

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

Dallas Field Services Group
1100 Commerce Street, Room 441
Dallas, TX 75242

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Computer Assistant
GS-335-9

Organization: Executive Support Section
Aircraft Maintenance Organization
[number] Logistics Group
[number] Flying Training Wing
[location]

OPM decision: Computer Assistant
GS-335-9

OPM decision number: C-0335-09-06

Judith Frenzel
Classification Appeals Officer

July 18, 2003

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]

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Introduction

On April 11, 2003, the Dallas Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [employee] employed in the Executive Support Section, Aircraft Maintenance Organization, [number] Logistics Group, [number] Flying Training Wing, Department of the Air Force, located at [location]. The agency's administrative report was received April 30, 2003. The position is presently classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-9. The appellant believes it should be classified as Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210-9. We have accepted and decided the appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

Background information

The appellant's position was previously classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-9. The new Job Family Standard for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200 was issued in June 2001. This standard abolished the Computer Specialist, GS-334, series and standard. The agency applied the new standard in October 2002 and found the position did not meet the criteria for coverage by the GS-2210 series and was properly classified in the GS-335 Computer Clerk and Assistant Series. The appellant believes his position supports classification to the GS-2210 series and filed an appeal with this office.

An OPM representative conducted an on-site audit of the appellant's position on May 22, 2003, and an interview with the immediate supervisor to help decide the appeal. In reaching our classification decision, we have reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description (PD) [number]. The supervisor and the appellant have both certified as to the accuracy of the PD.

Position information

This position is assigned to the Executive Support Section which provides administrative support to the Director of Aircraft Maintenance and the Aircraft Maintenance Organization (AMO). The appellant serves as the primary point of contact for support of the unit's Local Area Network (LAN) and the organization's information technology equipment.

The appellant functions as the primary administrator of the AMO LAN that includes approximately 300 workstations, 40 printers, and 2 network servers. His responsibilities include acting as a liaison between the AMO and the [number] Communications Squadron to ensure the maintenance and upgrades to the LAN, printers, computer hardware and software; managing the workstations, troubleshooting problems with printers and software, and providing training and user assistance. He performs routine installation and configuration of communications equipment; maintains the security of the LAN; and prepares and submits requirements to replace old computers and printers. The work requires knowledge of a wide variety of computer techniques, procedures, requirements, and sources.

Within prescribed policies and guidance, the appellant monitors security requirements for passwords, physical security, and virus protection, and reports breaches of security to appropriate

officials. He coordinates the installation of new and upgraded system hardware/software; provides technical assistance and training to current and potential end users; and resolves processing malfunctions resulting from changes in hardware or software operating configurations. He provides in-house technical support for users of the organization's stand-alone and networked information systems equipment (e.g., computers, printers, scanners, file servers, modems, and terminals). The appellant performs research on equipment compatibility, specifications, cost, and effectiveness, and makes recommendations through the [number] Logistics Group, on system changes and upgrades to higher level officials.

The appellant reports to the Executive Support Section Chief who provides direction and guidance on objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The appellant identifies the source and nature of problems and the work to be completed. He independently plans and carries out the required work, and submits completed products to users without supervisory review. The supervisor is kept informed of the progress of work projects and potential controversial matters or problems.

Series, title and standard determination

The GS-2210 Information Technology Management Series covers two-grade interval administrative positions that manage, supervise, lead, administer, develop, deliver, and support information technology systems and services. This series covers only those positions which the paramount requirement is knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods; e.g., data storage, software applications, networking. This knowledge is used to perform such functions as planning, designing, analyzing, developing and implementing systems for the 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.

The GS-2210 standard excludes work that involves IT support or services functions. Such work requires a practical knowledge of IT systems, workflow, and controls rather than the broad and indepth knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods characteristic of positions covered by the GS-2210 standard. That standard discusses distinguishing between specialist work and assistant work and provides examples of positions whose functions should be excluded from the GS-2210 series because they do not require the regular and recurring application of knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and measures. Those functions described include monitoring the operations of small networked systems, adding network users, updating passwords, installing or assisting users in installing commercial off-the-shelf software programs, configuring hardware and software according to instructions, running scheduled backups, troubleshooting minor problems, and responding to less complex user questions.

The GS-335 Series covers positions 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.

The GS-335 standard states that employees in this occupation 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. One of the functional areas identified by the standard is the providing of direct support to computer specialists. In this capacity, some computer assistants at full performance levels perform duties similar to those assigned to entry and trainee level computer specialist positions. Such support work typically requires knowledge of the scope, contents, and purposes of program documentation. The duties may also require a working knowledge of programming languages. Some work may require knowledge of system hardware such as the number and kind of devices, operating speeds, amount of core and other equipment characteristics. This knowledge may also be supplemented by knowledge of internal software routines.

We find the appellant's work excluded from the GS-2210 and assigned to the GS-335 series. The AMO LAN is small and the duties do not require the in-depth knowledge of IT principles, concepts, and methods sufficient to plan, analyze, design, develop, test, configure, implement, and maintain the network systems as addressed in the GS-2210 series. The appellant's position is limited in scope by the fact that higher echelons within Air Force have responsibility for establishing service-wide systems, hardware and software requirements, and making decisions on the need for system upgrades and/or software migrations. The work performed by the appellant is characteristic of that described in the GS-335 Computer Clerk and Assistant Series and is properly classified using that standard. The appropriate title for non-supervisory positions at grade GS-5 and above is Computer Assistant.

Grade determination

The GS-335 standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are evaluated on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required in terms of nine factors common to non-supervisory 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 level. 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.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the worker must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply these knowledges.

At Level 1-6, the highest level described in the standard, in addition to the knowledge described at Level 1-5, employees must use extensive knowledge of at least one multi, and typically several single, processor computer systems. They monitor processing work flow and diagnose and resolve error and problem conditions involving many program interrelationships and interlocking computer systems. This work requires extensive knowledge of computer equipment, internal computer processes, applications and utility programs, and magnetic media. It also requires knowledge of a wide range of analytical and diagnostic methods, procedures, and principles. Additionally, knowledge is required of some elements of programming, systems analysis, and equipment operations. These knowledges are used to identify the nature and source of problems occurring during processing and to plan and implement solutions. Employees at this level commonly use these knowledges to advise specialists in setting up run instructions and developing effective operating methods. Work at this level commonly involves taking action to order and interpret system dumps, order and implement back-up recovery procedures to replace faulty tapes or disks, reallocating equipment usage to work around equipment malfunctions, etc.

The appellant's work meets, but does not exceed, Level 1-6. As at Level 1-6, the appellant's work requires knowledge of a wide range of computer techniques, requirements, sources, and procedures. Extensive knowledge is needed of the current system software, operating systems and application software packages that are supported by the AMO. The work also requires extensive knowledge and troubleshooting skills necessary to monitor, operate, and maintain the organization's information systems equipment. The equipment supported includes microcomputers, minicomputers, scanners, laser and color printers, modems, terminals, and system file servers. The appellant must possess knowledge and skills related to telecommunications, LAN connections, ports and switches in order to maintain and troubleshoot systems interfacing and communicating with remotely located systems. Like Level 1-6, the appellant uses knowledge to identify the source of operational failures in the system and to take actions to resolve problems and restore operations. This knowledge of the equipment and system requirements is used to coordinate the installation of new systems or the upgrading of system components or infrastructure. This knowledge is also used to develop and provide AMO management officials with recommendations for the acquisition of new equipment within the parameters of agency guidelines and procedures.

We evaluate this factor at Level 1-6 and credit 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, and the review of completed work.

At Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard, the supervisor provides directions on objectives and priorities for new work, deadlines, and deadline changes for new and established work. The employee identifies the work to be done, plans and carries out the steps required, and submits completed work to users (programmers, operators, functional users) without supervisory review. The employee independently deviates from instructions to provide for situations such as lower and higher priorities and other changes based on past experience and flexibility within processing specifications. The employee commonly adapts or develops new work procedures

and instructions for application by self and others. The employee will seek supervisory assistance and discuss problems related to the work such as when processing requests appear to exceed system capacity or could have adverse effect on other processing requirements. Completed work is reviewed for conformity to deadlines and accepted practices. Work methods are not normally reviewed unless a recurring common pattern of problems develops.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. The supervisor provides directions on objectives and priorities for new work, deadlines, and deadline changes for new and established work. As at Level 2-3, the appellant, based on his expertise in his line of work, has significant latitude to independently plan and carry out his assignments without supervisory review. However, the supervisor monitors work to ensure conformity to deadlines and ensures customers are satisfied. The appellant may seek technical advice from the Logistics Group or the Communications Squadron staff on difficult or unusual problems.

We evaluate this factor at Level 2-3 and credit 275 points

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used in doing the work and the judgment that is needed to apply them.

At Level 3-3, the highest level described in the standard, the employee works with new requirements or new applications for which only general guidelines are available. The employee uses judgment in adjusting the most appropriate guidelines to fit new processing requirements or develops new methods for accomplishing the work. Guidelines may require modification to provide for adding new forms of input, allowing for flexible scheduling, adjusting to new or conflicting requirements, or to adapt to new hardware/software capacity.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 3-3. Guidance available to the appellant consists of general agency program standards, handbooks and manuals; installation policies; and procedural materials provided by hardware/software manufacturers or vendors. Guidelines vary in detail and specificity. As at Level 3-3, the appellant is required to use judgment to interpret, adapt, and apply this guidance; to determine which is more appropriate for resolving local problems relating to system operations; and to integrate new hardware/software into existing systems to maintain compatibility and accomplishing work.

We evaluate this factor at Level 3-3 and credit 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 in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

At Level 4-3 of the standard, the employee performs a variety of tasks involving discrete methods and procedures or a variety of related tasks requiring a sequence of actions involving

differing methods and procedures. Decisions on what is to be done results from study of each assignment or problem situation. Actions to be taken differ according to the equipment or program system appropriate to satisfy the request. For work directly supporting specialists, examples include participation in all phases of a project from problem definition through implementation of a program.

Level 4-4 is distinguished from 4-3 by the variety and complexity of operating systems monitored, nature and variety of problems encountered and resolved, and the nature of independent decisions made by the employee. At Level 4-4, the employee typically monitors the operations of several major computer systems. Programs run on these systems are a mix of independent and interdependent applications. Specifically, employees at this level perform problem solving duties involving a wide range of problem or error conditions in equipment, program data and processing methods and procedures. This diagnosis and resolution of error and problem conditions involves equipment configurations having different operating characteristics, a wide variety of data and programs and many different processes and methods to arrive at solutions or develop new procedures. Also at this level, the employee makes decisions and devises solutions based on program, equipment and system knowledge. This involves interpreting considerable data to identify the problems, planning and implementing solutions, and refining or designing operating methods or techniques.

As at Level 4-3, the appellant performs a variety of tasks involving varying methods and procedures. The appellant provides technical support to computer users within the AMO, ensuring the LAN and server are operational. He resolves operating problems involving network hardware and software issues, installs external and internal devices and peripherals, and sets up software and parameters according to systems specifications. The appellant decides what needs to be done on a day-to-day basis. The AMO computers primarily use the Microsoft Office package and two Air Force programs for aircraft maintenance, parts, and training data. As at Level 4-3, he identifies and carries out methods and variations within established procedures, and makes other similar decisions to perform such work. Actions to be taken differ according to the equipment, program or system affected. However, if confronted with incomplete or conflicting data, the appellant will notify and refer questions/problems to the Logistics Group or the Communications Squadron staff for guidance.

The appellant's position fully meets Level 4-3 for this factor. The duties do not involve the wide variety of data and programs or the independent decisions including development of new procedures or designing operating methods or techniques as typical of the Level 4-4. These responsibilities are typically delegated to the IT staff responsible for the entire base, e.g., the Communications Squadron level.

We evaluate this factor at Level 4-3 and credit 150 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

Level 5-3, the highest level described in the standard, is distinguished from Level 5-2 by the addition of requirements for solving problems and answering technical questions about control, scheduling, and/or direct support functions. The problems encountered are conventional to data processing although solutions are not always covered by established or standardized procedures. Results of the work affect the efficiency of processing services and adequacy of products used in subsequent activities and processing procedures and methods.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 5-3. The appellant is responsible for supporting the AMO's networked computers, printers, and servers that interface with the base LAN. As in Level 5-3, the appellant provides assistance to local users of the systems in the event of a system problem. He also provides training for new users and for new or updated systems, and coordinates and assists in the installation of new or revised systems. The appellant provides advice and assistance to users on operating problems and provides or arranges for training on various systems and applications. He makes recommendations to higher levels for additional equipment and software, ensuring compatibility with present systems, costs, and effectiveness in meeting the organization's needs. However, higher echelons with the agency have responsibility for establishing service-wide systems, hardware and software requirements and making decisions on the need for systems upgrades and/or software migrations. The services provided by the appellant affect the local computer operations of the organization.

We evaluate this factor at Level 5-3 and credit 150 points.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor considers face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain.

At Level 6-2, the highest level described in the standard, contacts are with specialists and recipients of services who are employees of the same agency but outside the data processing organization; with employees of other agencies who use the facility; or with contractors' representatives such as vendor repair technicians or customer engineers. These contacts are structured and routine, and the role of each participant is readily determined.

The appellant's work meets but does not exceed Level 6-2. Comparable to the Level 6-2, the appellant's primary personal contacts are with employees within the AMO, the Logistics Group, and other computer support personnel outside the unit, e.g., the Communications Squadron and vendor repair personnel.

We evaluate this factor at level 6-2 and credit 25 points.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

This factor deals with the purpose of the contacts selected in Factor 6.

At Level 7-2, the highest level described in the standard, the purpose of contacts is to plan or coordinate changes in scheduling requirements or priorities due to data or equipment related

problems; to participate with users in planning and coordinating new or modified requirements; or to plan user participation, methodology, and deadlines for new projects.

Similar to Level 7-2, the appellant's contacts are for the purpose of coordinating work, resolving hardware/software problems, providing technical advice and assistance to users, training new and existing users on new or upgraded systems hardware/software, and advising managers on issues related to automated systems, equipment and software acquisition.

We evaluate this factor at Level 7-2 and credit 50 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 8-2. Like Level 8-2, the appellant's position requires extended periods of standing, walking, stretching, bending, stooping, etc., while troubleshooting, installing equipment, etc. The appellant needs manual dexterity to insert and remove cards from CPU, connect and disconnect cables, equipment, etc. The work also requires lifting and moving CPUs, monitors, printers, boxes of cable and other hardware that may weigh 30 or more pounds.

Level 8-3 is not met, as the appellant's position does not require regular and recurring lifting and carrying of objects of heavy weight (over 50 pounds) and occasional lifting and carrying of heavier materials.

We evaluate this factor at Level 8-2 and credit 20 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor covers the risks and discomforts in the physical surroundings and the safety precautions needed.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 9-1. As at Level 9-1, the appellant's work environment involves everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices, meeting, and training rooms. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

Level 9-2 is not met. The appellant is not routinely exposed to moderate risks requiring other than normal safety precautions.

We evaluate this factor at Level 9-1 and credit 5 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-6	950
2. Supervisor 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	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-1	5
<i>Total</i>		<i>1900</i>

The appellant's position is credited with 1900 points, which falls within the range for GS-9 (1855 to 2100).

Decision

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