



## United States Office of Personnel Management

**Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness**  
*Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions*  
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**Standard:** ~~Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Parts I and II~~  
**Factor:** ~~Factor I-Base level of work supervised~~  
**Issue:** Determining extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision of a subordinate position covered by a Factor Evaluation System standard

**Although the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide was superseded by the [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#), the discussion in this article is still valid under the General Schedule Supervisory Guide.**

### **Identification of the Classification Issue**

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a position classification appeal. The appeal involved a position covered by Part II of the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide. Part I has a similar provision for which the resolution would also be applicable. The appellant supervised both GS-11 and GS-12 employees. The Office of Personnel Management classification standard covering the work supervised was in Factor Evaluation System format. The GS-12 employees met all other requirements of the "base level" definition; however, the agency had determined that they failed to meet criteria (c), i.e., the grade must not be based on a degree of extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision. The agency had pointed out that the GS-12 positions were credited with Level 2-4 of Factor 2, Supervisory Controls, and Level 3-4 of Factor 3, Guidelines. These two were the only factors that were rated differently from the evaluation of the GS-11 positions which were rated at Levels 2-3 and 3-3. The agency concluded that the GS-12 positions could not be considered as the base level of work supervised.

The issue was whether or not the crediting of a higher level on Factor 2, Supervisory Controls, constituted evidence of a degree of extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision.

### **Resolution**

Factor level 2-4 provides for positive supervisory involvement in work initiation and planning, interim oversight activities, and review of completed work. While limited in some respects, it is an appropriate and normal level of supervision for an employee at the GS-12 level.

Factor Level 2-5 provides for administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The employee is responsible for planning, designing, and carrying out work independently, and results are considered technically authoritative and are normally accepted without significant change. Consequently, Level 2-5 does represent an extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision. Thus, where Level 2-5 is the grade-determining factor for a position, that position would not normally be creditable toward determining the base level of work supervised.

Under the factor system, the grade of a position is dependent on all nine factors. Therefore, unless the difference between Factor Levels 2-4 and 2-5 actually causes a difference in grade level there can be no determination that the grade of the position is based on extraordinary independence or freedom from supervision.

In the subject appeal case, as the GS-12 positions were credited at Level 2-4 rather than Level 2-5, there was no possibility of exclusion of them from base level credit. Accordingly, the supervisory position was certified to a higher grade.