

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



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

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

Appellants: [appellants]

Agency classification: Mail Clerk, GS-305-3

Organization: [activity]

[Air Force]

OPM decision: Mail Clerk, GS-305-3

OPM decision number: C-0305-03-03

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

12/28/98

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).

Decision sent to:

[appellants addresses]

Director, Civilian Personnel Operations
U.S. Department of the Air Force
AFPC/DPC
550 C St. West
Randolph Air Force Base, TX 78510

Director of Civilian Personnel
Department of the Air Force
1040 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1040

Chief, Classification Branch
Field Advisory Services Division
Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service
1400 Key Blvd, Suite B-200
Arlington, VA 22209-5144

Introduction

On September 3, 1998, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [appellants]. Their position is currently classified as Mail Clerk, GS-305-3. This classification was supported on appeal to the Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service. The appellants believe that their position is properly titled as Document Security and Mail Clerk (Motor Vehicle Operator) and properly graded at GS-5. They are uncertain of which occupational series best represents their work. The appellants work in the [activity at a medium sized Air force Base.] We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, U.S. Code.

To help decide this appeal, a Dallas Oversight Division representative conducted a telephone audit of the appellants' position. The audit included interviews with the appellants and their immediate supervisor. In reaching our classification decision, we reviewed the audit findings and the information of record furnished by the appellants and their agency, including their official position description, number 8013850. We find their official position description to be adequate for classification purposes.

Position information

The appellants are responsible for providing postal support for all organizations on base. Their work involves the proper and timely processing of all incoming and outgoing mail, which requires them to operate a variety of mechanical and automated equipment; to complete both Air Force and United States Postal Service (USPS) forms; and to ensure that mail dispatch procedures and mail address information comply with Air Force and USPS requirements. To disseminate and collect mail, the appellants must drive a step-up van to and from distribution points on base and to the main post office in downtown [small city], located near the base.

Included in the appellants' responsibility for providing postal support for base organizations are services related to the handling of security classified mail. In performing these services, the appellants provide handling instructions to base personnel concerning the special procedures for controlled mail; receive and dispatch controlled mail according to regulations prescribed by both the Air Force and the USPS; account for all controlled mail until they obtain signed receipts from the appropriate individuals authorized to receive the mail; and records receipt and delivery information (using a personal computer). Management added these "document security" duties to the appellants' position over a year ago. Previously, these duties were performed by military personnel.

Series determination

We find that the appellants' position is properly classified in the Mail and File Series, GS-305. The appellants' position meets the series definition since its principal purpose is to perform clerical work associated with the processing of mail. The range of work they perform is typical of work classified in the GS-305 Series. The appellants' work that specifically relates to the processing of security classified mail is adequately covered by the GS-305 Series and is not classifiable to any other occupational series. Consistent with GS-305 mail work, the appellants' work requires, as its

paramount knowledge, a knowledge of clerical processing operations concerning the prompt and systematic flow of material between the originator and the receiver.

Title determination

The title of Mail Clerk is established for nonsupervisory positions in grades GS-1 through GS-5 in which mail duties are predominant. The appellants' duties and responsibilities related to handling security classified mail are sufficiently represented by this title, as this work is adequately covered by the GS-305 Series. Accordingly, the inclusion of the phrase "Document Security" as part of the position's official title is inappropriate.

Although the appellants are required to maintain a Government vehicle operator's license in order to drive a mail van, this duty is incidental to the primary purpose of their position. The Position Classification Standard for the Mail and File Series, GS-305, provides that positions belonging to this series may require operating battery-powered or automotive vehicles. Accordingly, the inclusion of "Motor Vehicle Operator" as a parenthetical title is also inappropriate.

The proper title of the appellants' position is Mail Clerk.

Standard determination

The appellants' position is properly graded using the Position Classification Standard for the Mail and File Series, GS-305. The GS-305 position classification standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which uses nine factors. Each factor is evaluated separately and is assigned a point value consistent with factor level definitions described in the standard. The total number of points for all nine factors are converted to a grade by use of the standard's grade conversion table. Under the FES, each factor level description describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at the next lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

Grade determination

The appellants disagree, specifically, with their agency's evaluation of their position on Factors 1, 3, 4, and 5. In their appeal, they do not indicate disagreement with their agency's evaluation of Factors 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9. After evaluating the appellants' position, we concur with the agency's evaluation of Factors 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and in our appeal decision, we limit our discussion to the evaluation of those factors questioned by the appellants.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the mail clerk must understand to perform acceptably and the nature and extent of the skills necessary to apply those knowledges.

The appellants' position meets Level 1-2. At this level, positions require a basic knowledge of the functions and organizational structures of the units serviced, a basic knowledge of the subject matter content of the materials being processed, and a knowledge of mail processing and control procedures. At this level, mail clerks typically sort and route materials to 50 to 100 separate distribution points. According to the standard, positions at this level require knowledge of procedures and regulations governing various types of mail, including security classified. Work at Level 1-2 involves preparation and dispatch of various materials with differing processing procedures and obtaining current information from directories and indexes.

To perform their work accurately and timely, the appellants must possess a basic knowledge of functions and organizational structures on base to sort and route mail. The subject matter and destination of materials handled by the appellants, including security classified materials, are usually easily identifiable by labeled subject headings and organizational codes. To obtain missing or to correct erroneous routing information, the appellants must know how to use military and civilian directories and indexes. To process these materials and to provide handling instructions to base personnel, they must possess and apply knowledge of both Air Force and USPS regulations concerning correct procedures. Consistent with standard's description of Level 1-2, these procedures vary according to the type of mail, e.g., regular, certified, and security classified mail; and base hospital packages labeled as containing biohazardous material. Although the appellants' work involves fewer than 50 distribution points, the knowledge of organizational structures and processing procedures that they must possess to perform their work exceeds Level 1-1. At Level 1-1, mail clerks are required to be familiar with a more simple organization than an Air Force Base and to process a smaller variety of materials than is processed by the appellants.

The appellants' position does not meet Level 1-3. At this level, mail clerks must possess a more thorough knowledge of the functions performed by the units they service to enable them to analyze and route materials to at least 150 discrete distribution points. At Level 1-3, the 150 or more units serviced are characterized as having close and overlapping functions. Also, at this level, the subject matter of materials handled is not clearly identifiable, and their intended destination frequently is obscured. Work at Level 1-3 requires frequently having to search for materials when the searching involves several possible locations, several indexes, or information that does not exist on record.

The appellants are responsible for dispatching mail to only 32 distribution points. The nature and the intended destination of the materials they handle usually are clearly identifiable. Information for which they must search is usually available on record, e.g., complete or up-to-date address information or names of base personnel authorized to accept security classified mail.

For Factor 1, we assign Level 1-2 (200 points).

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor measures the nature of guidelines and the judgement needed to apply them.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-1. At this level, guides typically consist of standing oral instructions and written guidelines, the majority of which may be memorized by the mail clerk. Guidelines at Level 3-1 usually are complete and specific and allow little discretion in applying them to the work.

In performing their work, the appellants are required to follow specific procedures established by Air Force and USPS regulations. Although they must recognize and distinguish between different types of mail (e.g., regular, security classified, packages containing biohazardous material, etc.) such distinctions are easily made, and the guidelines they apply after making these distinctions are clear, complete, and do not permit significant deviation. When processing and dispatching mail, searching for missing or correct information, answering inquiries, or controlling security classified mail, they follow standard operating procedures. The regulations and instructions governing their work are stable, and their content is easily memorized.

The appellants' position does not meet Level 3-2. At this level, guidelines not only are numerous, but the mail clerk must use judgement and initiative in selecting the proper guide since the pertinent guide often is not readily identifiable.

Although the appellants' duties and responsibilities related to security classified mail are covered by different guidelines than other types of material they handle, the total number of guides they must apply to perform their work is not so great to merit crediting their position with Level 3-2. Furthermore, the nature of the instructions governing security classified mail is consistent with the nature of their other guidelines. The guidelines for handling security classified mail are specific, complete, do not permit significant deviation, and are easily memorized.

For Factor 3, we assign Level 3-1 (25 points).

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor measures 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 in and originality in performing the work.

The appellants' position meets Level 4-2. According to the standard, at this level, there is a variety in the materials processed by the mail clerk and in the activity required, e.g., recognizing a variety of printed forms, deciding appropriate routing actions, and processing and safeguarding security classified mail. Level 4-2 work involves a number of related steps for different types of mail,

searching for missing materials or information, and distinguishing among a number of distribution points.

The appellants process a variety of materials, e.g., regular, registered, certified and security classified mail; and packages containing biohazardous material. Depending on the type of material, the appellants perform several sets of related steps to accomplish the tasks involved in sorting, dispatching, collecting, transporting, and safeguarding the material. Processing security classified mail is a responsibility the appellants have for one type of mail, among other types. Consistent with the standard's description for Level 4-2, their processing of security classified mail involves a set of related procedures that are distinct from the procedures required to process other types of material.

The appellants' position does not meet Level 4-3. At this level, mail clerks perform duties related to processing a great variety of materials. The materials they process typically are complicated and require them to take multiple actions of an independent nature and to use multiple indexes and cross-references. At Level 4-3, work involves duties in the context of overlapping classifications and diverse and complicated subject matter content (i.e., legal and technical subject matter in a variety of formats). Mail clerks working at Level 4-3 must recognize the need for (and take action to obtain) processing improvements.

The appellants do not process an unusually great variety of materials. To meet their work objectives, the appellants do not contend with complicated subject-matter that requires them to discern the situation and initiate multiple, independent actions. Typically, the destination of the materials they handle are clearly labeled, and their nature are quickly classified. Tasks necessary to complete their work objectives are highly related, usually sequential, and determined by established procedures and guidelines. When searching for information or when providing assistance to base personnel, they typically do not consult multiple indexes or cross references. They usually are able to obtain needed information from one source, e.g., an alpha listing, a base map, a current list of base personnel authorized to receive security classified mail, or a specific set of regulations.

For Factor 4, we assign Level 4-2 (75 points).

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor measures the effect of the work both within and outside the organization. Elements considered in measuring this factor include the purpose, breadth, and depth of the products or services provided.

The appellants' position meets Level 5-1. Positions at this level involve well-established mail functions. Timely performance of these functions facilitates the work of the organizational units serviced. The appellants' work, including those duties and responsibilities related to security classified mail, involve functions that are well-established by standard operating procedures and by Air Force and USPS regulations. Prompt and accurate performance of their work supports, but is not substantively relevant to, the work performed by the units on base they service.

The appellants' position does not meet Level 5-2. At this level, positions are concerned with improving methods that affect the overall efficiency of the mail unit. Level 5-2 work may also involve determining appropriate materials to be made available to serviced units. Work at this level affects the ability of personnel in serviced units to perform their work accurately.

The purpose of the appellants' position is to provide postal support for base organizations by processing of a variety of incoming and outgoing mail, including mail that is security classified. There is no evidence to suggest that, in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, they must be concerned with making significant improvements to the overall efficiency of the mail unit. This responsibility is held by the position held by their supervisor, who is classified as a Mail Supervisor, GS-305- 6. The postal support work performed by the appellants does not normally have direct bearing on the accuracy of the substantive work performed by base personnel in serviced units. Rather, consistent with the standard's description for Level 5-1, the work performed by the appellants facilitates the timely accomplishment of the work performed by those units.

For Factor 5, we assign Level 5-1 (25 points).

Summary

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required	1-2	200
2. Supervisory controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-1	25
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-1	25
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-1	20
8. Physical demands	8-3	50
9. Work environment	9-2	20
TOTAL POINTS		565

The total points assigned to the appellants' position equals 565. According to the standard's grade conversion table, the position is properly graded at GS-3.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Mail Clerk, GS-305-3.