

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

San Francisco Oversight Division  
120 Howard Street, Room 760  
San Francisco, CA 94105-0001

**Classification Appeal Decision**  
**Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

**Appellant:** [Name of appellant]

**Agency classification:** Computer Assistant  
GS-335-9

**Organization:** [Appellant's organization/location]  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

**OPM decision:** Computer Assistant  
GS-335-9

**OPM decision number:** C-0335-09-03

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Carlos A. Torrico  
Classification Appeals Officer

January 31, 2002  
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:**

[Appellant's address]

[Appellant's representative]

**Agency:**

[Appellant's servicing human resources office]  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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## **Introduction**

On April 18, 2001, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [the appellant]. On June 7, 2001, the Division received the agency's administrative report concerning her appeal. Her position is currently classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9. However, she believes her position should be classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-9. The appellant works in the [appellant's organization/location] U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. We have accepted and decided her appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

## **General issues**

The appellant makes various statements about her agency and its evaluation of her position. In addition, she compares her position to several Computer Specialist, GS-334, positions (now Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210) in her agency that she believes are similar to her job. In adjudicating this appeal, our only concern is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of her position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing her 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 her appeal. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison.

This appeal decision is based on a careful review of all information submitted by the appellant and her agency. In addition, to help decide the appeal, an OPM representative conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant, and her first and second level supervisors. The appellant has certified to the accuracy of her recently updated position description (PD) [number]. In the absence of the immediate supervisor, the second level supervisor also attested to the accuracy of the appellant's PD.

## **Position information**

The appellant serves as one of three technical support employees providing advice and technical assistance to Province Corporate Desktop Computer users in the [appellant's organization]. The [appellant's organization] is part of the [organizational unit] Province which has responsibility for the information technology needs of three independent Forests. These are the [names of forests and locations]. Within the Province, there are approximately 850 to 900 corporate computers. The primary purpose of the appellant's position is to provide advice and technical assistance and support to approximately one-third (200 to 300) of the personnel using Province Corporate Desktop Computers connected to the Local Area Network (LAN) systems. These systems are primarily located and administered within the [name of forest] National Forest. The appellant assists computer users connected to the LAN with various computer needs/problems such as providing advice, troubleshooting, and identifying and resolving network-related hardware and software problems. She also has the responsibility for installing external and internal devices/peripherals, and installing and setting up software and parameters per systems

specifications. She serves as the coordinator between users and vendors in ordering and purchasing parts and supplies for Province Corporate Computer users.

The appellant has Intranet and a limited amount of Internet service duties and responsibilities for computer users located at the [forest name] National Forest and three-fourths of the Intranet and Internet users located at the [forest name] National Forest. These duties include managing the home page for these two forest sites. She carries out this responsibility by monitoring the currency of all information uploaded on the home page, by responding to questions and providing advice to site readers/users, and by correcting routine technical problems that may cause disruption to the site's home page. For the two forests the appellant's duties include coordinating the overall design and implementation of web pages for placement on the Intranet (and to a small degree on the Internet) at the request of various department managers and supervisors. This involves responding to requests from managers and supervisors about the type of information they want displayed on a web page, and doing limited design work that meets the individual's needs. The appellant decides how to best display the requester's information on the web page, and by using HyperText Markup Language (HTML) creates a web page for placement on the Intranet site and/or occasionally on the Internet site of the agency.

The results of our interviews, the appellant's PD and other material of record furnish more information about her duties and responsibilities and how they are performed.

### **Series, title, and standard determination**

The agency has assigned the appellant's position to the Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335, and titled it as Computer Assistant. We concur with the agency's series and title determination. As stated in the GS-335 standard (dated February 1980, reissued in HRCDC-7, July 1999) positions in that series cover work involving performance or supervision of data processing support and services functions for users of digital computer systems. This work requires knowledge of external data processing sequences, controls, procedures, or user and programming languages, rather than in-depth knowledge of computer requirements or techniques associated with development and design of data processing systems.

Employees whose jobs are classified in the GS-335 series support or assist other employees who design, operate, or use automatic data processing systems applications and products by performing work in one or a mix of functional areas. Some computer assistants at full performance levels perform duties similar to those assigned to entry and trainee level computer specialist positions. Work in the GS-335 series typically requires knowledge of the scope, contents, and purposes of program documentation. The duties may also require a working knowledge of programming languages. It may also require knowledge of system hardware such as the number and kind of devices, operating speeds, and the amount of core and other equipment characteristics. This knowledge may be supplemented by knowledge of internal software routines. We find this work situation similar to the appellant's.

The appellant believes her position should be classified in the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334. However, effective June 5, 2001 (with the posting of a new standard on OPM's web site), that series and the classification standard covering it were canceled, and replaced by the Job

Family Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200. The new standard instructs agencies to classify work previously covered by the GS-334 series to the Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210, when knowledge of information technology is the paramount requirement necessary to perform the primary duties of the position. Since the appellant believes her position should be assigned to the GS-334 series, in making our series determination we have applied guidance from the JFS for the GS-2200 group. Work in the GS-2210 series covers two-grade interval administrative positions that manage, supervise, lead, administer, develop, deliver, and support information technology systems and services. The series covers only those positions for which the paramount requirement is knowledge of information technology principles, concepts, and methods to perform functions such as planning, designing, analyzing, developing and implementing systems for an organization.

Information technology refers to systems and services used in the automated acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control display, switching, interchange, transmission, assurance, or reception of information. Information technology includes computers, network components, peripheral equipment, software, firmware, services, and related resources.

We find that the appellant's position does not fully meet the requirements for assignment to the two-grade interval Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210. While she possesses and applies a sound practical knowledge of hardware and software functions and capabilities in order to provide advice and assistance to personal computer users on various computer applications, interface with the LAN, and plan and update web pages, her duties do not require (1) the in depth knowledge of information technology principles, concepts, and methods sufficient to plan, analyze, design, develop, test, configure, implement and maintain network systems, and internet/intranet systems and activities nor (2) the knowledge sufficient to provide comprehensive customer support functions and services to the extent described in the standard for the GS-2210 series. Indeed, positions like the appellant's that assist customers in installing and configuring desktop systems and commercial off-the-shelf software, monitoring the operation of small networked systems, configuring hardware and software according to instructions, and resolving problems in accordance with established procedures, do not meet the paramount knowledge criteria for coverage by the GS-2210 series and are excluded from the GS-2200 Group.

In distinguishing between specialist and assistant work, the GS-2200 JFS notes that specialist positions are established as developmental jobs with clear progression to higher grade levels as the specialist receives progressively more difficult assignments, requiring the application of a broad knowledge of information technology principles, concepts, and methods. Assistant positions support the work of specialists, requiring the application of established methods and procedures, and practical knowledge, as opposed to conceptual knowledge, of the techniques and guidelines pertinent to the assignment area. The appellant's position supports and augments the work of two server systems administrators (GS-334-11) in the province, and the nonsupervisory work of her supervisor (GS-334-11) who is also a system manager. The JFS points out that specialist positions are established as developmental jobs. We found no evidence that management's intent in establishing the appellant's position was to make it a developmental position with clear progression to a higher graded specialist. Indeed, most of the computer related positions in the province, including the appellant's unit, are classified in the Computer

Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335, indicating that the work of the organization predominantly requires a practical knowledge of computer processes and techniques, rather than in depth knowledge of information technology principles, concepts and methods. Another indicator of assistant work is the use of established methods and procedures. The appellant operates with such guidance (e.g., Technical Information Bulletins), and if she encounters a technical problem that cannot be resolved by applying standard operating procedures and guidelines, she seeks assistance from higher graded specialists in the province, regional office, or computer/software vendors.

The appellant's position is assigned to the Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335. The standard for that series contains appropriate grade level criteria that we have applied below to the appellant's position.

### **Grade determination**

The appellant does not contest the agency's grade determination of her position. Based on our fact-finding and application of the grading criteria in the GS-335 standard, we agree with the agency's grade evaluation as summarized below.

#### *Summary*

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-6	950
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
<i>Total</i>		1885

The appellant's position totals 1885 points which falls in the GS-9 range (1855-2100). Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table in the GS-335 standard, her position is properly graded at GS-9.

### **Decision**

The appellant's position is properly classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9.