

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

Agency classification: Military Personnel Clerk (OA)
GS-204-5

Organization: [Installation]
U.S. Navy
[Location]

OPM decision: Human Resources Assistant
(Military/OA)
GS-203-5

OPM decision number: C-0203-05-02

/s/

Timothy P. Heath
Classification Appeals Officer

3/29/01

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, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Since this decision changes the series and title of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 5 CFR 511.702. The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

[Appellant]

Director
Human Resources Office – Code 00V
U.S. Department of the Navy
[Location]

Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of
the Navy (Civilian Personnel and Equal
Employment Opportunity)
Nebraska Avenue, Complex
321 Somer Court, NW., Suite 40101
Washington, DC 20393-5451

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

Introduction

On October 31, 2000, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted a classification appeal for the position of Military Personnel Clerk (OA), GS-204-5, [Installation], U. S. Navy, [Location]. The appellant is requesting that his position be classified as Military Personnel Clerk (OA), GS-204-6.

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

The appellant compares his position to a similar vacant position advertised by the Marine Corps at the GS-6 level. In addition, he believes that his current position description does not adequately encompass the total scope of his duties.

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. The agency has primary responsibility for ensuring that its jobs are graded consistently with OPM standards, guidelines, and appeal decisions. If the appellant considers his job so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, the appellant may pursue the matter by writing to his human resources office. In doing so, the appellant should specify the precise organizational location, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the jobs in question. If the jobs are found to be basically the same as the appellant's, the agency must correct their classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to the appellant the differences between his job and the others.

OPM considers a position description adequate for classification purposes when the major duties and responsibilities of the position are listed, and proper classification can be made when the description is supplemented by otherwise accurate, available, and current information on the organization's structure, mission, and procedures. We find the current position description adequate.

To help decide the appeal, an Atlanta Oversight Division representative conducted a telephone interview with the appellant and his supervisor on March 7, 2001. In reaching our decision, we considered the information provided during the interviews and all written information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including the official position description of record.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to position description number [Number]. This is a standard position description developed as a result of an indepth classification review conducted in 1994 by Department of the Navy, Office of Civilian Personnel Management, Eastern Region, and Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet (CINCLANFLT), Civilian Personnel and Equal Employment Opportunity Programs. This standard position description is used at all Personnel Support Activity Detachment (PSD) offices throughout CINCLANTFLT.

The appellant provides personnel clerical support and assistance to military personnel assigned to the Navy's Officer Candidate School (OCS). Duties include ensuring students are reporting to assigned command within the correct time frame, and preparing reporting endorsements, emergency data, military pay orders, and any missing reporting and detaching endorsements. The appellant determines the availability and utilization of government quarters and messing facilities, verifies eligibility, and prepares and distributes documents for Variable Housing Allowance and Basic Allowance for Quarters.

The appellant verifies the accuracy and currency of records for new students, and drafts correspondence and coordinates contact with former commands, Department of Navy Bureau of Personnel (BUPERS) or others, to procure missing documents, confirm record entries, and resolve conflicts. He tracks and monitors any pending actions and provides for interim action where service records are not immediately available or are lost. He verifies the service record against information in various locally generated reports and ensures that pages are properly documented, filed, and purged as required. The appellant answers students' questions regarding entitlements, and processes the varied personnel and related pay actions required during the members' staff assignment.

The appellant provides exit processing for students transferring to new duty stations, including sea duty or overseas assignments. He is required to continuously coordinate with serviced commands, BUPERS, and others to resolve numerous problems (e.g., sudden changes in orders, last minute denial of overseas dependent entry, sudden legal/medical problems, etc.). The appellant initiates and prepares all pay and personnel documents pertaining to the transfer, and processes the documentation to close out personnel records at the PSD.

Series determination

In December 2000, OPM issued a new Job Family Standard (JFS) for Assistance Work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-200. This new JFS incorporates work previously classified to the Military Personnel Clerical and Technician Series, GS-204, into the GS-203, Human Resources Assistant, series. The agency has re-evaluated the appellant's position against the new classification standards.

The JFS for Assistance Work in the Human Resources Management Group covers one-grade interval administrative support positions that supervise, lead, or perform human resources (HR)

assistance work requiring substantial knowledge of civilian and/or military HR terminology, procedures, operations, functions, and regulatory policy and procedural requirements applicable to HR transactions. The work does not require the broad knowledge of Federal HR systems or the depth of knowledge about HR concepts, principles, and techniques that are characteristic of the recognized HR specialist positions in the *Human Resources Management Series*, GS-201.

The primary duties of the appellant's position involve processing the military personnel actions and documentation associated with the service member's attendance at the Navy's OCS. Such assignments are properly covered in the GS-203 series.

Title determination

In accordance with the titling practices outlined in the standard, the position is properly classified as Human Resources Assistant. Since the appellant's work involves support of a military HR program, the parenthetical title *Military*, is added to the basic title. An additional parenthetical title, *Office Automation (OA)*, is added to reflect the office automation and qualified typist requirements of the position.

The appropriate title for this position is Human Resources Assistant (Military/OA).

Standard determination

JFS for Assistance Work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-200, December 2000.

Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, August 1991.

Grade determination

The GS-200 JFS uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are evaluated on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required 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 in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated level. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

The appellant disagrees with the agency determination of factors 1, 2, and 3. We have reviewed factors 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and we agree with the agency's determinations for factors 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. We disagree with the agency evaluation of factor 4. Therefore, this decision will only discuss factors 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Factor 1- Knowledge required by the position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that an employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills necessary to apply that knowledge. The agency credited this factor with Level 1-3. The appellant believes Level 1-4 is correct.

At Level 1-3, human resources assistants must have knowledge of, and skill in applying, a standardized body of military personnel, pay, and transportation regulations, policies, precedents, and procedures in order to complete the full range of transactions required to process service members in and out of assigned duty stations. They must have a thorough knowledge of the military service record and the ability to apply numerous and varied written guidelines and directives. Level 1-3 assistants must have knowledge of the military organizational structure that supports the programs executed by the PSD, good interpersonal and oral and written communication skills, and knowledge of automated systems, applications and relationships to master personnel and pay automated systems. Level 1-3 assistants receive, review and process military personnel actions. They examine information contained in applications, statements of service, correspondence, official military folders, and official publications to verify data affecting payment such as longevity, withholding deductions, and disability allowance waivers. They identify periods of active and inactive service, time lost, etc., by type of service (i.e., Enlisted, Warrant Officer, Commissioned Officer) and category (i.e., regular, Reserve, National Guard) and compute creditable service for retirement or other purposes. They initiate actions requesting clarification relating to creditability of certain types of service.

The appellant's position is located in a personnel action processing unit and fully meets the criteria for Level 1-3. He applies a standardized body of rules, procedures, and operations to perform a variety of automated and clerical support work to receive, review, and process military personnel actions for service members attending the Navy's OCS. The guidelines establish what documents and information are necessary to correctly process the personnel action. All actions must be completed in accordance with the specific instructions governing the Navy's automated personnel system. The appellant provides information to students about entitlements, personnel, and related pay actions.

At Level 1-4, assistants are required to have knowledge of, and skill in applying, an extensive body of military HR rules, procedures and operations sufficient to perform a wide variety of interrelated and/or non-standard support work. Assistants at this level plan, coordinate, develop facts and/or resolve support problems in one or more HR specialties. Level 1-4 assistants review records and documents to develop facts and issues such as those surrounding improper actions committed by service members. They outline options for the case and recommend appropriate action. At Level 1-4, assistants make initial determinations on eligibility for retirement and completion of active duty service commitments. They make initial recommendations on eligibility for promotion and identify discrepancies in selectee records. They screen district officer lists and develop lists of personnel eligible for promotion based on date of rank and

schedule of pending promotion board. They reconcile headquarters promotion eligible lists and coordinate with headquarters and selectees to resolve outstanding issues.

The nature of the appellant's job assignment and the functions of his work unit limit his opportunity to function at Level 1-4. The appellant is responsible for processing the paperwork necessary to document attendance at the Navy's OCS and transfer to subsequent military duty assignment. He is not involved in Level 1-4 assignments such as determining if the attendee has met the educational and other eligibility requirements for receiving a commission. The appellant does not gather facts and make recommendations regarding student suspensions for medical or disciplinary reasons. His responsibility is to process the personnel actions to implement these decisions.

Level 1-3 is credited for 350 points.

Factor 2- Supervisory Controls:

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor or another individual over the work performed, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. The supervisor determines what information the employee needs to know to perform the assignments (e.g., instructions, priorities, deadlines, objectives, and boundaries). The employee's responsibility depends on the extent to which the supervisor expects the employee to develop the sequence and timing of the various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modifications 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., detailed review of the completed assignment; spot check of finished work for accuracy; or review only for adherence to policy). The agency credited Level 2-2. The appellant believes Level 2-3 is correct.

At Level 2-2, assistants use initiative and work independently within the framework established by the supervisor in carrying out recurring assignments such as obtaining, inserting, and correcting missing and incorrect data in an automated HR system. They follow limited procedures or are controlled by readily applicable instructions that specifically describe how the work is to be done and the kind of adaptations or expectations that can be made. They refer specific problems not covered by the supervisor's instructions or standard operating procedures to a supervisor or designated employee for assistance or decision. The supervisor reviews work to verify accuracy and conformance to procedures and any special instructions. Recurring assignments are reviewed through quality control procedures. Work may be spot checked for accuracy. The supervisor closely reviews new or difficult assignments such as pay changes or situations that have potential adverse impact.

The appellant meets Level 2-2. The appellant processes personnel actions for approximately 1600 students yearly. He completes his assignments in conformance with applicable standing priorities, schedules and deadlines. The nature of the appellant's work assignment controls priorities and deadlines. The recurring nature of his work, combined with his experience level and technical knowledge of the automated personnel system, allows the appellant to accomplish his day-to-day work with limited supervisory intervention. Available guidelines and automated system processing procedures provide the appellant with specific directions for processing his

assigned cases. The supervisor is available to provide guidance on problem situations. The appellant is responsible for ensuring that the transactions he processes are factually accurate and that the correct procedures have been followed. The appellant's supervisor has established an intra-unit quality control mechanism in which the unit's four processing assistants check each other's work. The supervisor spot checks completed actions for technical accuracy and signs for final approval.

At Level 2-3, assistants plan the work, resolve problems, carry out successive steps of assignments, and make adjustments using established practices and procedures. In addition, assistants recommend alternative actions to the supervisor, handle problems and/or deviations that arise in accordance with instructions, policies and guidelines, and refer new or controversial issues to the supervisor for direction. The assistant is responsible for job products such as job vacancy announcements, ranking factors identified for rating schedules, position descriptions, job evaluation statements, recommendations for disciplinary actions and the drafting of policy statements.

The appellant does not have the broader assignments envisioned by Level 2-3. His work responsibility is narrowly focused on processing personnel actions. The specific guidelines governing how the appellant is to access and input information into the automated personnel system effectively provides case-by-case direction. All actions processed require substantially the same documentation and are entered into the automated personnel system in the same way. The appellant does not have the flexibility to alter how he processes a personnel action nor can he deviate from published instructions on entering information into the automated personnel system.

Level 2-2 is credited for 125 Points.

Factor 3- Guidelines:

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment employees need to apply them. Individual assignments may vary in the specificity, applicability, and availability of guidelines; thus, the judgment employees use similarly varies. The existence of detailed plans and other instructions may make innovation in planning and conducting work unnecessary or undesirable. However, in the absence of the guidance provided by prior agency experience with the task at hand or when objectives are broadly stated, the employee may use considerable judgment in developing an approach or planning the work. The agency credited Level 3-2. The appellant believes Level 3-3 is correct.

At Level 3-2, human resources assistants use a number of established, procedural guidelines such as work samples, references and operating procedures and manuals. The employees use judgment in locating and selecting appropriate guidelines, manuals, references, and procedures for application to specific cases. The employee refers significant proposed deviations or situations to which existing guidelines cannot be applied to the supervisor or a higher-grade co-worker.

The appellant meets Level 3-2. He uses guidelines including numerous Department of Defense and Department of the Navy personnel, pay and transportation manuals and regulations and supplemental Comptroller General Decisions, BUPERS messages, PSD instructions, and local base operating policies and procedures. He follows the requirements contained in the automated system operational guidelines when entering data into the Navy's automated personnel record system. The appellant uses judgment in selecting and applying the most appropriate guidelines and/or procedures according to the transaction or case being processed. The incumbent selects from established alternatives to meet special needs. The supervisor is available in situations where guidelines do not apply or which require significant judgment.

At Level 3-3, assistants use guidelines that have gaps in specificity and are not applicable to all work situations. The employee selects the most appropriate guideline and decides how to complete the various transactions. Assistants use judgment to devise more efficient methods for procedural processing, gather and organize information for inquiries and/or resolve problems referred by others. In some situations, guidelines do not apply directly to assignments and require the employee to make adaptations to cover new and unusual work situations.

Level 3-3 is not met. The appellant has access to specific guidelines when applying military personnel, pay, and transportation regulations. In addition, there are established policies, procedures, and precedents available to assist him in processing the full range of transactions necessary to process a service member in and out of his/her assigned duty station. Although the appellant may have to choose between a number of guidelines, the guidelines are specific to the case in point and do not require that he devise new or revised methods for processing the actions.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

Factor 4 – Complexity:

This factor covers 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 and originality involved in performing the work. The agency credited this factor with Level 4-3. We do not agree with the agency's determination.

At Level 4-2, work consists of related steps, processes and standard explanations of methods or programs in an HR function. Level 4-2 assistants make decisions on appropriate actions from various choices and differences among easily recognizable situations and use information that is factual in nature.

The appellant meets Level 4-2. The nature of processing personnel actions is one of proceeding step-by-step through a predetermined process. Guidelines and procedures that prescribe what action is needed in various situations govern each step of the process. Once the situation is identified, the appellant follows established guidelines that provide specific instructions on how to proceed with processing the action.

At Level 4-3, work consists of different and unrelated steps in accomplishing HR assignments and processes. Level 4-3 assistants analyze factual data, identify the scope and nature of problems or issues, and determine the appropriate action from among many alternatives.

Level 4-3 is not met. The appellant's work is accomplished within an established structure of applicable guidelines and procedures. The appellant's core assignment is inputting personnel actions into an automated personnel system. To accomplish this, the appellant follows a series of predetermined and interrelated steps. The appellant does not determine the appropriate methods and techniques to process the actions and input them into the automated personnel system. The documentation he needs is prescribed by operating procedures and guidelines. While the appellant may vary the order of the steps he takes, what he needs to do in each step is directly determined by applicable guidelines and operating procedures.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	2a	45
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	880

In accordance with the grade conversion table in the standard, a total of 880 points falls within the range for GS-5, 855-1100 points.

EVALUATION OF THE OFFICE AUTOMATION WORK:

The office automation work is evaluated against the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, which is also written in the FES format. These duties do not impact the grade of the position, therefore, a summary evaluation follows:

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-1	25
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	1a	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	Total	740

A total of 740 points equates to GS-4, 655 to 850 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the guide.

Summary

The administrative support and clerical work is grade-controlling and equates to GS-5, and the office automation duties equate to GS-4.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Human Resources Assistant (Military/OA), GS-203-5.