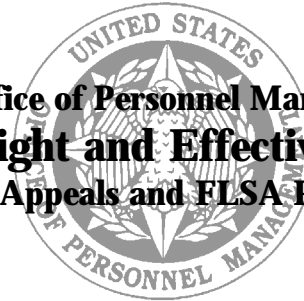


**U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness  
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs**



**Philadelphia Oversight Division  
600 Arch Street, Room 3400  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1596**

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

**Appellant:** [appellant's name]

**Agency classification:** General Clerk  
GS-303-3

**Organization:** [name] Field Office  
Physical Support Branch  
Operations Division  
U.S. Army Engineer District, [name]  
[location]

**OPM decision:** (Title optional)  
GS-303-3

**OPM decision number:** C-0303-03-02

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Robert D. Hendler  
Classification Appeals Officer

/s/ 1/12/00  
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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 (PCS's), appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

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## **Introduction**

On September 22, 1999, the Philadelphia Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant's name]. His position is currently classified as General Clerk, GS-303-3. However, the appellant believes the classification should be Administrative Officer, GS-341-5. He works in the [name] Field Office, Physical Support Branch, Operations Division of the U.S. Army Engineer District, [name], [location]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General Issues**

The appellant believes his position should be reclassified primarily based on the fact that he maintains the daily time and attendance records for approximately 30 people at his site and others located primarily at the [location] office. He also states that other people performing time keeper duties in the District Office are in positions in other series and at higher grades.

The issue of the classification of other positions performing time keeping functions raised by the appellant is not, in and of itself, germane to the classification appeal process. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM PCS's and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to PCS's is the exclusive method for classifying positions, other methods or factors of evaluation, such as comparison to other positions that may or may not be classified correctly, are not authorized for use in determining the classification of a position. Therefore, we have considered the information and documents provided by the appellant only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

We conducted telephone audits with the appellant on December 29, 1999, and January 3, 2000, and a telephone interview with the appellant's first-level supervisor, [name] on January 4, 2000. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his current assignments, and both his current job description (JD) number 08785 NS and a new description of work titled a position description (PD), proposed November 2, 1999, but not yet classified or numbered. Both the appellant and his first-level supervisor agree that the current JD is insufficiently specific and does not adequately describe the work that he performs. However, both agree that the proposed PD describes the appellant's work. Our fact finding revealed that the proposed PD contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellant and is incorporated by reference into this decision. However, we find that Factors 2, 3, and 4 overstate the nature of the office automation (OA) work performed by the appellant, as discussed below.

## **Position Information**

The appellant works in an office with two other employees: his supervisor, occupying a Supervisory Construction Representative, GS-809-12 position, and a co-worker occupying a Construction Representative, GS-809-11 position. The office serves approximately 30 staff

members located primarily at [location] and [location] who operate in the field. The appellant's major duties are to provide clerical support to ensure efficient office operations. He independently performs a variety of prescribed tasks, including receiving, answering, or referring routine telephone inquiries to staff members; maintaining office files in subject and/or chronological order; reviewing incoming correspondence; routing and distributing mail; and maintaining and ordering office supplies as requested by other staff members. He maintains technical publications, manuals, and technical order files including controlling reference material and performing inventory control of office supplies and lubricants for equipment used by the Operations Division. He also records time and attendance, and vehicle usage and fuel consumption data for supervisory endorsement on a weekly basis. To accomplish this, he is supplied with data from field employees regarding time and attendance, and the number of days equipment is used, miles driven, and fuel consumed. He inputs this information into the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS). He brings CEFMS up on his computer by clicking on an icon and selecting the appropriate format. He then types in the data supplied by field representatives. The recording of the data is the only required use of the computer and takes approximately 10 percent of the appellant's time.

### **Series, title, and standard determination**

The appellant's primary responsibility is to apply established policies, procedures, and practices to maintain required records and provide the information contained in them in a timely manner to appropriate recipients. His work does not require knowledge of general management principles, inherent in two-grade interval administrative work, like the Administrative Officer Series, GS-341, or the Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series, GS-301, but rather knowledge of a body of rules, procedures, and practices that govern the Operations Division's daily operation.

Unlike the appellant's work, two-grade interval administrative work requires a high degree of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of the functions, processes, theories and principles of management, and the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information.

Such work typically involves planning for and developing systems, functions, and services; formulating, developing, recommending, and establishing policies, operating methods, or procedures; and adapting established policy to the unique requirements of a particular program.

In contrast, the appellant typically follows detailed procedures that require limited program knowledge and practical experience to apply, rather than knowledge of management or administrative principles. Program knowledge and practical experience governs his decisions and written procedures provide guidance when providing information to both contractors and staff.

Like other one-grade interval clerical positions, the appellant carries out his duties based on the application of established methods and procedures. He applies a practical knowledge of the purpose, operation, procedures, techniques and guidelines of the specific program or functional requirement. Like other clerks, he typically learns his work on-the-job and attends specific training courses related to his work. Consequently, the appellant's position is properly classified

to a one-grade interval series, rather than to the two-grade interval GS-341 or GS-301 series.

The appellant's position is excluded from the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326 because it does not require the competitive keyboard skills fundamental to that series. His work consists of a variety of intermingled clerical support functions, ranging from maintaining time and attendance records and equipment maintenance warranty records to receiving vendors selling office supplies, lubricants and other items needed by the office, and, at the request of his supervisor, eliciting price quotations for needed supplies from approved vendors. Occasionally, he also suggests to new contractors in need of hand tools and small parts local commercial establishments where they can be obtained locally. Specialized program knowledge is required in each of these functional areas, with none of them predominant. Because there is no single series specifically covering these specialized functions, the appellant's work is classified to the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303. The GS-303 series covers one-grade interval work not classifiable elsewhere. It includes positions like the appellant's where the duties are to perform technician, assistant, or clerical work requiring knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization within the framework of established guidelines.

The clerical work associated with the appellant's activities is evaluated by use of the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work (GLGCAW). The OA duties are evaluated by reference to the criteria contained in the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide (OAGEG). The GS-303 series prescribes no specific titles. The agency may assign a title consistent with the instructions appearing in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, Section III, H, 2. Therefore, the position is allocated properly as (Title optional), GS-303.

### **Grade determination**

The appellant's position requires performance of different kinds of work which, when evaluated in terms of duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required, may be at different grade levels. In most instances, the highest level work assigned to and performed by the employee for the majority of the time is grade-determining. If work assigned and performed at a higher grade is only a minority of the time, it may be grade controlling only if it is officially assigned to the position on a regular and recurring basis; occupies at least 25 percent of the employee's time; and that the higher level knowledge and skills needed to perform the work would be required in recruiting for the position if it became vacant.

#### *Clerical duties*

The GLGCAW covers the work of processing transactions and performing various office support and miscellaneous clerical and assistance duties within a framework of procedures, precedents, or instructions. Clerical work is described by the guide as work such as preparing, receiving, reviewing, and verifying documents; maintaining office records; locating and compiling data or information from files; compiling information from files; compiling information for reports; keeping a calendar and informing others of deadlines and other important dates; and similar

clerical support work within an organization. This work requires a knowledge of the clerical requirements and processes involved in maintaining the functional programs of the unit.

In addition to the grade level definitions contained in 5 U.S.C. 5104, the guide uses two evaluation factors: *Nature of Assignment* and *Level of Responsibility*.

### *The law*

The distinctions made in law between GS-3 and GS-4 grade level work are distinctions of degree rather than kind. The definitions at both levels address three factors: training or experience; working knowledge of a special subject matter; and exercise of independent judgment in accordance with well-established policies, procedures and techniques. Although the GS-4 grade level definition refers to “a *moderate amount* of training and *good* working knowledge,” the GS-3 grade level definition refers only to “*some* training and *some* working knowledge” (*italics added*). However, the primary distinctions are that the GS-4 grade level requires the presence of a higher degree of all three factors, whereas the GS-3 grade level requires only a lower degree of any one of the three be present, and that the GS-4 grade level requires “the exercise of independent judgment in accordance with well-established policies, procedures, and techniques” whereas the GS-3 requires only “*to some extent* the exercise . . .” (*italics added*).

The appellant’s position does not require the continuous exercise of independent judgment to the extent envisioned at the GS-4 grade level, nor does it require the higher levels of training, experience, and working knowledge envisioned at that level. The clerical tasks in his position require little special training or subject matter knowledge and the supervision of the position and review of its products are too close to consider the incumbent as continuously exercising independent judgment. The appellant’s position is best evaluated at the GS-3 grade level definition of the law.

### *The standard*

#### *Nature of assignment:*

This factor measures the knowledge required to perform the work and the complexity of the work processes.

At the GS-3 grade level, work consists of many different prescribed tasks, steps, or operations. Deciding what needs to be done requires the employee to choose from among similar procedures. The work varies primarily in factual ways, such as in the sources of information or in the kinds of forms, transactions, or entries. Work requires good understanding of the structure of the organization served and enough knowledge of the organization’s terminology and work flow to employ the correct set and sequence of tasks, steps, and operations. The appellant’s work closely matches the GS-3 grade level illustration. As at that grade level, he takes and delivers telephone messages for the staff and answers routine inquires; maintains office manuals and other publications; records information; monitors and reorders office supplies, and keeps time and

attendance records, coordinating their submission to payroll.

In contrast, at the GS-4 grade level, the work involves performing the full range of standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems. The work consists of related steps and processes which require the employee to identify and recognize differences among a variety of recurring situations. The actions taken or responses made differ in nature and sequence due to the particular characteristics of each case or transaction.

The nature of the appellant's duties does not require him to decide among different but plausible procedures. The data collection and distribution procedures are specific and the data are all recorded on standardized forms whose purposes are clearly identified. The other procedures are likewise standardized and clearly applicable to the specific situation. Consequently, this factor is evaluated at the GS-3 grade level.

*Level of Responsibility:*

At the GS-3 grade level, the supervisor provides individual assignments by explaining what is to be done and how to accomplish it. Routine assignments are performed independently, but problems or unfamiliar situations are referred to the supervisor. Review of the work increases with more difficult assignments. A large number of procedural guides such as manuals and written and oral instructions apply directly to the work and are always available. The employee exchanges information with co-workers. Contacts outside the organization are in closely controlled or structured settings. Comparable to the GS-3 grade level, the appellant receives his assignments from the supervisor and performs the routine work independently. The supervisor or a higher level employee provides specific instructions related to retrieving certain data and reviews his work for accuracy and conformance to instructions. The appellant primarily exchanges information with co-workers within his organization.

In contrast, at the GS-4 level, the supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments. The employee uses initiative to complete work following 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. The number and similarity of guides require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines and procedures. The employee makes minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in specific cases. Contacts are with co-workers and those outside the organization to exchange information and, in some cases, resolve problems.

The GS-4 grade level is not met since the appellant does not have to exercise the type of independent judgment described in order to select from numerous, similar guidelines and procedures nor does he deviate from the guides. Consequently, this factor is credited at the GS-3 grade level.

Since both factors are evaluated at GS-3 grade level, the appellant's clerical duties are properly evaluated at the GS-3 grade level.



### *OA duties*

OA, as used in the OAGEG, refers to the practical use of electronic systems to provide general clerical office support. Electronic systems used in an office environment consist of hardware and software components. When used together, these components are capable of storing, retrieving, manipulating, transferring, computing, and printing information. Hardware components include, but are not limited to, electronic typewriters, word processors, personal computers, work stations (keyboards and visual displays) linked to a computer, and associated equipment such as printers, optical scanners, and modems. Typical types of software used in OA include word processing, electronic mail, calendar, project management, database management, desk-top publishing, graphics and spreadsheet programs.

The OAGEG is written in the factor evaluation system (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the knowledge required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions. A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor level descriptions (FLD's). The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected FLD. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular FLD in the PCS, the lower point value must be assigned unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the Grade Conversion Table in the PCS.

#### *Factor 1 - Knowledge required by the position*

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge.

Level 1-2 (200 points) requires skill in operating a computer terminal using a standard typewriter style keyboard with additional function keys, as well as skill in operating related equipment, such as printers and modems. The work requires a knowledge of processing procedures and function keys to execute at least several basic OA functions such as storing and retrieving electronic documents or files; activating a printer; inserting and deleting text; printing standardized paragraphs from a glossary; and producing letters and memoranda in much the same way as they would be typed on a standard typewriter. Such positions also require a knowledge of grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and terminology commonly used in office settings and a knowledge of standard processing procedures, formats, and distribution and retention policies. As described above, the appellant uses equivalent OA software knowledge in producing documents in standardized format. He often uses a previous document and inserts the new information provided by field personnel.

At Level 1-3 (350 points), positions require a knowledge of varied and advanced functions of one software type or varied functions of more than one software type; or other equivalent knowledge.

Knowledge of software functions are applied to produce a wide range of documents that often require complex formats such as graphics or tables within text; to edit and reformat electronic drafts; and to update or revise existing databases or spreadsheets.

The appellant does not produce documents containing charts, graphs, or highly technical or specialized terminology. The database functions performed by the appellant are of a routine nature consisting of accessing the appropriate database, inserting/correcting data, and capturing specified data elements to be printed in hard copy. The appellant is not required to establish a database or manipulate data within a database. He does not import data information into a text document. The knowledge and skill exercised by the appellant fails to meet Level 1-3. Therefore, Level 1-2 (200 points) is credited.

### *Factor 2 - Supervisory controls*

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for carrying out assignments, and how completed work is reviewed.

At Level 2-1 (25 points), assignment instructions clearly indicate what is required. The work is performed in accordance with detailed procedural instructions on matters such as: hardware/software selection; use of established databases and spreadsheets; and format, spacing, and arrangement of information. The employee works as instructed and seeks advice on all matters not specifically covered, clearly defined, or easily located in the instructions or guidelines.

As at this level, the appellant is expected to produce final spreadsheet documents by filling in the cells of the appropriate CEFMS spreadsheets in accordance with established practices and procedures. The spreadsheets are already loaded on the computer and are brought up by an unvarying standard procedure. The spreadsheet documents produced are standardized in nature with minimal variation. The supervisor reviews the finished product for content and accuracy and adherence with published guidelines.

In contrast, at Level 2-2 (125 points), the supervisor provides general instructions for standard, preestablished, or continuing OA tasks. The employee works independently in carrying out familiar assignments in accordance with previous instructions, standard procedures for creating documents and established use of software packages. The employee seeks further guidance when new or unusual assignments call for deviations from established procedures or otherwise require special instructions. Completed work is usually checked for compliance with office procedures or instructions, technical accuracy and appearance. The appellant's assignments do not require deciding among a variety of software packages, selecting from among a variety of available formats, or equivalent exercises in judgment envisioned at Level 2-2. Therefore, Level 2-1 (25 points) is credited.

### *Factor 3 - Guidelines*

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

At Level 3-1 (25 points), there are detailed procedural guidelines covering all aspects of the work which are directly applicable to the work performed. Employees follow step-by-step instructions to use a word processing system. They enter text from drafts in a designated format and follow instructions for identifying and electronically storing documents and for printing hard copies. As at Level 3-1, the appellant is expected to follow the guidance contained in the operation procedures covered by available software user manuals. There is no requirement that the appellant exercise judgment in document format, data input/retrieval, or machine operation. The straightforward nature of the documents produced and the requirement for adherence to the CEFMS system requirements fully meet Level 3-1.

At Level 3-2 (125 points), the employee must exercise judgment because of the number and similarity of guidelines or the availability of alternative procedures for accomplishing a function. Level 3-2 is not met since the appellant does not have to use the degree of judgment described at this level, e.g., selecting from a number of alternative procedures when deciding how to accomplish the task at hand. Therefore, Level 3-1 (25 points) is credited.

#### *Factor 4 - Complexity*

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-1 (25 points), the work consists of clear-cut repetitive tasks such as entering a few items of information to produce standard documents, retrieving specified items of information from an existing data management system, or acknowledging receipt of and printing electronic mail. The sequence of steps and the function keys used to activate the equipment and to perform the processing functions are prescribed in detailed instructions. The standardized and specific nature of the appellant's assignments meet the criteria described at Level 4-1.

At Level 4-2 (75 points), the work requires a varying number and sequence of steps and use of different functions from one assignment to another. Processing steps and procedures required to complete assignments are varied and numerous. These steps and procedures differ in terms of the type of software used, the type of document or specific report to be produced or edited, the specific formatting required for a document, the existence of prerecorded formats, and other differences of a factual nature. Some assignments at Level 4-2 involve using one type of software to create or edit a variety of standard documents requiring differing procedures and functions, or to process lengthy documents with a variety of format changes within each document. Other assignments at this level involve using two or more types of software, e.g., word processing and database management, to process different types of documents, paragraphs, tables, reports, etc., that can be combined in a number of ways and that require extensive entry of data from drafts. The appellant's assignments do not require the use of multiple types of software, or creating or editing a variety of standard documents requiring differing procedures typical of Level 4-2.

Therefore, Level 4-1 (25 points) is credited.

*Factor 5 - Scope and effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-1 (25 points), the purpose of the work is to perform specific, recurring tasks required to maintain electronic records and/or to produce various items, e.g., correspondence, memos, publications, manuscripts, reports, or forms, in draft or final form according to most recent data. Production usually includes steps such as selecting and adhering to the proper format; determining the spacing and arrangement of material; making entries to and retrieving data from electronic records; and checking references, distribution requirement, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The services performed facilitate the work of the originators of the documents or the users of the data maintained. Like Level 5-1, the appellant performs specific tasks including preparing standard correspondence and maintaining electronic records. His assignments facilitate the work of the office.

At Level 5-2 (75 points), the purpose of the work is to collect, select, organize, and provide information in oral or written form. This may involve telephone conversations, electronic mail, reports, on-line databases, etc. The work affects the way in which other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information, and increases the availability and usefulness of the information involved. The appellant does not gather and collect information which he then must organize and present in another format, either written or oral, as described at Level 5-2. Therefore, Level 5-1 (25 points) is credited.

*Factor 6 - Personal contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of contacts*

These factors measure the type and purpose of face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The level of regular and recurring personal contacts selected under Factor 6 is to be matched with the purposes of those contacts under Factor 7, and the appropriate point value credited using the chart provided in the standard.

### *Persons contacted*

At Level 1, contacts are with employees within the immediate work unit or related support units such as points-of-contact and document originators. The appellant's OA contacts meet Level 1 criteria in that they are within the immediate work unit or associated supply operation units or contractors.

At Level 2, contacts are with employees at various levels throughout the agency who are involved in or affected by integrating or changing automated office procedures. The appellant does not routinely have contacts outside of the field staff that he supports, and is not involved in the OA procedural issues required at Level 2.

### *Purpose of contacts*

At Level A, the purpose of contacts is to exchange information about the assignment or methods to be used to complete the assignment, e.g., to clarify terminology, determine priorities, discuss additions or revisions, or discuss equipment capabilities. Comparable to Level A, the appellant's contacts are primarily to exchange information with staff and contractors.

At Level B, the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, and integrate work processes or work methods for OA between and among related work units. The appellant provides services within a single unit directed by his supervisor and is not required to plan, coordinate, or integrate work processes. Therefore, Level 1A (30 points) is credited.

### *Factor 8 - Physical demands:*

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee in performing the work assignment, including the agility and dexterity required, and the extent of physical exertion. As at Level 8-1 (5 points), the only level defined, his work is sedentary and requires no special physical demands. Therefore, Level 8-1 (5 points) is credited.

### *Factor 9 - Work environment*

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, and the safety precautions required. As at Level 9-1 (5 points), the only level defined, the work involves minimal risks and observance of safety precautions typical of office settings. Therefore, Level 9-1 (5 points) is credited.

### *Summary*

In summary, we have evaluated the position as follows:

<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-2	200
2. Supervisory Controls	2-1	25
3. Guidelines	3-1	25
4. Complexity	4-1	25
5. Scope and Effect	5-1	25
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	6-1 7-A	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	340

The total of 340 points falls within the GS-2 point range of 255-450 points.

This is a mixed grade position with clerical duties evaluated at the GS-3 grade level and OA duties at the GS-2 grade level. As discussed previously, the appellant's general clerical work occupies a sufficient portion of the work time to permit evaluation of the position, as a whole, to the GS-3 grade level.

### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as (Title optional), GS-303-3.