



United States Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
October 1997
No. 20-01

Standard: [General Schedule Supervisory Guide](#) (April 1993)
Factor: N/A
Issue: Coverage of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide for Supervision of Small Workloads

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management oversight division's adjudication of an appeal. The appellant occupied a Telecommunications Manager, GS-0391-12, position at a moderately large transportation facility, servicing approximately 1,800 employees. The appeal for upgrading was based on supervising three subordinate GS-0391-12 positions. The subordinate positions had been upgraded to the GS-12 grade level by a manager with delegated classification authority contrary to the advice provided by the servicing personnel office. The position description of record indicated that the appellant spent 10 percent of the work time on administrative supervisory functions. A proposed new position description credited the position with performing supervisory functions 25 percent of the work time.

Resolution

During the audit, the appellant stated that he spent approximately 50 percent of his time supervising two subordinates (a third position was vacant). The appellant described supervision as including working side-by-side with his subordinates in the communications room as well as watching their work in order to develop back-up skills. When evaluating potential new software interfaces and similar projects, he described the process as requesting ideas from and brainstorming with his subordinates after reviewing system literature, test results, etc. The position description to which the two subordinates were assigned described the supervision received as limited in nature and extent (Level 2-4), i.e., assignments are made:

in terms of the scope and objectives of the project . . . independently analyzes assignments to identify potential problem areas and determine reasonable approaches to resolving them. . . . Completed work is reviewed for adequacy of results achieved and conformance to policies and assignment objectives. Controversial findings and major deviations are reviewed for soundness of basic assumptions and extension and adaptation of principles and techniques.

Literal interpretation of the work controls described by the appellant during the desk audit would not exceed Level 2-2 within the Factor Evaluation System . At that level, the supervisor is intensely involved in the actual work process, e.g., suggesting work methods or advising on source materials available, and reviewing work for compliance with instructions and established procedures. Crediting the subordinate positions with Level 2-2 would have had a substantial negative impact on their grade level.

The oversight division found that the nature of the work control process described by the appellant was consultative in nature, typical of technical team direction rather than traditional supervision. This was reflected in the position description of record that recognized that the position devoted 10 percent of its time to personnel management, equal employment opportunity, and related actions, including "counseling employees on performance requirements." Assuming, *arguendo*, an additional 5 percent of the appellant's time was spent on traditional technical supervision over the subordinates' work (including the vacant position), the oversight division concluded the appellant's position fell short of the minimum 25 percent of the work time required for classification as a supervisory position. Therefore, the General Schedule Supervisory Guide could not be applied for grade level determination. The oversight division concluded the primary purpose of the appellant's position was technical program management evaluated properly by application of the Telecommunications Series, GS-0391, position classification standard.