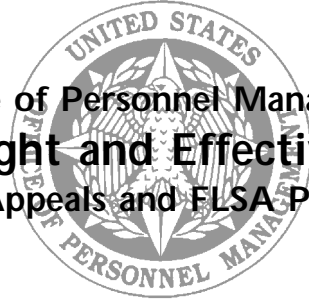


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

Organization: [appellant's activity]
Department of the Air Force
[location]

OPM decision: Engineering Technician
GS-802-9

OPM decision number: C-0802-09-37

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon
Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

11/4/99
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:

[appellant's name and address]

[servicing personnel office]

Director, Civilian Personnel Operations
U.S. Department of the Air Force
AFPC/DPC
550 C Street West
Randolph Air Force Base, TX 78150-4759

Director of Civilian Personnel
HQ USAF/DPCC
1040 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1040

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 21, 1999, the Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted an appeal from [the appellant]. The appealed position is assigned to the [appellant's activity], Department of the Air Force, [location]. The agency has classified the position as Engineering Technician, GS-802-9. The appellant believes his position should be classified as Engineering Technician, GS-802-11, and filed an appeal with the Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service. That office determined the position was properly classified as Engineering Technician, GS-802-9. We have accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

In reaching our classification decision, we considered information submitted by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description [number], and information obtained by telephone from the appellant and his supervisor. The appellant and his supervisor certify to the accuracy of the duties described in [the appellant's position description], dated March 30, 1994. We find that [the position description] is adequate for position classification purposes.

Position information

The function of the [appellant's activity] is to accelerate Civil Engineering's response time to users by having an on-board contractor with whom delivery orders are negotiated. [The appellant's activity] is a cradle-to-grave operation that allows a project manager to design, estimate, negotiate, and perform the construction management, inspection, and acceptance of the project.

The purpose of the appellant's position is to accomplish planning studies and designs for complex, conventional, or nonconventional work. The appellant provides technical expertise to the contracting officer during negotiations of delivery orders and during the construction phase of those delivery orders after they have been negotiated. [The appellant] is responsible for writing the statement of work, developing the design, estimating costs, negotiating with the contractor through the contracting office, managing the construction projects, and accepting finished projects.

The appellant serves as technical representative to the Contracting Officer to interpret and clarify plans, specifications, and other proposal documents for contractors prior to proposal submittal. [The appellant] attends pre-work conferences with user and contractor for coordination of contractor access to work area and mitigation of impact on user operations. The appellant's PD and other material of record furnish much more information about [the] duties and responsibilities and how they are performed.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant does not contest the series or title of [the] position. The GS-802 Engineering Technician 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 are not classified utilizing criteria specified for professional engineering positions. We agree with the agency's determination that the position is properly placed in the GS-802 series. Since the appellant is assigned to projects that involve the construction, renovation, replacement or repair of structures, mechanical and electrical systems, components and equipment with none of these being paramount, the title *Engineering Technician* is appropriate. This title applies to positions that cover two or more of the subject-matter specializations described in the standard when no one of the specializations is paramount. The criteria in the GS-802 standard are used to evaluate the appellant's work.

Grade determination

The GS-802 standard defines grade levels under two classification criteria: *Nature of assignments* and *Level of responsibility*. Our evaluation with respect to these criteria follows.

Nature of assignment

The nature of assignment includes the scope and difficulty of the project and the skills and knowledge required to complete the assignment.

The appellant believes that the agency's evaluation of his position does not adequately reflect the scope and complexity of [the] current responsibilities or the multidiscipline work [the appellant] performs. [The appellant] states that the supervisor has assigned work to the three GS-9 and two GS-11 engineering technicians in the [appellant's activity] without considering the complexity of the assignments. The appellant believes that the majority of [the appellant's] work is at the GS-11 level. To support [this] claim, the appellant refers to a consistency review conducted by the agency which indicates (a) that the supervisor assigns projects among the technicians without consideration of the complexity of assignments, (b) that the supervisor's method of assigning work may dilute the grade of the GS-11 positions and result in the more complex projects being given to the GS-9 technicians, and (c) that the supervisor believes time constraints, workload, and difficulty in determining what is considered complex work prohibit the division of work appropriate for the grade levels of the technicians.

The GS-802 standard describes GS-9 engineering technicians as those who typically perform a variety of work relating to the area of specialization that requires the application of a considerable number of different basic but established methods, procedures, and techniques. Assignments at this level usually involve independent responsibility for planning and conducting a block of work which is a complete conventional project of relatively limited scope, or a portion of a larger and more diverse project. These assignments require study, analysis, and consideration of several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs and selection of the most appropriate. Assignments generally require consideration of numerous precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. Further, GS-9 level assignments typically require coordination of several parts, each requiring independent analysis and solution, and 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.

GS-11 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 which relate to the area of specialization; and (2) some knowledge of related scientific and engineering fields. Technicians at this level plan and accomplish complete projects or studies of conventional nature requiring the 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. 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 new ways of accomplishing objectives and in adapting existing equipment or current techniques to new uses.

In performing [the] work, the appellant identifies the limits of the work involved, the kinds of controlling data needed, and the criteria and techniques to be applied. The appellant installs heating and cooling air handlers, duct systems, and diffusers for environmental control using existing chilled and hot water systems. [The appellant] prepares detailed statements of work and estimates for new construction, renovations, alterations, repairs, and maintenance to various base facilities (ranging in price from \$2,000 to \$500,000) using unit pricing books and automated pricing systems. Such work requires the ability to assimilate the information into a detailed cost estimate. Information provided by the appellant, [the] supervisor, and agency personnel officials indicates that the appellant spends about half of [the] time on assignments which involve design and/or construction inspection responsibilities.

The appellant and his supervisor provided information on three projects as representative examples of the complexity of the appellant's work: upgrade D-2, A & C-3, and O & M 633 restrooms to include reconfiguration of walls, floors, ceilings, fixtures, and ventilation. The appellant performed technical reviews and recommended approval or disapproval of required drawings, products, materials, and equipment submittals required for the accomplishment of the projects. These projects required the appellant to study, analyze, and consider several possible courses of action, techniques, general layouts, or designs and to select the most appropriate from among these.

The appellant's assignments require technical knowledge of accepted engineering principles and practices of the civil discipline which would be acquired through experience in construction and remodeling of engineering and knowledge of architectural, electrical, and mechanical disciplines. In carrying out assignments, the appellant uses well-established regulations contained in Air Force Technical Orders and Department of Defense, Air Force, and Command regulations for civil engineering and contracting, codes, blue prints, and comprehensive planning guides. These

guidelines are relatively clear cut and do not require significant interpretation or adaptation to accomplish the work.

Similar to GS-9 work described in the standard, the appellant's assignments require applying a considerable number of different methods, procedures, and techniques. As at the GS-9 level, most of the appellant's work requires checking and analyzing detail and assembly drawings of moderately complex items of equipment of conventional design to determine whether the design and drawing are complete and correct and whether design conforms to production requirements. As is typical at the GS-9 level, the appellant's work requires consideration of many precedents and some adaptation of previous plans or techniques. For example, [the] construction work sometimes requires adaptation or modification of precedents by making minor deviations, such as the number or location of fixtures in an area. Most of these construction problems have been previously encountered.

The appellant's work falls short of the GS-11 level. While the appellant's assignments generally require an analysis of the work, consideration of time constraints and available resources, and determination of which course of action to take, most of [the appellant's] work is conventional in nature and has limited scope. For example, the appellant has access to a wide variety of guidelines, agency regulations, specification books, manufacturing guides, and national code handbooks which are applicable to most of his assignments. Because the appellant's projects are narrower in scope than envisioned at GS-11, they do not have phases requiring planning and coordination to the extent intended at that level. At this level, the technician is typically confronted with a variety of complex problems in which considerable judgment is needed to make engineering compromises and decisions. Further, the GS-11 technician devises new ways of accomplishing objectives.

Level of responsibility

This factor includes consideration of the nature and purpose of person-to-person work relationships and supervision received in terms of intensity of review of work as well as guidance received during the course of the work cycle.

At the GS-9 level, the supervisor outlines requirements, provides information on any related work being performed, and furnishes general instructions 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 and gives more detailed instructions when distinctly new criteria or new techniques are involved. 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 at the GS-9 level are primarily to resolve mutual problems and coordinate the work with that of personnel in related activities. Some contacts are made with agencies for whom work is done and with contractors and engineer firms. The contacts are made to clear up

doubtful points, advise as to discrepancies found in meeting contract terms, consider recommendations for acceptable substitutes, and promote adherence to agency standards. Contacts outside the agency are usually arranged under supervisory guidance.

At the GS-11 level, engineering 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 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. By comparison, technicians at lower grade levels receive advice and guidance on the application of nonstandard methods and techniques or in the solution of complex problems requiring significant deviations from established practice. Technicians at the GS-11 level customarily make contacts in the course of their work with the same groups of individuals as do technicians 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.

The appellant's supervisor assigns work in terms of overall objectives as to the end product desired and in terms of the volume of current workload and contractual activity involved. Completed work is reviewed for general adequacy, conformity to purpose, and sound engineering judgment. The appellant's contacts are with base staff and contractor representatives.

The appellant's level of responsibility falls short of the GS-11 level. The appellant has access to a wide variety of guidelines, agency regulations, specification books, manufacturing guides, and national code handbooks which are applicable to most of his assignments. Engineering and architectural staff at the base are also available to provide technical assistance if needed. Although the appellant may work relatively independently in terms of designing, collecting data, writing performance work standards on the construction requirements which contractors use to construct the project, and participating in the negotiation of contracts and awarding sums of money for the completion of the project, [the appellant] does not have the considerable freedom in carrying out all phases of assignments as indicative of the GS-11 level. Information obtained during the telephone interview indicates that the appellant has limited opportunity to resolve unusual or complex problems requiring significant deviations from established practice. In summary, the appellant's level of responsibility does not exceed the GS-9 level.

Summary

Both the nature of the appellant's assignments and level of his responsibility meet and do not exceed the GS-9 level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Engineering Technician, GS-802-9.