



United States
Office of Personnel Management

DIGEST OF SIGNIFICANT CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS AND OPINIONS

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**Office of Merit Systems
Oversight & Effectiveness**

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Note to Readers

The guidance in this issue is still applicable and useful in classifying positions in the Federal government. However, there may be references to names and addresses of organizations within the U.S. Office of Personnel Management that have changed, names of individuals no longer employed at the Office of Personnel Management, or documents such as the Federal Personnel Manual that no longer exist.

For the December 1997 HRCD-4 release, the Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs made minor, nonsubstantive edits to Digest issues 1 through 19. For example, acronyms and abbreviations were spelled out in many places, references to law and regulation were expanded, typographical errors were corrected, leading zeros were added to 3-digit series numbers, outdated prefaces have been deleted, and the issuance date were added to the header of each page. Because of the change from the original paper version to an electronic format, the page numbers in Digest issues 1 through 19 and other references, such as the General Schedule classification standards and Federal Wage System job grading standards, now available electronically may have changed. In issues 1 through 19, where there is a reference to a page, we either eliminated the page reference or updated the page number with the page number of the electronic version. Beginning with issue 20, pages references are to the electronic version only. Please note that pages numbers may change when a file is printed depending on the format and printer used.

The Office of Classification Appeals and Fair Labor Standards Act Programs is responsible for the content of the Digest. We be reached by telephone at 202-606-2990, by fax at 202-606-2663, or by email at ~~adomsoe@opm.gov~~ fedclass_appeals@opm.gov.

Digest issues are also available on the Office of Personnel Management's website and electronic bulletin board. The website address is <http://www.opm.gov/classapp> and the ~~electronic bulletin board is OPM ONLINE. Using a modem, dial OPM ONLINE at 202-606-4800. Long distance telephone charges may apply.~~ [OPM ONLINE was discontinued July 1999. The *Digest* can also be found on OPM's CD-ROM entitled General Schedule Position Classification and Federal Wage System Job Grading Standards, which is issued by OPM's Classification Programs Division.]

Standard: N/A

Factor: N/A

Issue: Variety as a classification factor in a mixed-grade position

Identification of the Classification Issue

An Office of Personnel Management region reviewed and certified an Administrative Officer position to a lower grade (i.e., GS-13 to GS-11). The agency requested that the Office of Personnel Management central office review and overturn the region's decision based on the application of the classification principle of "variety." The position consisted of five sets of duties; they were:

- Supervision GS-8
- Personnel GS-8
- Property Management . . . GS-9
- Budget Administration . . . GS-11
- Financial Management . . . GS-11

The agency argued that the final grade should be GS-12 based on application of the "variety principle."

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management reviewed the agency's argument and found it unacceptable. The additional grade for variety must be considered as a "premium" which is added to the *proper tentative grade of the position*. Before the "premium" for variety can be credited in a mixed-grade position, a tentative grade level must be determined using sound classification approaches.

In deciding this case, the Office of Personnel Management first considered guidelines on the classification of mixed-grade positions. The Office of Personnel Management found that the position's time, according to the agency's own evaluation, was divided into four major occupational areas. Two sets of duties were at the GS-11 level; with two other duties at the GS-9 and GS-8 levels respectively. In addition, the position had supervisory functions which were not considered by the agency. (These duties were GS-8 by application of criteria in Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Part I.)

While not specifically stated in the agency's evaluation, the Office of Personnel Management found that the GS-11 level duties occupied a majority of the employee's time, and were the most appropriate value for the whole position. Therefore, the Office of Personnel Management established the tentative grade at GS-11.

Having established the tentative grade at GS-11, OPM then considered the issue of variety. Duties below the tentative grade were not considered since their relative value to the position as a whole would not raise the total worth of the position above the tentative grade. The two sets of duties at the GS-11 level were not considered to be so different that the premium grade should be added.

As a general rule, OPM found that variety may be considered as a classification factor in a mixed-grade position only after the application of mixed-grade guidelines.

Standard: [Equipment Development: Grade-Evaluation Guide](#) (EDGE) (EDGE)

Factor: N/A

Issue: Differentiating between Parts II and III

Identification of the Classification Issue

An employee wrote to the Office of Personnel Management asking that his position, Supervisory Physical Scientist, GS-1301-14, be regraded at a higher level. The employee was the designated Project Officer (by an agency circular and later by an agency regulation) for two research projects. The employee was also designated Project Officer by his agency's Command Group and reported directly to the Commanding Officer of a major development command.

As Project Officer, the employee was delegated full line authority of the Commanding Officer for the accomplishment of the assigned mission as provided in his agency's regulations. As Project Officer, he served as the central focal point for a major command on the mission system; provided central management and coordination for program matters; monitored efforts of participating organizations and provided tasking/guidance as required to insure successful program accomplishment; and coordinated priorities, requirements analysis and documentation, objectives, resources and cost estimating, and various sub-efforts to effect maximum utility of program resources.

The question arose as to which part of the Equipment Development or Guide: Grade-Evaluation Guide is most appropriate for measuring the total worth of the subject position.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management found that neither Part I nor Part III provided a satisfactory means for evaluating a Project Officer-type position since neither part fully measured the authority and managerial demands explicit in this position. Part II, however, covers positions which manage the combined efforts of contractors and Government employees in accomplishing a specific development project. Positions properly covered by Part II of the Equipment Development or Guide: Grade-Evaluation Guide report to a Project Manager who in turn plans, directs and controls a development project with full authority to allocate agency resources within specific time frames. In this case, there was no designated Project Manager.

The Office of Personnel Management determined that the employee reported to the Commanding Officer of a subordinate development command who in turn reported to the Commanding Officer of a major command. The Office of Personnel Management concluded that the Commanding Officer of the Development command could be regarded as tantamount to a Project Manager in the sense implied in Equipment Development or Guide: Grade-Evaluation Guide.

In this case, the Office of Personnel Management went beyond the identification of a position by its organizational title, i.e., Project Manager, but rather identified the position which had the duties and responsibilities normally found in such a position. Since the Commanding Officer of the development command fully met the intent of Equipment Development or Guide: Grade-Evaluation Guide, it was proper for the Office of Personnel Management to consider this position the Project Manager without the imposition of the organizational title.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide and Forestry Series, GS-0460

Factor: N/A

Issue: Use of the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide for grading a Forester (Administration), GS-0460

This article was deleted in December 1990 because of the issuance of the revised Introduction to the Position Classification Standards.

Standard: Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, Parts I and II (TS-23, January 1976)

Factor: Factor I, Base Level of Work Supervised

Issue: Whether Federal Wage System Positions should be included in the percentage calculation GS-0460

This article was deleted in August 1994 because of the issuance of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (TS-123, dated April 1993), which superseded the Supervisory Grade-Evaluation Guide, issued in January 1976 (TS-23) and the Draft Grade Evaluation Guide for White Collar Supervisors, issued in 1991.

Standard: [Secretary, GS-0318](#) (TS-34; 1/79)

Factor: I--Knowledge required by the position

Issue: Distinguishing between Work Situation A and Work Situation B

Identification of the Classification Issue

A Secretary in a major Department of Defense command requested a position classification review by the Office of Personnel Management. The employee was seeking a higher grade. Her immediate supervisor was a military officer who had the responsibility of managing a personal service program for the command. The supervisor served in a staff capacity where the program was carried out at 21 military bases, 22 support sites, 6 national guard units, and 7 reserve units.

The immediate organization of the program office consisted of the supervisor's office and four subordinate divisions, each staffed with 2-3 military officers responsible for segments of the total program.

In her request to the Office of Personnel Management, the secretary argued that her position fully met the characteristics of Work Situation B as described under Factor I.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management found that Work Situation A was most appropriate for this environment. In its evaluation, the Office of Personnel Management noted that the subelement "Work Situation" is designed to measure the complexity of the organization served, i.e., the immediate office of the supervisor and any subordinate offices. The Office of Personnel Management expanded on the terms "immediate office of the supervisor and subordinate offices" as being those units under the direct line authority of the supervisor. Organizations which receive staff supervision cannot be considered as subordinate offices under this subelement.

Although the supervisor's immediate organization did have four subordinate divisions, the Office of Personnel Management still found that Work Situation A was proper since--

Work Situation B involves a segmented organization where each group differs in such aspects as subject matter, functions, relationships with other organizations and administrative

requirements. There must be a system of formal internal procedures and administrative controls, and a formal production or progress reporting system which requires continuous attention on the part of the secretary. Although the organization is segmented, there is no evidence that the formality typical of Work Situation B is present or required.

Therefore, in evaluating the subelement it is important that the classifier go beyond the organizational structure, and, in fact, examine the nature and degree of interaction and administrative controls among the subordinate units. It is this lack of interaction, procedures and controls which precluded an evaluation as Work Situation B.

Standard: N/A

Factor: N/A

Issue: Classification of mixed-grade positions

**This article was deleted in December 1990
because of the issuance of the revised
Introduction to the Position Classification
Standards.**
