



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
October 1999
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Standard: General Biological Science Series, GS-401 ([Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families, January 1999](#))
Factor: N/A
Issue: Selection of Appropriate Professional Series

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an OPM oversight division's adjudication of a classification appeal. The appellant's duties were "mixed" in that he performed elements of work covered by more than one occupational series. The appellant's primary duties at a military installation included developing and implementing all program activities related to the management and preservation of a forest and oversight and management of the cultural and historical resources located within its boundaries. The agency placed the position in the General Biological Science Series, GS-401, claiming that the appellant performed work in more than one professional series with none being predominant.

Resolution

As stated in The Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families, positions in the General Biological Science Series, GS-401 involve professional work in biology, agriculture, or related natural resource management when there is no other more appropriate series. Positions included in the GS-401 series involve (1) a combination of several professional fields with none predominant or (2) a specialized professional field not readily identified with other existing series. The oversight division found that the appellant's position did not meet either of these criteria.

The appellant performed work in only one professional field--forestry--which was readily identified with the Forestry Series, GS-460. Like work in that series, his duties for managing the forest resources required primarily professional knowledge and competence in forestry science in

order to conserve, utilize and protect the natural resources of the forest, including the inventory, management, planning, and evaluation of each resource. The military installation did not include a variety of non-forest habitats warranting application of the depth and breadth of work in other established professional fields required for coverage by the GS-401 series, e.g., Wildlife Biology, GS-486 and Rangeland Management, GS-454.

Although OPM noted that the forestry duties were not grade controlling, professional knowledge in the forestry field constituted the paramount knowledge and qualifications for the position and the principal reason for the position's existence. Moreover, the sources of recruitment and lines of progression for the position traditionally came from individuals possessing professional forestry knowledge and skill. Agency management indicated that when filling the position, the primary knowledge required was a professional knowledge and competence in forestry science.

The work managing the cultural and historical resources at the installation was judged to be non-professional. Such work is typically classified in the Park Ranger Series, GS-025. However, because the appellant did not perform the full scope of duties in the conservation, use and management of Federal park resources as described in the occupational information in the GS-025 PCS, the position did not warrant classification to that series. For the preceding reasons, OPM determined that it was inappropriate to classify the position in the GS-401 series and assigned it to the Forestry Series, GS-460.