

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



Washington Oversight Division
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Civil Engineer
GS-0810-11

Organization: Public Works Department
Engineering Division
Naval Support Activity New Orleans
New Orleans, Louisiana

OPM decision: Civil Engineer, GS-0810-11

OPM decision number: C-0810-11-01

Rich Quasney
Classification Appeals Officer

Date 11/17/97

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]

Ms. Alice Williams-McGrath, Director
Human Resources Office
U.S. Naval Air Station
2300 General Meyer Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70142

Office of Civilian Personnel Management
Director for Classification, Staffing, and
Compensation (OCPM Code C20)
800 North Quincy Street
Arlington, VA 22203-1998

Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service
Field Advisory Services Division
Classification Branch (CPMS-ASFP)
2461 Eisenhower Avenue
Hoffman Building 1, Suite 112
Alexandria, VA 22331-0900

Introduction

On June 12, 1997, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [appellant]. His position is currently classified as Civil Engineer, GS-0810-11. However, he believes its classification should be Civil Engineer, GS-0810-12. He works in the Engineering Division, Public Works Department, Naval Support Activity (NAVSUPPACT), New Orleans, Louisiana. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

The appellant believes the duties and responsibilities in his specialty are the same as those of the Electrical Engineering position which was reclassified from GS-11 to GS-12. He certifies that his official position description (PD) is accurate and complete. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's current duties to another position as a basis for deciding his appeal.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description MI06339.

Position information

The mission of the NAVSUPPACT, Engineering Division, is to provide engineering services to support all Class II Property. This division provides the technical expertise to assist NAVSUPPACT and/or its tenants in the following: (1) development of design concepts, design criteria, design analyses, specifications; (2) management and review of design projects accomplished by architectural/engineering firms (A/E); consultation during bid and construction periods; reviewing change orders, claim negotiating, contract management; preparation of project documentation and justifications; and (3) maintenance of facilities. The Engineering Division provides a pool of expertise in the disciplines of architecture, civil, mechanical and electrical engineering.

The appellant serves as point of contact and civil engineering technical expert for NAVSUPPACT and SOUTHNAVFACENGCOM projects at the base. He develops plans, conceptual designs, construction documents, specifications, cost estimates, and reviews/resolves problems arising during the construction process. Project management includes the inspection and review of the assigned project to ensure quality and compliance standards are met. The duties of the appealed position require a knowledge of planning, surveying, design and construction/demolition of buildings, construction/repair of recreation sites and facilities; and knowledge about the nature of soils and/or earth formations. The primary orientation of this position is consistent with the knowledge and skills of the Civil Engineering Series.

Series and guide determination

We find that the appellant's position is best covered by the Civil Engineering Series, GS-0810, and is best graded by means of this standard with validation of the General Grade-Evaluation Guide for Nonsupervisory Professional Engineering Positions. Neither the agency nor the appellant disagrees.

Title determination

The appellant does not dispute the series or title of his position, and we agree that the Civil Engineer title is appropriate for the position.

Grade determination

The Civil Engineering Series standard is comprised of four parts. Part II contains grade-level criteria for planning and design functions. Because the paramount functions of the appellant's position deal with planning and design structures, Part II was used to grade this position. In Part II, grade levels are defined in terms of (1) the inherent complexity of the planning and design problems assigned, and (2) the level of judgment and authority exercised. Each of these factors is evaluated separately and the final grade level is derived from the common highest grade levels of each factor.

Complexity of the planning and design problems assigned

To indicate levels of complexity of planning and design problems in the grade-level descriptions, the standard uses the terms "conventional work" and "advanced work." Conventional work can be accomplished by applying or adapting standard references, criteria, and precedents. Advanced work requires searching out and selecting laws, formulas, principles, and materials and applying them to novel situations. Assignments received at the GS-11 level involve conventional work with general indications of results expected. The GS-11 engineer is responsible for coordinating an area or phase of work with engineers responsible for related specialized phases, to arrive at mutually satisfactory approaches and solutions to problems.

The appellant performs all the design civil engineering for the facility and is responsible for assigned projects from initiation to completion. The majority of projects are conventional in nature and are performed in conjunction with an A/E firm with the appellant serving as the Project Design Engineer (PDE). As the PDE he is responsible for the full range of technical and administrative work associated with the project. This includes the planning, design and estimate for the project, selection and negotiations with the an A/E firm, review and approval of an A/E designs and change orders, consulting during bid and construction periods, and contract management. The appellant's work fully meets the GS-11 level of the Civil Engineering Series standard. Though some assignments may require *advanced work*, the work examples provided do not support GS-12 work on a regular and recurring basis.

The appellant spends most of his time on assignments or projects involving base facilities and street and utility repairs. Most of these projects are conventional in nature and do not meet the full intent of the criteria for GS-12 work. Typical assignments include building demolition, renovation and repair; repair and rehabilitation of parking areas; construction of running/walking track; swimming pool repairs; utility repairs and alternations; construction of covered walkway; and installation of fencing. Unexpected problems, such as termite infestation, impact the design and planning functions, but do not meet the GS-12 criteria to “identify and define the nature and scope of obscure problems” and “derive criteria from inconclusive or variable data”. The nature of assignment relates directly to the TYPE I, GS-11 engineer, who performs assignments that involve combinations of complex features.

According to the standard, coordinating or monitoring planning and design efforts, the engineer develops schedules for orderly and timely accomplishment of work, arranges for obtaining data and information from outside sources, and advises other engineers on solutions to technical problems. The GS-12 engineer is expected to coordinate his or her efforts with those in other specialities to ensure compatibility of approach and optimum results. In addition, the engineer contacts other government agencies and representatives of business and private interests to negotiate differences, to obtain their cooperation in carrying out investigations, to get their clearances, etc. The appellant’s position does meet a segment of the GS-12 criteria in the advisory, planning and reviewing services provided to the A/E and base tenants. The General Grade-Evaluation guide for Nonsupervisory Professional Engineering Positions validates work of this type and identifies it as Type III, typically GS-12 level. Though the appellant’s position meets a segment of the criteria at the GS-12 level, the complexity of the assignment is only fully met at the GS-11 level.

Level of judgment and authority exercised

The level of judgment and authority exercised is determined by (1) the kind and degree of supervision received; (2) the extent to which the employee must assess or identify the scope of the assignment and the methods used to complete the work; and (3) the extent of responsibility delegated with the work. When making assignments to the appellant, the supervisor indicated that he does not differentiate, in terms of complexity, from those given to other engineers in the division. Work is distributed based on the primary engineering focus - architecture, civil, electrical or mechanical. The appellant is expected to independently accomplish the work with minimum reference to the supervisor. Completed work is accepted as technically accurate, and it is reviewed by the supervisor only for administrative and general engineering requirements. This level of judgment and authority meets criteria at both the GS-11 and GS-12 levels.

Summary

The grade-level criteria of the standard identify two elements, complexity of assignments and judgment and authority exercised. Both elements must be fully met at the same grade level to establish the grade. The appellant’s position fully meets the complexity of assignments criteria at

the GS-11 level of work. The level of judgment and authority exercised meets the criteria at the GS-12 level. Consistent with OPM guidelines the lower of the two grade levels controls the final grade of the position.

Decision

The appellants position is properly evaluated using the Civil Engineering Series, GS-0810, and graded at GS-11.