

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



Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 972
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

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

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

Organization: Specific Work Planning Branch
Facility Planning Division
Facility Management Department
Navy Public Works Center
[city, state]

OPM decision: Electrical Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

OPM decision: C-0802-09-17

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

2/13/98

Date

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:

[address]

[name]

Director, Human Resources Office

Naval Base

[address]

Mr. William Duffy

Chief, Classification Branch

Field Advisory Services Division

Defense Civilian Personnel Management

Service

1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200

Arlington, VA 22209-5144

Introduction

On July 8, 1997, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted an appeal for the position of Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-9, Specific Work Planning Branch, Facility Planning Division, Facility Management Department, Navy Public Works Center, [city, state]. The appellant is requesting that his position be changed to Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General Issues

This appellant is part of a group appeal from engineering technicians at the Navy Public Works Center who perform work in various specializations. Information furnished with the group appeal compares their GS-9 positions with other engineering technician positions at the same location whom they believe are performing the equivalent work or below but are classified at a higher grade. Copies of position descriptions were provided for two Mechanical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, positions; one Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, position; and one Electronics Engineering Technician, GS-856-11, position. Although the GS-11 position descriptions are certified by a management official, none have a classification certification or a position description number on the Optional Form 8. A certification by a management official certifies the accuracy of the position description which represents the official record of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position. However, a classification certification indicates the position description has been placed in its proper class, title and grade in accordance with the OPM classification standards and guidelines by a person delegated classification authority. Since the GS-11 position descriptions lack a classification certification, the duties and responsibilities are not an official record of duties and responsibilities, have not been properly classified, and are neither reviewable nor appealable under the classification appeal process. Additionally, by law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant, the appellant's representative, and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant and his supervisor.

Position Information

The appellant is assigned to Position Number 7L141. The appellant, supervisor, and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant performs electrical engineering technician work. He analyzes project requests and determines the scope of proposals to ensure the needs of the customer are addressed. Based on site visits and discussions with the customer, the appellant determines the condition of the projects, scope of the work, time frames, and unusual circumstances that may be encountered during work on assigned projects and recommends the most cost efficient method of construction. He prepares design sketches, cost estimates, detailed job plans, and material requirements involved in the maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems. The majority of his work involves electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground), and components and electric power generation equipment. In addition, the appellant performs work as necessary in other areas, such as structural or mechanical, related to his project assignment.

He also has responsibility for planning, designing, testing, maintenance, operation, and monitoring the computer system software, hardware, and data bases used to support the electrical engineering technician function. The appellant states that he expects this work to involve approximately 40 percent of his time.

The appellant receives direction from the Acting Supervisory Engineering Technician, GS-802-12, who assigns work identifying major objectives and providing background information and guidance. Unusual problems are discussed by the appellant and the supervisor. The appellant determines the technical requirements of the job plans, construction plans, methods, components/materials, and cost estimates. The supervisor provides minimal technical assistance and completed work is reviewed for quality, timeliness, and adherence with instructions, guidelines, and policy.

Standards Determination

Engineering Technician Series, GS-802, June 1969.

Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, July 1991.

Series Determination

The agency placed the position in the Engineering Technician Series, GS-802. The appellant does not contest the occupational series nor the title of his position.

The GS-802 series includes technical positions that require primarily application of a practical knowledge of (a) the methods and techniques of engineering or architecture; and (b) the construction, application, properties, operation, and limitations of engineering systems, processes, structures, machinery, devices, and materials. The positions do not require professional knowledges and abilities for full performance and, therefore, do not require training equivalent in type and scope to that represented by the completion of a professional curriculum leading to a bachelor's degree in engineering or architecture.

The GS-334 series includes work with responsibility for analyzing, managing, supervising, or performing work necessary to plan, design, develop, acquire, document, test, implement, integrate, maintain, or modify systems for solving problems or accomplishing work processes by using computers. Positions are included in this series when the primary need is knowledge of information processing methodology/technology, computer capabilities, and processing techniques. The GS-334 standard instructs that positions should be classified to the appropriate subject-matter series when they involve computer work primarily requiring knowledge of a specific subject-matter field as the paramount consideration for recruitment.

The primary knowledges and skills required to successfully perform the work of this position are those of an engineering technician. The work is, therefore, properly placed in the GS-802 series.

Title Determination

The title Electrical Engineering Technician applies to positions that perform work concerned with systems, plants, equipment, and materials for the generation, transmission, conversion, distribution, control, measurement, or utilization of electrical energy. Included in this specialization are positions that involve the design of electronic installations where the work does not require knowledge of electronics to the extent characteristic of the Electronics Technician Series, GS-856. Since the work involves preparing job plans, cost estimates, and construction plans for maintenance, repair, new construction, and rehabilitation of real property systems including electrical communication, power and distribution systems (overhead and underground) and components; electric power generation equipment; and electric power and distribution, the position is properly titled Electrical Engineering Technician.

Grade Determination

The engineering technician work requires approximately 60 percent of the appellant's time and is evaluated by the criteria in the GS-802 standard. The computer work requires approximately 40 percent of the time and is evaluated by reference to the GS-334 standard.

Engineering Technician Duties

The grading criteria in the GS-802 standard is written in the narrative format. Grade levels are discussed in terms of two factors: (1) Nature of Assignment, and (2) Level of Responsibility. The position is evaluated as follows:

Nature of Assignment

This factor considers the scope and difficulty of the project, and the skills and knowledge required to complete the assignment.

At the GS-9 level, engineering technicians typically perform a variety of work relating to an area of specialization that requires the application of a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. Assignments usually involve independent responsibility for planning and conduct of a block of work which is a complete conventional project of relatively limited scope, or a portion of a larger and more diverse project. Assignments require study, analysis, and consideration of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs, and selection of the most appropriate. This generally requires consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. Often changes or deviations must be made during the progress of an assignment to incorporate additional factors requested after commencement of the project or to adjust to findings and conclusions which could not be predicted accurately in the original plans. The GS-9 assignments typically require coordination of several parts, each requiring independent analysis and solution. When phases or details of the project are performed by other groups or personnel outside the organizational unit, the technician reviews, analyzes, and integrates their work. In addition, assignments at this level require a good understanding of the effect that recommendations made or other results of the assignment may have on an item, system, or process and its end-use application.

The appellant provided samples of his most complex recent assignments. Some representative samples included:

- ▶ Installing lighting control sensors as part of the Energy Conservation Project for the Fleet Industrial Supply Center Buildings.
- ▶ Replacing a bathroom with a galley kitchen and determining the electrical power needs, locations for powers, amps, circuit breakers, etc.

In each case, the appellant was fully responsible for the electrical aspects of the job and, where the electrical installation was the paramount aspect of the work order, the appellant had the lead on the project. The appellant indicated that his assignments required major adaptations with little or no precedents from which to work. However, it is our finding that the appellant is not creating new systems or establishing new procedures for the work. The vast majority of his work is repair by replacement, and the appellant has the state of the art electrical engineering principles and systems information for reference. Thus, based on experience, the appellant is able to choose an appropriate means of accomplishing the work from procedures/systems that already have been developed and for which information is available. Accordingly, the appellant is responsible for selecting the appropriate solutions from the body of knowledge already in place.

The appellant is given the assignments and time frame for completion by the supervisor. Once the project is assigned, he is essentially on his own and does not receive assistance from the supervisor in coming up with the completed assignment or in meeting with customers, vendors, or shop personnel involved in the project unless problems arise. The supervisor meets with the appellant informally on a daily basis and receives an update on the status of his work on a weekly basis. In the event the appellant needs technical assistance, he generally consults with an engineer or another

technician. He investigates the job site, consults with the customer, and ultimately provides a work plan, a cost estimate, and requisitions material. Once approved by the customer, the work is assigned to the appropriate work center and the appellant is responsible for providing quality assurance on the project to the workers onsite and meeting with the customer to resolve any job-related problems or concerns. Guidance includes the National Electrical and Local Code Book, Engineering Handbook, Architectural Graphic Standards, RS Mean cost estimating, NAVFAC design manuals, military handbooks, technical bulletins and magazines, and files of previous similar projects when available (these files may be available from the Base Civil Engineer [BCE] or the customer). All projects must conform to the National Electrical Code and any applicable local codes. The estimates prepared by the appellant are based on historical data from other jobs, when available, and estimations based on Engineer Performance Standards (EPS) and the Estimator system. The EPS is used to assist in estimating jobs by identifying tasks and man-hours to accomplish the work; and the automated Estimator system is used to determine labor hours, materials, and other cost factors. The work requires the use and application of established engineering principles, methods, and techniques. In addition, where guidelines are inappropriate, impractical, or incomplete, the appellant has access to other technicians, the BCE staff and/or the manufacturer for assistance. These assignments are comparable to the GS-9 level.

At the GS-11 level, engineering technicians perform work of broad scope and complexity that requires application of (1) demonstrated ability to interpret, select, adapt, and apply many guidelines, precedents, and engineering principles and practices related to the area of specialization; and (2) some knowledge of related scientific and engineering fields. GS-11 technicians plan and accomplish complete projects or studies of a conventional nature requiring independent adaptation of a general fund of background data and information and interpretation and use of precedents. They are typically confronted with a variety of complex problems in which considerable judgment is needed to make sound engineering compromises and decisions. Other related interests must often be considered, entailing frequent coordination with personnel in the fields concerned. There is a continuing requirement for contact work. Initiative, resourcefulness, and sound judgment are needed in planning and coordinating phases of assignments and in selecting which of several sound alternatives is to be used in arriving at acceptable engineering compromises. Ingenuity and creative thinking are required in devising ways of accomplishing objectives, and in adapting existing equipment or current techniques to new uses.

By comparison, technicians at lower levels receive assignments which are usually segments or phases of the type independently carried out at grade GS-11 or which involve less complex systems and facilities requiring design adaptation. GS-9 technicians apply standard engineering methods and techniques whereas GS-11 technicians are typically required to be creative in devising ways to accomplish the work. Assignments typically found at the GS-11 level include: (1) Develops cost estimates for competitive bidding for a variety of multiple-use construction projects. Determines (a) construction operations and methods involved and the time required to complete each phase or feature, (b) various types and capacities of construction equipment required and cost of operation and maintenance, (c) material types and quantities, and (d) overhead, tax, and other costs; or, (2) Prepares designs and specifications for various utility systems such as heating, plumbing, air conditioning,

ventilating, pumping, gas supply, and pneumatic control systems. Assignments characteristically involve utility systems for office buildings, pumping stations, and flood control facilities, where the complexity or nonconventional nature of the buildings and facilities entails design problems requiring considerable adaptation of precedents or design of features for which precedents are not directly applicable. Performs technical review of contractor-prepared designs and specifications for such systems.

The GS-11 level is not met. Larger and more complex projects generally go to the Engineering Division and/or are contracted to engineering or architectural firms to supply drawings and specifications. The appellant's assignments deal primarily with the electrical aspects of conventional construction projects, design features, drawings and contract specifications for portions or complete buildings or facilities. While the buildings being worked on are typically older, there are established national, local, industrial, and manufacturer codes, specifications, and, in some cases, files of previous work available to the appellant in order to accomplish his portion of the projects. The appellant does not generally deal with a variety of multiple-use construction projects and does not develop new procedures/systems as is envisioned at this level.

GS-10 level assignments are not specifically described in the standard. The appellant's assignments do not in any way regularly exceed those described at the GS-9 level. Therefore, his assignments cannot properly be classified at the GS-10 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Nature of Assignment.

Level of Responsibility

This factor considers the nature and purpose of person-to-person work relationships, and the supervision received in terms of intensity of review of work and of guidance received during the course of the work cycle.

At the GS-9 level, the supervisor provides information on any related work being performed, and furnishes general instruction as to the scope of objectives, time limitations, priorities, and similar aspects. The supervisor is available for consultation and advice where significant deviations from standard engineering practices must be made. The supervisor observes the work for progress and for coordination with work performed by other employees or other sections and for adherence to completion and cost schedules. Standard methods employed are seldom reviewed, but review is made for adequacy and for conformance with established policies, precedents and sound engineering concepts and usage. Personal work contacts typically are more frequent and demanding and are primarily to resolve mutual problems and coordinate the work with that of personnel in related activities. Some contacts are made with using agencies for whom work is done and with contractors and architecture-engineer firms. The contacts are made to clear up doubtful points, to advise as to discrepancies found in meeting contract terms, to consider recommendations for acceptable substitutes, and to promote adherence to agency standards and concepts of good engineering. Contacts outside the agency are generally arranged under supervisory guidance.

The GS-9 level is met. The appellant's work is assigned by the supervisor by trade, e.g., electrical, and time frames and priorities are discussed. From this point, he is expected to carry out the project with minimal supervisory involvement. The appellant sets up appointments; reviews the job; determines the requirements for sketches or drawings; prepares the sketches and drawings; prepares the job plan, funding estimates, and scoping estimate for minor or specific jobs; determines and requisitions material needed for the job/project; tracks material receipt; meets with shop supervisors to review the job; provides technical assistance; writes change orders as needed; provides quality assurance; coordinates with contractors, vendors, shops, and Engineering Division as needed; and meets with customers to discuss any problems. Contacts are with the customers, facility managers, project managers, shop supervisors and tradespeople/mechanics, engineers, and vendors. Meetings are conducted with the contacts as needed, generally, without supervisory involvement, although the supervisor may sit in on meetings to assist in resolving problems.

At the GS-11 level, technicians have considerable freedom in planning work and carrying out assignments. The supervisor makes assignments in terms of the major objectives, providing background information and advice on specific unusual problems which are anticipated or on matters requiring coordination with other groups. Unusual or controversial problems, or policy questions arising in the course of a project, may be discussed with the supervisor, but technical supervisory assistance is infrequently sought or required. The supervisor is usually informally advised regarding progress, but there is little review during progress of typical assignments. Completed work in the form of recommendations, plans, designs, reports, or correspondence is reviewed for general adequacy, conformity to purpose of the assignment, and sound engineering judgment. Contacts in the course of the work are with the same groups of individuals at lower grade levels and the purpose of the contacts is similar. Because of the increased scope of GS-11 assignments, these contacts tend to become more extensive than at lower levels. Contacts with contractors and other personnel regarding complex engineering and administrative problems are carried out without close supervision. However, the technician generally discusses with the supervisor the approach to be taken.

Although the appellant works independently under general supervision, the intent of the GS-11 level is not met. He may recommend a course of action, but the appellant seeks technical advice on unusual problems and policy issues. The GS-11 level of responsibility assumes that the employee is performing assignments equivalent to the GS-11 level and would, therefore, have responsibility for adapting a general font of knowledge and interpreting precedents to handle complex assignments requiring the exercise of considerable judgment. In comparison, the appellant applies conventional engineering practices and a knowledge of the codes, specifications, and regulations to his projects. He exercises some judgment in determining the applicability of the specifications, codes, and engineering principles to the specific project, but consults with his supervisor on difficult problems or situations. This level of responsibility does not meet the intent of the GS-11 level.

The GS-10 level is not specifically described in the standard. To be appropriately classified at the GS-10 level, the technician's Level of Responsibility would have to regularly and clearly exceed the level described at grade GS-9. The appellant's position does not regularly require him to perform at a level that exceeds the GS-9 level.

GS-9 is assigned for Level of Responsibility.

Both factors are evaluated at the GS-9 level, therefore, the engineering technician duties equate to the GS-9 level.

Computer Specialist Duties

The evaluation criteria in the GS-334 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under FES, positions are placed in a grade on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor-level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor-level description in the standard, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

Under FES, positions which significantly exceed the highest factor level or fail to meet the lowest factor level described in a classification standard must be evaluated by reference to the Primary Standard, contained in Appendix 3 of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. The Primary Standard is the "standard-for-standards" for FES.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge.

At Level 1-6, employees use knowledge of established computer techniques and requirements to perform such assignments as developing individual programs, test plans, or reports within an approved framework, or facilitating user interface and access to computer systems by giving training on using generalized software. At this level, an applications oriented assignment normally entails knowledge of the technical characteristics of an operating mode, e.g., remote job entry terminals, end user systems, and system software rules pertinent to the assigned areas. This level also includes knowledge of the work process to be accomplished or equipment to be controlled by computer. Such knowledge is used to carry out assignments where the objectives to be reached are clearly identified and are realizable by straight-forward adaptation of precedents and established practices. The information provided typically specifies basic requirements. This includes, for an applications project, what the operating mode is to be, what kinds of equipment or system software will be required, which

programming language is appropriate, and what inputs, outputs, and overall processing logic are involved.

Two illustrations provided in the standard of work at this level are as follows:

- A computer specialist who evaluates various brands of computer equipment for replacement of or addition to existing machinery. The decision has already been made as to the number of units or capacity needed and with what other equipment the new equipment must be compatible.
- A computer specialist who trains users to use generalized software, including operating system commands and procedures to communicate with system software and obtain system status information; system utilities to display or print files; software for ad hoc information retrieval and report generation; and communications hardware and software to access remote computer facilities. Such specialists develop user guides and handbooks on how to make effective use of application systems developed for their support.

The knowledge required by the appellant's position is comparable to Level 1-6. A primary technical function performed by the appellant is to assist users in their application of standardized information systems such as the Estimator system. In providing this assistance, the appellant troubleshoots problems users are experiencing with program applications. The appellant determines the cause of the problem (software, hardware, or user), develops and takes corrective action, if possible. The appellant keeps users informed about modifications made to the systems and/or changes to the procedures to be followed in inputting or extracting information from the data bases. The appellant provides one-on-one training assistance to users of the systems. He may be involved in assuring that recurring reports are downloaded, printed, and distributed as scheduled and may be required to use a standard query language to write programs to format and retrieve reports from information data bases. The appellant attempts basic maintenance/repair activities on hardware prior to contacting the vendor or sending the equipment to a repair facility.

At Level 1-7, computer specialists use knowledge of a wide range of computer techniques, requirements, methods, sources, and procedures to accomplish a variety of assignments in an assigned application or speciality area. Included at this level is knowledge of system software and systems development life cycles (including systems documentation, design development, configuration management, cost analysis, data administration, systems integration, and testing). The work requires the ability to modify standard practices and adapt computer systems to solve a variety of computer software problems and to adapt precedents or make significant departures from previous approaches to similar projects to provide for the specialized requirements of some projects. These knowledges and abilities are used to analyze and make recommendations on major aspects of a project, such as the system interrelationships to be considered or the operating mode, system software, and/or equipment configuration to be adopted. Characteristic of positions at this level is the performance of studies in which alternatives are set forth or devised, their costs and benefits weighed, and reports prepared in which the study methodology is outlined, alternatives discussed, and recommendations

made. Typically, employees at this level develop the plans and specifications necessary for carrying out the recommendations, e.g., for a proposed application, developing specifications which set forth inputs, outputs, the basic decision rules, and program interrelationships. Also included at Level 1-7 are troubleshooting design and software implementation problems, providing staff advisory and planning services, user assistance/training, or evaluating services or functions within a specialty area such as computer performance measurement techniques or security procedures applicable to a particular system.

Two illustrations provided in the standard of work at this level are as follows:

- A computer specialist who assists users in one or several subject-matter fields in deciding which processes to automate; how to select equipment and software; how best to use available technology; and whether and how to network. In this type of work situation, the computer specialist reviews and selects equipment and software; assists in set-up, testing, and user training; resolves equipment and software compatibility questions; and other related functions.
- A computer specialist who serves as a systems monitor or operations troubleshooter when this involves devising recovery plans for system failure situations. The plans include developing and/or using utility programs to isolate causes of problems between hardware, system software, and applications programs; enhance the ability to detect damaged or lost files; optimize disk management; measure system performance; control system security; and/or extend operating system capabilities to support local requirements. In case of failures in the agency standard system, Level 1-7 specialists make “quick fixes” in higher level language and/or job control language to restore operations; analyze problems; develop recommendations; and collaborate with design center personnel in effecting needed changes.

Level 1-7 describes a work situation where the computer specialist participates substantially in all major aspects of an automation project, including the initial system design stage where the equipment and software are selected and the system interrelationships and operating specifications are considered. Also at this level, the computer specialist develops operating specifications for remote teleprocessing or telecommunications equipment and services.

The appellant operates in an applications environment as opposed to a developmental environment as envisioned by the standards for Level 1-7. The appellant’s job responsibilities are carried out in a local organization which is a user of data management systems developed elsewhere. He does perform basic troubleshooting activities at the local level dealing with local hardware/software problems. However, the appellant’s assignments are more limited than those described at Level 1-7.

Level 1-6 is credited for 950 points.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls:

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for carrying out assignments, and how completed work is reviewed.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor defines the employee's scope of responsibilities and the objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The employee is provided assistance with unusual situations which do not have clear precedents. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps involved and handles problems and deviations in accordance with agency standards, previous training, established practices, or system controls. Work is reviewed for adequacy of the technical aspects, but the techniques used by the employee during the course of the assignment are not reviewed in detail.

The supervisory controls exercised over the appellant's position are more limited than those described at Level 2-3 because of his assignment as the computer specialist providing technical support to a group of users in a line activity. The appellant's supervisor is not a computer specialist and does not have the expertise to provide technical direction, however, assistance is available from an engineer in the division. The appellant is expected to independently carry out his ongoing job responsibilities on his own initiative based on his technical expertise and knowledge of organizational goals. Special project assignments are given in general terms of objectives and time frames to be met. The appellant's supervisor expects him to exercise his technical knowledge and expertise in developing solutions to operating problems and to know which problems need referral to offsite technicians.

This type of supervisory control is comparable to that described at Level 2-4 in which the supervisor sets the overall objectives and, in consultation with the employee, determines time frames. An employee at Level 2-4 independently plans and carries out projects and analyses of the organization's requirements; interprets policies, procedures, and regulations in conformance with established mission objectives; integrates and coordinates the work of others as necessary; and resolves most conflicts that arise. The employee informs the supervisor about progress, potentially controversial matters, or far-reaching implications. Completed work is reviewed from an overall standpoint in terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements or achieving expected results.

Level 2-4 is credited for 450 points.

Factor 3 - Guidelines:

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used, and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-3, guidelines are available but are not completely applicable or gaps exist in significant areas. The employee is required to adapt guides and precedents for application to the assigned project or gather considerable information to supplement gaps or lack of specificity to particular problems. Judgment is required in relating precedent approaches to specific situations.

The appellant's use of guidelines is comparable to Level 3-3. He assists users in operating various data base/management systems. While usually applicable in most situations, available guidelines do not always provide direct guidance in resolving a specific user problem. The same lack of universal specificity is true of manufacturers' manuals and software applications guides and manuals. The appellant must rely on his technical knowledge and expertise to interpret and adapt these guidelines and instructions to fit the current situation or operating problem.

At Level 3-4, policies and precedents provide general guidance with little specificity regarding the approach to be followed in accomplishing the work. The assignments usually require deviating from traditional methods or researching trends or patterns to develop improved methods or formulate criteria. The employee must use initiative and resourcefulness in researching and implementing state-of-the-art techniques and technologies in order to develop new and improved methods to cope with particular projects. At this level, the projects typically encompass unprecedented design efforts, integrating the work of others as a team or project leader, or predicting future environments or the impact of future processing.

Level 3-4 is not met. The appellant is not involved in any activities where significant research or analysis is required or where methods and techniques are devised, e.g., the conducting of feasibility studies or system design and development. The appellant's assignment is to provide technical support to a group of engineering technicians and supervisors using various data base systems in support of their project assignments. Guidelines governing the operations of the systems have been developed. The appellant may need to adapt and modify these guidelines to fit the problem situation at hand based on his past experience and knowledge of current technologies. This adaptation and modification of standard guidelines and operating procedures does not meet the scope described at Level 3-4.

Level 3-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 4 - Complexity:

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-3, assignments consist of various tasks or duties involving different methods or procedures. Decisions regarding methods to be used depend on the nature of the data involved. Normally the employee must analyze plans to discern deviations or other situations that have a bearing on the choice among established techniques for carrying out the assignment. Accomplishing the assignment involves ascertaining and analyzing interrelationships, e.g., the potential effect of program changes on related programs in the system.

The appellant's assignment meets Level 4-3. The appellant, functioning in a user organization, exercises technical skills in support of the operation of personal computers. This includes initial hardware setup, configuration, and minor modifications. Additionally, the appellant applies

knowledge of the automated programs and their data base configurations to resolve user problems and to develop ad hoc reports. In selecting additional hardware or software, the appellant researches readily available information sources such as manufacturers' specifications, computer magazines, and publications to make determinations as to hardware capabilities, adoptabilities/connectivity to current hardware, needs, etc.

Assignments at Level 4-4 consist of projects, studies, or evaluations characterized by the need for substantial problem analysis. The work requires consideration of considerable data. The level of difficulty is typified by developing programming specifications for major modifications to existing systems, or new systems where precedents exist at the same general scale of operation as the new systems. Decisions at this level involve assessing situations complicated by conflicting or insufficient data and testing of different approaches.

Level 4-4 is not met. The appellant is not involved in designing new or modified programs. The programming that he performs is more standard in nature, e.g., utilizes standard off-the-shelf query language to manipulate data contained in the management information systems in order to produce various ad hoc reports. The appellant's position does not require the variety of techniques and methods typically found at this level, nor is it complicated by the conflicting and complex circumstances described.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect:

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, as measured by the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-3, the work involves resolving a variety of conventional problems, questions, or situations such as typically is the case where responsibility has been assigned for maintenance of a set of programs. Established practices and techniques are used. The work affects the adequacy of such activities as field investigations, internal operations, or research conclusions.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work meets the criteria at Level 5-3. The appellant is responsible for the care and maintenance of the computer systems supporting the engineering technician functions. Troubleshooting activities are confined to his assigned Public Work Center (PWC) organizations. In exercising his technical expertise, he relies on established practices and commonly accepted techniques for resolving user problems. Unusual problems and situations are referred to others for resolution.

In comparison, work at Level 5-4 involves investigating and analyzing a variety of unusual problems, questions, or conditions associated with a particular application or specialty area; formulating projects or studies such as those to substantially alter major systems; or establishing criteria in an assigned

application or specialty area. The work at this level affects a wide range of agency activities, activities of non-Government organizations, or functions of other agencies.

Level 5-4 is not met. The appellant's position does not have the scope described at this level, i.e., wide range of agency activities at numerous sites around the country, nor does his work affect the operations of other agencies.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts:

These factors measure the type and purpose of face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The level of regular and recurring personal contacts selected under Factor 6 is to be matched with the purposes of those contacts under Factor 7, and the appropriate point value credited using the chart provided in the standard.

Personal Contacts

At Level 1, contacts are with co-workers in the immediate organization and in related or support units.

At Level 2, contacts, in addition to those within the immediate organization, are with employees in the agency but outside the immediate organization.

Level 1 is assigned for this factor. The appellant's contacts are normally to assist the engineering technicians in the PWC organizations.

Purpose of Contacts

Level b is assigned for this factor. At this level, the purpose of contacts is to coordinate work efforts, solve problems, or to provide advice to managers on noncontroversial organization or program related issues. The purpose of the appellant's contacts is to provide assistance to users in resolving technical problems.

Level c is not met. At Level c, the purpose of the contacts is to influence others to utilize particular technical methods and procedures, or to persuade others to cooperate in meeting objectives when there are problems in securing cooperation. Users seek the appellant to request his assistance in resolving operational problems. There is no need for the appellant to persuade users to follow the technical methods or procedures required by the various data management systems. This requirement is a basic requirement of the users' jobs.

Level 2-b is credited for 75 points.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands:

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee in performing the work assignment, including the agility and dexterity required, and the extent of physical exertion.

The appellant's position is typical of Level 8-1, the highest level described in the standard. Typically, the employee sits comfortably to do the work. However, there may be some walking; standing; bending; or carrying of light items. No special physical demands are required to perform the work.

It is recognized that, on occasion, the appellant moves, lifts, or installs personal computers or other hardware such as printers which may require physical exertion beyond that described at Level 8-1. However, these activities are occasional and do not occur with a frequency that fully meets the intent of Level 8-2, as described in the Primary Standard, which involves regular and recurring work which requires some physical exertion, such as long periods of standing, walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces; recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching, or similar activities; or recurring lifting of moderately heavy items, such as typewriters and record boxes. Level 8-2 work may require specific, but common, physical characteristics and abilities, such as above average agility and dexterity.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9 - Work Environment:

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, and the safety precautions required.

Level 9-1 covers work performed in a typical office setting where no special safety precautions are required. The appellant performs his work in an office environment with no special safety requirements.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-6	950
2. Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	6-2 7-b	75
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	2060

A total of 2060 points falls with the range for a GS-09, 1855 to 2100 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-334 standard.

Summary

The engineering technician duties equate to GS-9, and the computer specialist duties equate to GS-9. The position is, therefore, correctly evaluated at the GS-9 level.

Decision

This position is properly classified as Electrical Engineering Technician, GS-802-9.