

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

**Chicago Oversight Division
230 South Dearborn Street, DPN 30-6
Chicago, Illinois 60604**

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

Appellants: [Appellants' names]

Agency Classification: File Clerk, GS-305-3

Organization: Department of Treasury
Bureau of the Public Debt
[Name] Office
[Name] Division
[Name] Branch
[Name] Section
[City, State]

OPM decision: **File Clerk
GS-305-3**

OPM decision number: C-0305-03-04

/s/

Frederick J. Boland
Classification Appeals Officer

January 14, 1999

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' names and address]

[name and address of appellants' servicing
personnel office]

Mr. Robert Brevis
Director of Personnel Policy
U.S. Department of Treasury
Room 4164-ANX
Washington, DC 20220

INTRODUCTION

The appellants are assigned to job number 97662, File Clerk, GS-305-3. The position is located in the [Name] Section, [Name] Branch, [Name] Division, [Name] Office, Bureau of the Public Debt, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

The appellants request a change in the title and grade to *Referral Control Clerk, GS-305-5*. The appellants agree the official position description is accurate but believe that the duties warrant greater credit than was assigned by the agency to five of the nine Factor Evaluation System (FES) factors. The factors identified, by FES numeric order are: 1) Knowledge Required by the Position, 2) Supervisory Controls, 3) Guidelines, 5) Scope and Effect, and 7) Purpose of Contacts.

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellants are three of approximately 63 employees in the [Name] Section. The section chief is a GS-305-8, File Supervisor (Chief). The section consists of two GS-305-7 File Supervisors (Group Supervisor), three GS-305-5 Lead File Clerks, three GS-303-4 Clerks (Alpha Control Clerk), four GS-305-4 File Clerks (Special Searcher), one GS-303-4 Clerk (Caveat Control Clerk), one GS-303-4 Clerk (Numeric Control Clerk), three GS-350-4 Microfilm Equipment Operators, one GS-326-4 Office Automation Clerk, two GS-303-4 Securities Support Clerks, 35 GS-305-3 File Clerks (Searcher), two GS-303-3 Clerks (Distribution Clerk), two GS-305-3 File Clerks (Film Librarian) and the appellants, three GS-305-3 File Clerks.

The appellants locate and retrieve bond information stored on microfilm that is necessary for the generation of referral tickets. Files housed in the microfilm library are filed alphabetically and numerically. Referral tickets are used by the [Name] Office to investigate and reconcile bond redemption errors. The appellants ensure that all required supporting claims documents are attached to the referral tickets and check tickets for possible errors. If errors are found, the appellants return the referral tickets to data transcribers for correction and generation of new tickets. Appellants forward tickets to requestors, maintain daily records of referral requests, and prepare forms related to this process.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Series and Title Determination

The GS-305 series covers positions involving the administration, supervision or performance of clerical work related to the processing of incoming or outgoing mail and/or the systematic arrangement of records for storage or reference purposes, the scheduled disposition of records, and the performance of related work when such duties require the application of established mail or file methods and procedures, knowledge of prescribed systems for governing the flow and control of communications, and/or the filing or storage and retrieval of records, and knowledge of the organization and functions of the operating unit or units serviced.

The appellants' position includes duties characteristic of this series, such as the locating and withdrawing of material from records to meet the needs of users.

The prescribed title for non-supervisory positions in the GS-305 series, grades GS-1 through GS-5, in which file duties predominate is *File Clerk*.

Grade Determination

The GS-305 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under FES, a position factor must be fully equivalent to the factor-level described in the standard to warrant credit at that level and the associate point value. If work is not fully equivalent to the overall intent of a particular level described in the standard, a lower level and point value must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect of the work that meets a higher level.

Work demanding less than a substantial (at least 25 percent) amount of time is not considered in classifying a position. Similarly, acting, temporary, and other responsibilities that are not regular and continuing are not considered in classifying positions. (Temporary assignments of sufficient duration, though, are sometimes recognized in accordance with agency discretion by temporary promotion if higher graded duties are involved, by formal detail, or by performance recognition.)

The appellants raise specific issues regarding five of the nine factors discussed in the standard. Accordingly, this decision details our analysis of these five factors alone. However, we independently reviewed their duties and responsibilities against the other factors and concur with the agency's credit level assignments for the four undisputed factors.

Factor 1: Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor assesses the nature and extent of information or facts that employees must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply these knowledges.

The appellants feel that Level 1-3 is supported and they state:

We, the incumbents, are required to have a thorough knowledge of the referral ticket process which involves various forms and procedures, PC-based applications, and/or on-line systems, acceptable bond inscriptions, the encoding process and technical aspects of the Referral Ticket Masterfile. The referral ticket is used in DTR and/or DAR to initiate an investigation of a bond retirement and to establish an accounting control over that investigation. In addition, when required documents are difficult to locate and retrieve, we are required to search several possible locations and/or possible file categories (e.g., if the information provided is meager, vague, or misleading, or when the existence of possible records is undetermined.)

While the appellants have described a thorough knowledge of the referral ticket process, it is not required that the appellants have thorough knowledge of organizations serviced, e.g., Division of Accounts and Reconcilements (DAR), Division of Transactions and Rulings (DTR) or the subject matter of material in those units beyond their relation to information or material requested and the referral ticket process. In each instance, the determination made is whether a referral ticket is

needed, whether sufficient material is present to accurately generate a referral ticket, and whether all pertinent documents accompany the referral ticket that has been generated. The use of automated systems in the performance of file work is recognized in the GS-305 classification standard. It states, “Neither the mechanical devices nor the operations performed in automated systems have affected the basic nature of mail or file work. The use of an automated system involves rearrangement of, but no change in basic filing processes.”

The appellants’ duties match Level 1-2, which covers positions that typically require a basic knowledge of the functions and organizational structures of the units serviced. A basic knowledge of the subject matter content of materials being processed is needed to distinguish among materials that require different processing, to classify materials by subject matter when they are misfiled, in use in serviced units, or have been passed on to someone other than the person to whom charged out, or similar duties.

Their duties are unlike those found at Level 1-3, where positions require a thorough knowledge of the functions performed in the units serviced and a thorough knowledge of the subject matter content of the materials that are processed. At Level 1-3, knowledge of the units serviced is used to classify and cross-reference material in the applicable filing system. Material may be either extensively cross-referenced, or the subject matter of the material itself is overlapping or difficult to discern.

We evaluate this factor at Level 1-2 and credit 200 points.

Factor 2: Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review, e.g., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment, detailed review of the finished assignment, spot-check of finished work for accuracy, or review only for adherence to policy.

The appellants claim credit Level 2-3 and state:

We independently plan and adjust the work flow to meet the requirements of the servicing Divisions. The supervisor is normally consulted only when problems arise for which no guidance or precedents exist. The work is reviewed in terms of the results achieved and the effect on resources and other administrative matters.

Level 2-2 covers positions where work assignments are performed independently in accordance with established procedures and previous experience. At this level supervisors are available for assistance on non-recurring assignments and may be consulted when problems arise that do not have precedents. Work may be spot-checked for accuracy and may be reviewed occasionally for compliance with applicable regulations.

At Level 2-3, the employee independently plans and adjusts mail and file functions to meet the requirements of units serviced. The serviced units at this level are concerned with new, emerging or innovative programs (e.g., research and development, engineering or scientific laboratories) which are subject to relatively constant change. Based on those circumstances the employee must independently adjust or change procedures, establish new file procedures or systems, and adapt established procedures.

The organizations that are serviced, (e.g., Division of Transactions and Rulings, Division of Accounts and Reconcilements) are not subject to the level of change found in research and development, or scientific environments. The position clearly exceeds Level 2-1 where detailed instructions are given regarding assigned tasks and the supervisor carefully reviews work in progress, yet the appellants perform duties based on established procedures and experience, as at Level 2-2.

We evaluate this factor at Level 2-2 and credit 125 points.

Factor 3: Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

The appellants state:

Our guidelines consist of numerous standing oral instruction and some written procedural guides which are applied in different work situations. Judgment is also used in selecting alternative means of locating documents when search information is inadequate or misleading and several locations are possible.

The appellants additionally state that when they have a situation not covered by standard operating procedures they present the situation to the supervisor along with a recommended course of action. The supervisor confirmed that situations are presented with possible solutions. However, while the appellants may recommend solutions when they encounter new situations, deviations in procedures are still approved by the supervisor. The appellants' duties are similar to Level 3-1 where guidelines are complete and specific, and any deviations from guidelines are referred to the supervisor for a decision prior to change.

Level 3-2 is not met where guidelines consist of numerous standing instructions and written procedural guides that are applicable in differing work situations. Employees at this level must use judgment and initiative in applying proper guides and in selecting alternative means of locating materials missing from files when search information is inadequate or misleading and several locations are possible. Unlike Level 3-2, the appellants' duties are performed in accordance with established methods and procedures pertaining to the referral ticket process and not differing work situations as described at Level 3-2.

We evaluate this factor at Level 3-1 and credit 25 points.

Factor 5: Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work (i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment) and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. Only the effect of properly performed work is considered.

The appellants feel that Level 5-2 is supported and they state:

The referral ticket process has a unique relationship within DDS and SBOO. We, the incumbents, are concerned, involved and have made suggestions on improvements to the methods and procedures used in the referral ticket process. This process and its efficiency have a major impact on the ability of personnel in the serviced units to perform their duties. We have been involved in evaluating and implementing suggestions that have had a major impact on the time involved for serviced units to perform their duties involving customer relations.

Scope

While the appellants make suggestions as employees at all levels of an organization are encouraged to do the purpose of their work is to perform well established filing functions as at Level 5-1. In contrast at Level 5-2, the work involves the improvement of work methods and procedures, the responsibility of lead and supervisory positions in the unit, rather than the appellants.

We evaluate Scope at Level 5-1.

Effect

The appellants' timely provision of requested documents and referral tickets is like Level 5-1 as it facilitates the work of employees in the units serviced. Unlike Level 5-2, their work does not affect the overall efficiency of the work unit, as would implementing improved methods and procedures.

We evaluate Effect at Level 5-1.

We evaluate this factor at Level 5-1 and credit 25 points.

Factor 7: Purpose of Contacts

This factor addresses the purpose of personal contacts, which may range from factual exchange of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints or objectives. Contacts credited under Factor 7 must be the same contacts credited under Factor 6.

The appellants state:

The purpose of contacts involves working with positions in the serviced units to resolve operating problems such as delays in production or inaccuracies of referral tickets and/or the Referral Ticket Masterfile.

The appellants add that their contacts are to gather more information and clarify questionable items. As noted under Factor 5, the appellants are not responsible for the resolution of operating

problems but rather the proper search, collection and distribution of information sufficient to timely and accurately provide referral tickets to serviced units. Work leaders and supervisors are responsible for resolving operating problems between work units and the testing or implementation of adopted suggestions or recommendations. The appellants' contacts are necessary to clarify requests and to insure that referral tickets are done in a timely fashion.

This is similar to Level 7-1 where contacts are to obtain or exchange information regarding performance of functions in the immediate work unit and to provide information to individuals in the serviced units regarding mail and file operations. In contrast, at Level 7-2 the purpose of contacts is to work with personnel in serviced units to resolve broader operating problems such as improperly coded or classified files or materials and inadequacy of existing file categories, responsibilities assigned to leaders and supervisors in the unit.

We evaluate this factor at Level 7-1 and credit 20 points.

FACTOR LEVEL POINT SUMMARY

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>200</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>2-2</i>	<i>125</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>3-1</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>4-2</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>5-1</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>6-2</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>7</i>	<i>7-1</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>8-1</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>9-1</i>	<i>5</i>
	<i>Total:</i>	<i>505</i>

The table above summarizes our evaluation of the appellants' work. As shown on page 13 of the standard, a total of 505 points falls within the GS-3 grade range (455-650).

DECISION

The proper classification of the appellants' position is File Clerk, GS-305-3.