

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

**Washington Oversight Division  
1900 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20415**

**Classification Appeal Decision  
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** (Name)

**Agency Classification:** Architect, GS-808-11

**Position Number:** MI06964001

**Organization:** Public Works Department  
Engineering Division  
(Naval installation)

**OPM Decision:** Architect, GS-808-11  
(Appeal Denied)

**OPM decision number:** C-0808-11-03

12/22/00: Factor 5 in the Summary of Factor Levels table on last page was corrected to 5-4 and 225 points. This changed the total points to 2,575 but did not affect the grade.

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Richard Quasney  
Classification Appeals Officer

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Date 11/17/97

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, 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).

**Decision sent to:**

(Appellant's name and address)

Office of Civilian Personnel Management  
Director for Classification, Staffing,  
and Compensation (OCPM Code C20)  
800 North Quincy Street  
Arlington, VA 22203-1998

(Civilian Personnel Officer)  
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Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service  
Field Advisory Services Division  
Classification Branch (CPMS-ASFP)  
2461 Eisenhower Avenue  
Hoffman Building I, Suite 112  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The appealed position is located in the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department, (Naval installation). The position is classified as an Architect, GS-808-11. The appellant has certified the position description as accurate but asserts that the position is undergraded and has requested reclassification to the GS-12 grade level. The appellant does not provide arguments based on classification criteria in support of his classification appeal. Instead, he provided a 1988 classification evaluation statement which upgraded an Electrical Engineering position in the same work unit and requested job-to-job comparison and reclassification based on the 1988 evaluation. Further, he offers a list of recent projects in support of the grade level increase.

## **POSITION INFORMATION**

The Engineering Division is responsible for accomplishing the engineering and architecture design, construction, and modification work at the (Naval installation). The Division consists of four professional engineers who work together as members of an inter-disciplinary team to accomplish the required work. The Electrical Engineer is the unit's supervisor and is classified as a Supervisory General Engineer, GS-12. The other three engineers have joined in a group classification appeal seeking reclassification to the GS-12 level based on the argument that they are all equal members of the team with technical responsibilities for their assigned projects and, essentially, do the same work as their boss. They argue that the reclassification of the Electrical Engineer position, prior to the selection of the Electrical Engineer as the supervisor of the unit, validates their claim to the higher grade. The supervisor continues to function as a team member in his specialty (i.e. Electrical Engineering) and the position was never filled behind him when he was selected as the supervisor. In addition to the Architect, the other engineering positions include a Civil Engineer, GS-810-11, and a Mechanical Engineer, GS-830-11.

Projects are assigned to an individual engineer-in-charge (EIC) on the basis of the preponderant engineering work in the project and workload demands. Each engineer is expected to have a general familiarity with the other engineering disciplines and to consult with other Division engineers on the more complex technical aspects of work in their disciplines. The EIC functions as a project engineer in administering a project from start to finish on both a technical and administrative management perspective. Most of the work, however, is contracted to commercial Architecture and Engineering (A&E) firms.

The position's two major responsibilities are (1) Facilities Planning and (2) Project Designs and A&E Contract Management. As the facility planner the incumbent examines the adequacy of existing facilities; determines the impact of construction on the use of existing facilities; and prepares studies to ensure that the Shore Facilities and Programming System is properly executed. He reviews all projects for conformance with the Historical and Archaeological Resources Protection plan. Further, he reviews and administers real estate use agreements for tenants and updates the general development and utilization maps. As the Architect-in-charge, he provides a variety of services to review and monitor

the work of contracting A&E firms, including, plans and specifications, cost estimates, problem resolution, and engineering oversight during construction.

## **SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION**

The GS-808 Architecture Series includes positions the duties of which involve professional architectural work which typically requires: (a) knowledge of architectural principles, theories, concepts, methods, and techniques; (b) a creative and artistic sense; and (c) an understanding and skill to use pertinent aspects of the construction industry, engineering, and the physical sciences related to the design and construction of new, or the improvement of existing, buildings. While the work in the Engineering Division includes multi-disciplinary engineering work, the unit is organized with four specialties rather than relying on General Engineers to accomplish the work. Since architecture is one of the disciplines represented and since the incumbent of the position is certified as a professional architect, the engineering specialty is appropriate.

The basic title for all non-supervisory positions assigned to the Architecture Series is “Architect,” except for developmental positions. The appellant does not disagree with the agency’s classification of the position as Architect, GS-808. We concur with the series and title.

## **GRADE LEVEL DETERMINATION**

The classification standard for the GS-808, Architecture Series, is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) which consists of nine evaluation factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. A point value is assigned to each factor level, and the total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

The appellant did not provide an analysis of his appeal based on a factor comparison with the classification standards and did not dispute the information in his official position description. Therefore, a full analysis of the position by each of the nine factors is provided in this appeal decision.

### **Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position**

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts required to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of skill necessary to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied.

The position requires the knowledge of professional architectural concepts, principles and practices in order to interpret, evaluate, or apply those concepts as they relate to the full range of duties involving the planning, design, renovation, and construction of buildings and structures. Knowledge of related fields of engineering (i.e. civil, mechanical, and electrical) is required to ensure design and construction

coordination and to recommend changes or corrections to design and construction as necessary. Further, knowledge in cost estimating methods relating to various aspects of alteration, repair and construction of facilities is required together with the knowledge of design contract management, particularly with respect to the selection procedures, scope of work, design fee estimates, and negotiation strategies of A&E firms.

This level of knowledge is comparable to, but does not exceed, Factor Level 1-7 which describes professional knowledges applicable to a wide range of architectural duties and the skill to: modify standard practice and adapt techniques to solve a variety of architectural problems; adapt precedents or make significant departures from previous approaches to similar projects to accommodate the specialized requirements for some projects; and apply the standard practices of engineering disciplines as they relate to a specific assignment.

Typically, at the next level, Level 1-8, the incumbent serves as a technical authority on all aspects of planning, design, or construction within a major organization of an agency or department serving a multistate area to advise on the interpretation and implementation of technical policy, directives, and program. Or, at Level 1-8, the architect develops architectural design criteria and standards for a major architectural program of nationwide extent. The architect at Level 1-8 would be involved in projects of such scope as a multimillion dollar medical complex with a wide variety of highly specialized types of structures involving rare and unique problems. The duties and responsibilities of the appealed position do not rise to the level of knowledge required by the classification standard at Level 1-8.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at Level 1-7 and credited with 1250 points.

## **Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls**

Supervisory controls cover the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. The responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification 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., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment, detailed review of the finished assignment, spot check of finished work for accuracy, review performed by a contracting officer prior to signature, or review only for adherence to policy.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor sets the overall objectives and resources available. The employee and supervisor, in consultation, develop the deadlines, projects, and work to be done. The architect, having developed expertise in the work involved, is responsible for planning and carrying out the assignment; resolving conflicts which arise; coordinating the work with others as necessary; and interpreting policy on his own initiative. He determines the approach and methods to be used and keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial matters, or far-reaching implications. Completed work

is reviewed only from an overall standpoint in terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements or expected results. This level effectively describes the *Supervisory Controls* exercised over the appellant's position.

While the Engineering Division operates with a high degree of independence for its EIC's in regard to the technical aspects of work, neither the appellant nor his co-appellants have authority or responsibility for defining mission or function; or shaping the work of the organization. In addition to the immediate supervisor, the appellant reports to the Assistant Public Works Director and his superior, the Public Works Director, both of whom are military officers with engineering education. Further, the work is reviewed at a higher organizational level by staff engineers of the (organizational component), Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

The position does not compare favorably with the highest level of the standard, Level 2-5. At this level the employee works with broad program goals that frequently impact national priorities. He recommends new projects and modification of program objectives that affect the availability of funds or other resources. The architect at this level has his work reviewed only for contribution to the advancement of technology, effect of his advice and influence on the overall program, or the fulfillment of program objectives. For example, an employee at this level would have been delegated unlimited authority for planning and carrying out the required activities, such as, interpreting, extending, originating, or devising new A&E contract provisions, incentives, clauses, terms, and conditions. While the appellant functions with a high degree of technical independence, it is still within prescribed operating parameters and he does not independently establish objectives and overall goals of the work.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-4 and credited with 450 points.

### **Factor 3 - Guidelines**

This factor covers the nature of judgment needed to apply guidelines. Since individual assignments vary in the specificity, applicability, and availability of guidelines, the constraints and judgmental demands placed on architects also vary. In the architectural field there are many guides and standard specifications. They serve as checklists and do not relieve the architect of the responsibility for making a judgment that the standards as written are applicable in the particular circumstances at hand. The architect may use considerable judgment in researching literature and developing new methods when direct guidelines are absent.

Guidelines governing the work of the appealed position include Government and industry technical publications and standards, DOD and Navy policy, and Federal legislative and regulatory documents. The employee has professional latitude in interpreting and applying the guidelines. This exceeds Level 3-2 where the architect is provided detailed and directly applicable guidelines and instructions which include applicable precedents. However, it does not meet Level 3-4 where guidelines are often inadequate in dealing with the more complex or unusual problems. At Level 3-3, guidelines include standard instructions, technical literature, agency policies and regulations, manufacturing catalogs and

handbooks, precedents and standard practices in the area of the assignment or specialization. This matches the level of guidelines for the appealed position.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-3 and credited with 275 points.

#### **Factor 4 - Complexity**

“Complexity” covers the nature and variety of tasks, steps, processes, methods, or activities in the work and the degree to which the architect must vary the work, discern interrelationships and deviations, or develop new techniques, criteria, or information. The factor includes the “complex feature” which is an individual architectural problem, broadly defined, which requires: modification or adaption of, or compromise with, standard guides, precedents, methods, or techniques; or special considerations of planning, scheduling, and coordination. The number and combination of complex features reflect the variation in the relative difficulty (or complexity) of work. The complex feature can be concerned with technical architectural work or with socioeconomic, administrative, or other aspects of architectural work.

The appellant provided a list of projects assigned during a three year period in support of his classification appeal. In addition, the appeal file included a summary of three problems that were resolved by the architect to illustrate the complexity of the work. Further, the appellant was interviewed by telephone to clarify various aspects of the assignment, including complexity. The work of the position does not include assignments of such breadth, diversity, and intensity that they involve many, varied complex features which is characteristic of Level 4-5. Instead the work assignment presents a few problems of moderate complexity that are more characteristic of the 4-4 level. At Level 4-4 the work involves the application of standard architectural practices to new situations which may require modification, adaptation, or compromise with precedent or standard guidelines. The position exceeds Level 4-3 where assignments consist of minor phases of a broader assignment of a higher grade architect that have been screened to eliminate complex features; and work is carried out without substantial adaptation.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-4 and credited with 225 points.

#### **Factor 5 - Scope and Effect**

Scope and Effect covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. The nature of the work describes such end objectives as the number of contracts awarded and administered, decisions and recommendations made, and policy and regulatory documents written.

Effect measures such things as whether the work output facilitates the work of others, provides timely services, affects agency programs or missions, or affects other agencies, private industry, or the general

public. The concept of effect alone does not provide sufficient information to properly understand and evaluate the impact of the position. The scope of the work completes the picture, allowing consistent evaluations. Only the effect of properly performed work is to be considered.

The incumbent of the position serves as the professional expert for work which requires an experienced or Registered Architect. The scope of the work is to plan, design, organize, coordinate, review, and approve actions inherent to the renovation, restoration, design, and construction of public buildings. The effect of the work impacts contracts of private A&E firms, and the successful completion of activity projects. This matches Level 5-4 where the purpose of the work is to provide expertise as a specialist in a particular function or specialized area by advising, planning, or reviewing specific problems, projects, programs, or functions.

Work assignments do not rise to Level 5-5 where the purpose of the work is to resolve critical problems or to develop new approaches or methods for use by other architectural specialists. Further, at Level 5-5, results of the work effort affect the development of major aspects of the agency's architectural program; or affects work of architectural experts both within and outside the agency. The appealed position does not exercise this level of scope and effect.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at Level 5-4 and credited at 225 points.

#### **Factor 6 - Personal Contacts**

This factor includes face-to-face contacts and telephone or radio dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Supervisory contacts are covered under the factor for supervisory controls. Criteria for evaluation under this factor include the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place. Credit is given only for contacts that are essential for successful performance of the work and which have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the work performed.

Contacts of the appealed position are made with engineers at the activity level; architects, engineers, and project managers at higher organizational levels within the agency; representatives of A&E firms, local and state government officials (i.e. professional engineers); community organizations; code producing organizations; construction contractors and suppliers; and members of professional/technical societies. These contacts meet the level of contacts described at Level 6-3. This includes a variety of personal contacts with officials, professionals, managers, vendors, private architecture and/or engineering firms, and others related to architectural work.

These contacts do not include the next higher level, Level 6-4, where personal contacts are with high ranking officials from outside the agency, including key officials and top architectural, engineering, and scientific personnel of other agencies, State and local government, private industry, and public groups. Nor does the incumbent participate, as a technical expert, in committees of national or international importance which is characteristic of Level 6-4.



Therefore, Factor 6 is evaluated at Level 6-3 and credited with 60 points.

### **Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts**

The contacts identified in Factor 6 are evaluated in Factor 7 for the purpose of those contacts. A wide range of contacts are described at various levels. The range stretches from the factual exchange of information to situations that involve significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

The purpose of contacts in this position is to conduct surveys and investigations; assess the effects of construction on the local community; resolve specific design or construction problems; develop factual data for recommendations on issues that have conflicting interests; justify feasibility or desirability of modifying existing structures rather than constructing new ones; and/or motivate personnel to continue good and safe engineering practices. Also, the incumbent monitors contract A&E firms to ensure they provide the contracted services.

Work criteria in this position meets Factor Level 7-2 where the persons contacted are usually working toward a common goal and are generally cooperative. At Level 7-2, the purpose of contacts is to discuss functional and other requirements for the building to be designed and to obtain facts, opinions, and client approval. The employee plans and coordinates architectural, engineering, or equipment features for specific projects; investigates factors involved in site selection, operational problems, and design criteria; discusses regulatory or cost expedients, new construction processes or materials, and reconciles differences of opinions; and advises on contract requirements, clarifies problems, and reaches agreement on overall plans and schedules.

The work of the position does not meet the next higher level. At Level 7-3 the employee negotiates agreements with contractors and agencies where there are conflicting interests. The incumbent does not negotiate contracts which are the responsibility of another office. Further, at Level 7-3, the employee justifies the feasibility and desirability of work proposals to top agency officials and defends the proposals against other experts in the field who have conflicting interests or opinions. The purpose of contacts in the appealed position does not rise to this level.

This factor is evaluated at Level 7-2 and is credited at 50 points.

### **Factor 8 - Physical Demands**

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the architect by the work assignment. This includes the physical characteristics and abilities and physical exertion involved in the work. While much of the work is completed in an office setting, the position requires regular and recurring field surveys and construction site inspections. This involves a considerable amount of physical activity such as walking, stooping, climbing, bending, and crawling. This work is comparable to the highest level in the standard at Level 8-2.

Therefore, this factor is evaluated at Level 8-2 and credited with 20 points.

**Factor 9 - Work Environment**

This factor considers the discomforts and risks (not including hazardous duty) in physical surroundings or job situations and the safety regulations required. Most of the work is performed in an office setting. There are regular visits to site locations that include construction and normal precautions must be taken. These visits expose the employee to high noise levels, dust, chemicals, and moving equipment. This compares closely with Level 9-2. The highest Level, 9-3, is not met since the work does not require the employee to be subject to potentially dangerous or hazardous situations on a regular and recurring basis.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-2 and credited with 20 points.

**Summary of Factor Levels**

The following table summarizes the factor levels credited to the appellant’s position.

<b>SUMMARY OF FACTOR LEVELS</b>		
<b>FACTOR</b>	<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and Effect	5-4	225
6. Personal Contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of Contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>2575</b>

The point total for the nine factors is 2500. According to the grade conversion table in the GS-808 standard, this point value falls within the range of 2355 to 2750 points and converts to a grade of GS-11.

**DECISION**

This position is properly classified as Architect, GS-808-11.