outside the agency for the purpose of receiving or providing information relating to the work or for the purpose of resolving problems in connection with recurring responsibilities.

At GS-6, the supervisor assists with precedent assignments by providing an interpretation of policy or the concepts and theories of the occupation. Completed work is evaluated for appropriateness and effectiveness in meeting goals. Guidelines such as regulations, instructions, evaluation criteria, and prior case or action files are available, but they are often not completely applicable to the assignment or have gaps in specificity. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines for application to specific cases or problems. The employee bases decisions and recommendations on facts and conventional interpretations of guidelines rather than on theory or opinion. The employee contacts others, as described above, to provide, receive, or develop information in order to identify problems, needs or issues, and/or to coordinate work efforts or resolve problems.

The GS-5 level is met. The appellants independently carry out the day-to-day assignments. They use judgment to determine the appropriate course of action to take, perform detailed Basic Allowance for Quarters entries computations based on housing entitlements making adjustments as required. Completed assignment and termination work is given a cursory review but computations are reviewed closely for accuracy. Contacts are with employees within the

installation, agency and department, personnel from other Federal agencies, landlords and realtors, community officials and financial institutions for the purpose of obtaining information for government housing or referral services or giving background information to community agencies, schools, community magistrates and police departments for individuals who have lived in government housing, and for resolving some non-routine questions that are related to their responsibilities.

The GS-6 level is not met. The appellants are assigned to handle and resolve the full range of assignment and termination work. However, the supervisor deals with unusual or controversial matters that require the interpretation of guides or alternatives when guidelines or precedents are not applicable and provides additional instruction on sensitive assignments or special projects. Additionally, the appellants contacts are primarily for the purpose of gathering or exchanging factual and/or technical information as opposed to identifying and resolving problems or coordinating work when guidelines and precedent cases generally do not apply or do not exist.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Since both factors are evaluated at GS-5, the overall evaluation of the clerical functions is GS-5.

### **OFFICE AUTOMATION DUTIES**

The Office Automation duties are in support of the primary and grade controlling work of the position. A summary evaluation of the office automation work is as follows:

<b>SUMMARY</b>		
<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
1. Knowledge Required By The Position	1-2	200
2. Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-1	25
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	1-a	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>590</b>

A total of 590 points falls within the range for a GS-3, 455 to 650 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide.

### **Summary**

The highest level of substantive work performed is evaluated at the GS-5 level. The Office Automation work is evaluated at GS-3. The position is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

### **Decision**

This position is properly classified as GS-303-5, with the title at the discretion of the agency. The parenthetical title *Office Automation* is to be added to the title.