

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



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

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

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

Organization: Recurring Work Management Branch
Facility Engineering Division
Facility Management Department
Navy Public Works Center
[city, state]

OPM decision: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

OPM decision number: C-0802-09-04

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer
2/13/98

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:

[appellant's representative]

[name]

Director, Human Resources Office

Naval Base

[address]

Mr. William Duffy

Chief, Classification Branch

Field Advisory Services Division

Defense Civilian Personnel Management

Service

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Introduction

On July 8, 1997, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal for the position of Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-9, Recurring Work Management Branch, Facility Engineering Division, Facility Management Department, Navy Public Works Center, [city, state]. The appellant is requesting that his position be changed to Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. 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.

General Issues

This appellant is part of a group appeal from engineering technicians at the Navy Public Works Center who perform work in various specializations. Information furnished with the group appeal compares their GS-9 positions with other engineering technician positions at the same location whom they believe are performing the equivalent work or below but are classified at a higher grade. Copies of position descriptions were provided for two Mechanical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, positions; one Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, position; and one Electronics Engineering Technician, GS-856-11, position. Although the GS-11 position descriptions are certified by a management official, none have a classification certification or a position description number on the Optional Form 8. A certification by a management official certifies the accuracy of the position description which represents the official record of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position. However, a classification certification indicates the position description has been placed in its proper class, title and grade in accordance with the OPM classification standards and guidelines by a person delegated classification authority. Since the GS-11 position descriptions lack a classification certification, the duties and responsibilities are not an official record of duties and responsibilities, have not been properly classified, and are neither reviewable nor appealable under the classification appeal process. Additionally, 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 position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant, the appellant's representative, and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant and his supervisor.

Position Information

The appellant is assigned to Position Number 7L144. The appellant, supervisor, and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant's primary assignment is electrical engineering technician work. He analyzes project requests and determines the scope of proposals to ensure the needs of the customer are addressed. Based on site visits and discussions with the customer, the appellant determines the condition of the projects, scope of the work, time frames, and unusual circumstances that may be encountered during work on assigned projects and recommends the most cost efficient method of construction. He prepares design sketches, cost estimates, detailed job plans, and material requirements involved in the maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems. The majority of his work involves electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground), and components and electric power generation equipment. In addition, the appellant performs work as necessary in various other areas related to utilities, water, steam, heating, and pest control.

The appellant receives direction from the Supervisory Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, who assigns work identifying major objectives and providing background information and guidance. Unusual problems are discussed by the appellant and the supervisor. The appellant determines the technical requirements of the job plans, construction plans, methods, components/materials, and cost estimates. The supervisor provides minimal technical assistance and completed work is reviewed for quality, timeliness, and adherence with instructions, guidelines, and policy.

Standards Determination

Engineering Technician Series, GS-802, June 1969.

Series Determination

The agency placed the position in the Engineering Technician Series, GS-802. The appellant does not contest the occupational series nor the title of his position.

The GS-802 series includes technical positions that require primarily application of a practical knowledge of (a) the methods and techniques of engineering or architecture; and (b) the construction, application, properties, operation, and limitations of engineering systems, processes, structures, machinery, devices, and materials. The positions do not require professional knowledges and abilities for full performance and, therefore, do not require training equivalent in type and scope to that represented by the completion of a professional curriculum leading to a bachelor's degree in engineering or architecture. The work is properly placed in the GS-802 series.

Title Determination

The title Electrical Engineering Technician applies to positions that perform work concerned with systems, plants, equipment, and materials for the generation, transmission, conversion, distribution, control, measurement, or utilization of electrical energy. Included in this specialization are positions that involve the design of electronic installations where the work does not require knowledge of electronics to the extent characteristic of the Electronics Technician Series, GS-856. Since the work

involves preparing job plans, cost estimates, and construction plans for maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground) and components, and electric power generation equipment, the position is properly titled Electrical Engineering Technician.

Grade Determination

The grading criteria in the GS-802 standard is written in the narrative format. Grade levels are discussed in terms of two factors: (1) Nature of Assignment, and (2) Level of Responsibility. The position is evaluated as follows:

Nature of Assignment

This factor considers the scope and difficulty of the project, and the skills and knowledge required to complete the assignment.

At the GS-9 level, engineering technicians typically perform a variety of work relating to an area of specialization that requires the application of a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. Assignments usually involve independent responsibility for planning and conduct of a block of work which is a complete conventional project of relatively limited scope, or a portion of a larger and more diverse project. Assignments require study, analysis, and consideration of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs, and selection of the most appropriate. This generally requires consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. Often changes or deviations must be made during the progress of an assignment to incorporate additional factors requested after commencement of the project or to adjust to findings and conclusions which could not be predicted accurately in the original plans. The GS-9 assignments typically require coordination of several parts, each requiring independent analysis and solution. When phases or details of the project are performed by other groups or personnel outside the organizational unit, the technician reviews, analyzes, and integrates their work. In addition, assignments at this level require a good understanding of the effect that recommendations made or other results of the assignment may have on an item, system, or process and its end-use application.

The appellant provided samples of his most recent assignments. His work primarily involves administering the Maintenance Service Agreement and Preventive Maintenance program at the Oceana facility. These contracts were developed by assessment and inventory of all equipment indicated by the Base Civil Engineer (BCE) or the Utilities Division as equipment that will affect station mission accomplishment and health/welfare needs. The appellant is responsible for performing Quality Assurance Inspections and for generating work orders to repair and update equipment and utilities for the site on a continuing and as needed basis. According to both the appellant and his supervisor, the most unique project he has worked on in the past year involved an aircraft maintenance trainer with hydraulically operated simulators.

The appellant is fully responsible for the electrical aspects of the projects and also for other aspects including water, steam, heating, and pest control. He indicated that, in some cases, such as the aircraft maintenance trainer, the assignments required major adaptations with little or no precedents from which to work. However, it is our finding that the appellant is not creating new systems or establishing new procedures for the work. The vast majority of his work is repair by replacement, and the appellant has state of the art electrical engineering principles and systems information for reference. Thus, based on his experience as an electrical engineering technician, the appellant is able to choose an appropriate means of accomplishing the work from procedures/systems that already have been developed and for which information is available. He selects the appropriate solutions from the body of knowledge already in place.

The appellant's work is recurring in nature. He solicits work under the contracts from the customers and is essentially on his own in coming up with the completed assignment or in meeting with customers, vendors, or shop personnel involved in the project. Unless problems arise, the supervisor does not get involved in carrying out the project. The supervisor meets with the appellant informally on a daily basis to receive an update on the status of the appellant's work and also is in regular contact with the customers to ensure that any problems or concerns are addressed. In the event the appellant needs technical assistance, he generally consults with another technician, the equipment manufacturer, or someone on the BCE's staff. The appellant investigates the job site, consults with the customer, and ultimately provides a workplan, a cost estimate, and requisitions material. Once approved by the customer, the work is assigned to the appropriate work center, and the appellant is responsible for providing quality assurance on the project to the workers onsite and meeting with the customer to resolve any job-related problems or concerns. Guidance available to the appellant includes the National Electrical and Local Code Book, Engineering Handbook, Architectural Graphic Standards, RS Mean cost estimating, NAVFAC design manuals, military handbooks, technical bulletins and magazines, and some files of previous similar projects (these files may be available from the BCE or the customer). All projects must conform to the National Electrical Code and any applicable local codes. The estimates prepared by the appellant are based on historical data from other jobs, when available, and estimations based on Engineer Performance Standards (EPS) and the Estimator system. The EPS is used to assist in estimating jobs by identifying tasks and man-hours to accomplish the work; and the automated Estimator system is used to determine labor hours, materials, and other cost factors. The work requires the use and application of established engineering principles, methods, and techniques. These assignments are comparable to the GS-9 level.

At the GS-11 level, engineering technicians perform work of broad scope and complexity that requires application of (1) demonstrated ability to interpret, select, adapt, and apply many guidelines, precedents, and engineering principles and practices related to the area of specialization; and (2) some knowledge of related scientific and engineering fields. GS-11 technicians plan and accomplish complete projects or studies of a conventional nature requiring independent adaptation of a general fund of background data and information, and interpretation and use of precedents. They are typically confronted with a variety of complex problems in which considerable judgment is needed to make sound engineering compromises and decisions. Other related interests must often be

considered, entailing frequent coordinative action with personnel in the fields concerned. There is a continuing requirement for contact work. Initiative, resourcefulness, and sound judgment are needed in planning and coordinating phases of assignments and in selecting which of several sound alternatives is to be used in arriving at acceptable engineering compromises. Ingenuity and creative thinking are required in devising ways of accomplishing objectives, and in adapting existing equipment or current techniques to new uses.

By comparison, technicians at lower levels receive assignments which are usually segments or phases of the type independently carried out at grade GS-11 or which involve less complex systems and facilities requiring design adaptation. GS-9 technicians apply standard engineering methods and techniques whereas GS-11 technicians are typically required to be creative in devising ways to accomplish the work. Assignments typically found at the GS-11 level include: (1) Develops cost estimates for competitive bidding for a variety of multiple-use construction projects. Determines (a) construction operations and methods involved and the time required to complete each phase or feature, (b) various types and capacities of construction equipment required and cost of operation and maintenance, (c) material types and quantities, and (d) overhead, tax, and other costs; or, (2) Prepares designs and specifications for various utility systems such as heating, plumbing, air conditioning, ventilating, pumping, gas supply, and pneumatic control systems. Assignments characteristically involve utility systems for office buildings, pumping stations, and flood control facilities, where the complexity or nonconventional nature of the buildings and facilities entails design problems requiring considerable adaptation of precedents or design of features for which precedents are not directly applicable. Performs technical review of contractor-prepared designs and specifications for such systems.

The GS-11 level is not met. The appellant's assignments are recurring and deal primarily with the electrical aspects of conventional construction projects, design features, drawings and contract specifications for portions or complete buildings or facilities. While the buildings being worked on are typically older, there are established national, local, industrial, and manufacturer codes, specifications, and, in many cases, files of previous work available to the appellant in order to accomplish his portion of the projects. The appellant does not develop new procedures/systems as is envisioned at this level.

GS-10 level assignments are not specifically described in the standard. The appellant's assignments do not in any way regularly exceed those described at the GS-9 level. Therefore, his assignments cannot properly be classified at the GS-10 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Nature of Assignment.

Level of Responsibility

This factor considers the nature and purpose of person-to-person work relationships, and the supervision received in terms of intensity of review of work and of guidance received during the course of the work cycle.

At the GS-9 level, the supervisor provides information on any related work being performed and furnishes general instruction as to the scope of objectives, time limitations, priorities, and similar aspects. The supervisor is available for consultation and advice where significant deviations from standard engineering practices must be made. The supervisor observes the work for progress and for coordination with work performed by other employees or other sections and for adherence to completion and cost schedules. Standard methods employed are seldom reviewed, but review is made for adequacy and for conformance with established policies, precedents and sound engineering concepts and usage. Personal work contacts typically are more frequent and demanding and are primarily to resolve mutual problems and coordinate the work with that of personnel in related activities. Some contacts are made with using agencies for whom work is done and with contractors and architecture-engineer firms. The contacts are made to clear up doubtful points, to advise as to discrepancies found in meeting contract terms, to consider recommendations for acceptable substitutes, and to promote adherence to agency standards and concepts of good engineering. Contacts outside the agency are generally arranged under supervisory guidance.

The GS-9 level is met. The appellant actively solicits projects under existing contracts from the customers at the Oceana site. Once the project is agreed on with the customer, the appellant discusses timeframes and priorities with his supervisor. From this point, he is expected to carry out the project with minimal supervisory involvement. The appellant sets up appointments; reviews the job; determines the requirements for sketches or drawings; prepares the sketches and drawings; prepares the job plan, funding estimates, and scoping estimate for the jobs; determines and requisitions material needed for the job/project; tracks material receipt; meets with shop supervisors to review the job; provides technical assistance; writes change orders as needed; provides quality assurance; coordinates with contractors, vendors, shops, and the BCE staff as needed; and meets with customers to discuss any problems. Contacts are with the customers, facility managers, project managers, shop supervisors and tradesmen/mechanics, engineers, and vendors. Meetings are conducted with the contacts as needed, generally, without supervisory involvement, although the supervisor may sit in on meetings to assist in resolving problems.

At the GS-11 level, technicians have considerable freedom in planning work and carrying out assignments. The supervisor makes assignments in terms of the major objectives, providing background information and advice on specific unusual problems which are anticipated or on matters requiring coordination with other groups. Unusual or controversial problems, or policy questions arising in the course of a project, may be discussed with the supervisor, but technical supervisory assistance is infrequently sought or required. The supervisor is usually informally advised regarding progress, but there is little review during progress of typical assignments. Completed work in the form of recommendations, plans, designs, reports, or correspondence is reviewed for general adequacy, conformity to purpose of the assignment, and sound engineering judgment. Contacts in the course of the work are with the same groups of individuals at lower grade levels and the purpose of the contacts is similar. Because of the increased scope of GS-11 assignments, these contacts tend to become more extensive than at lower levels. Contacts with contractors and other personnel regarding complex engineering and administrative problems are carried out without close supervision. However, the technician generally discusses with the supervisor the approach to be taken.

Although the appellant works independently under general supervision, the intent of the GS-11 level is not met. He may recommend a course of action, but the appellant seeks technical advice on unusual problems and policy issues. The GS-11 level of responsibility assumes that the employee is performing assignments equivalent to the GS-11 level and would, therefore, have responsibility for adapting a general font of knowledge and interpreting precedents to handle complex assignments requiring the exercise of considerable judgment. In comparison, the appellant applies conventional engineering practices and a knowledge of the codes, specifications, and regulations to his projects. He exercises some judgment in determining the applicability of the specifications, codes, and engineering principles to the specific project, but consults with his supervisor on difficult problems or situations. This level of responsibility does not meet the intent of the GS-11 level.

The GS-10 level is not specifically described in the standard. To be appropriately classified at the GS-10 level, the technician's Level of Responsibility would have to regularly and clearly exceed the level described at grade GS-9. The appellant's position does not regularly require him to perform at a level that exceeds the GS-9 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Level of Responsibility.

Summary

Both factors are evaluated at the GS-9 level.

Decision

This position is properly classified as Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-9.