

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a classification 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 the conditions and time limits specified in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, sections 511.605, 511.613, and 511.614, as cited in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[Appellant]

Ms. Claudia Cross
Acting Director, Human Resources Management
Department of Energy
ME-50
1000 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, D.C. 20585

Mr. Mark Petts
Executive Vice President
NTEU Chapter 228
P.O. Box 2283
Germantown, Maryland 20875

Introduction

On May 9, 2002, the Washington Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who is employed as a Health Scientist, GS-601-14, in the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for [deleted], Office of the Assistant Secretary for [deleted], Department of Energy (DOE), in [city and State]. The appellant requested that her position be classified at the GS-15 level. This appeal was accepted and decided under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

A telephone audit was conducted by a Washington Oversight Division representative on October 2, 2002, and a subsequent telephone interview with the appellant's supervisor, [name], on February 25, 2003. This appeal was decided by considering the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description, [number], and other material submitted in the agency administrative report on July 29, 2002.

Position information

The appellant serves as the senior science advisor for three collaborative projects focused on studies of health effects in [the country's] populations exposed to radiation. These projects are structured as cooperative agreements, with the appellant responsible for monitoring progress, resolving potential impediments, and overseeing peer review and analysis of proposals and progress reports. The appellant also serves as senior science advisor leading an effort to promote research related to the ongoing medical screening of DOE workers for chronic beryllium disease. In addition, she serves as the principal U.S. investigator on a project involving the establishment and operation of a tissue repository in [another country] to investigate the effects of radiation exposure.

Series determination

The appellant's position is properly assigned to the General Health Science Series, GS-601, which covers professional and scientific work which is health-oriented in nature but not more appropriately classifiable to one of the more specialized series within the GS-600 occupational group. Neither the appellant nor the agency disagrees.

Title determination

Since there are no prescribed titles for the GS-601 series, the position may be titled at the agency's discretion.

Grade determination

There are no published grade-level criteria for the GS-601 series. In such instances where specific criteria are not available for the work being evaluated, a standard addressing similar or related types of work is to be used. In this case, the Research Grants Grade Evaluation Guide addresses work that is most functionally similar to that performed by the appellant. This guide is written in a narrative format, with grade level criteria expressed in terms of two factors, *Assignment characteristics* and *Level of responsibility*.

Assignment characteristics

This factor addresses the nature and scope of the functions carried out; the complexity, novelty, and scope of the subject matter assigned; the kind and degree of technical and managerial judgment required; and the extent and intensity of scientific knowledges involved in carrying out the work.

The appellant's assignments most closely correlate with the GS-14 level. At this level, scientists serve as staff specialists responsible for providing technical leadership and guidance in a major subject-matter, functional, or program area. The assignments require intensive subject-matter knowledge and significant leadership qualities. Scientists at this level function in a lead role for the agency in seeking a balanced research endeavor and in stimulating change along particular lines. Their activities have a major impact on the direction of the agency's research program and on that of the research community itself in the assigned area. GS-14 scientists formulate the program needs of the agency in their areas. They evaluate the significance of trends and emerging fields and assess the adequacy of research competency within the field to achieve a quality and quantity of research to meet the agency's mission and objectives. They serve as the agency representatives on permanent or ad hoc committees to evaluate research proposals, to assess the scientific quality and validity of ongoing research, and to plan future approaches and emphasis. They initiate action among a variety of interests (both governmental and nongovernmental) to bring deficiencies and new developments into sharper focus, to stimulate new thinking or redirection of research efforts, and to enhance research capability. GS-14 scientists evaluate the significance of research results and initiate appropriate action to assure that proper action is given to critical and far-reaching research. They prepare or encourage scientists to prepare articles and reports and initiate symposia and other activities to disseminate vital data.

The appellant provides technical leadership and guidance for molecular epidemiology research in the agency's [country] program. She functioned in a lead role for the agency in advocating the addition of this component to the program and in providing oversight for its implementation, from issuance of the request for proposals through the peer review process and selection of proposals for funding, resulting in the initiation of five initial and two subsequent new collaborative projects between the U.S. and [the other country]. She was the primary force in the establishment of a tissue repository in the [country's] program, to include defining the scope of work, identifying and organizing U.S. training for the project scientists, selection and delivery of equipment, securing of required approvals relating to human subjects work, and preparation of progress reports. She serves as the lead scientist for the agency in promoting the establishment of a broad beryllium research program by establishing contacts with other agencies involved in related work, developing the program for a conference on future research in chronic beryllium disease, leading an effort to establish a beryllium lymphocyte repository, and soliciting proposals to conduct DOE-supported research on chronic beryllium disease. She has served as an invited speaker on the [country's]n tissue repository at scientific meetings and conferences, an invited presenter at seminars at the National Cancer Institute and at the Uniformed University of Health Sciences, established collaborative contacts with the European community administrators in charge of their programs in [country] to ensure that research efforts are not being duplicated, and developed a successful proposal for database integration between the [country's]n program and the Radiation Effects Research Foundation Program. These activities fully demonstrate her leadership role within her program area in stimulating new thinking, serving as a catalyst for the

redirection of research efforts, assessing research capabilities, and undertaking action to plan future approaches.

The appellant's work does not extend to the GS-15 level. At that level, scientists serve as staff experts and consultants providing leadership and direction for programs of national and international scope and impact in establishing goals and objectives for research programs; allocating scarce resources among major competitive programs; organizing efforts to initiate pioneering programs and to resolve critical issues involving national policies; developing policies and plans for strengthening agency and national programs of scientific and public urgency; determining the need for and directing the preparation of technical and administrative guides, standards, and criteria to accomplish national research objectives; continually evaluating the utilization of resources against progress made and reorienting programs to meet exceptionally important new national policies and goals; and integrating and coordinating the efforts of others in the agency at the GS-14 and lower levels who are each giving technical leadership to a research grants area. At this level, scientists commonly serve as team leaders or program directors with 1-3 associates.

This level describes positions that provide policy and program direction for a number of major programs, with considerable authority to establish goals and objectives, develop policies and administrative mechanisms, initiate or reorient programs, and allocate resources. The appellant does not have this level of authority and does not occupy a position whereby she is overseeing and giving direction to other scientists within the agency who are responsible for various program segments. Her role is principally to serve as a subject matter expert and technical resource for other investigators within the context of the cooperative agreements administered by her agency, rather than to carry out the broader, management-oriented functions expected at the GS-15 level. She advocates for the expansion of research capabilities and activities within the area of radiobiology and lends technical expertise to guide and advise on the implementation of these efforts, but she does not serve in the broader decision-making or policy-making capacity that would determine the ultimate substance and composition of the agency's research endeavors within the program area.

Level of responsibility

The level of responsibility inherent in the appellant's position is consistent with the GS-14 level. GS-14 scientists are responsible for providing an integrated and responsive agency effort for a research program or area. They receive little or no technical guidance or direction from superiors other than that provided by agency policies, practices, and funding levels. Typically, scientists at this level establish criteria and standards for others to follow in planning, reviewing, and evaluating research projects. The nature of the work requires a broad expanse of contacts with the scientific community involving substantial and fundamental issues in the given field. Since GS-14 scientists speak for the agency in formal and informal forums, the work is rarely subject to technical review except for critical matters they bring to the supervisor's attention. Supervisory control is primarily administrative and concerns such matters as approval for overall funding levels and priorities assigned to research efforts, initiating new programs, organizing symposia, and changing objectives of research efforts which have an important impact on major programs. Decisions relative to nonfunding and nonsupport of research efforts are frequently not susceptible to review unless the subject is quite controversial in the scientific community or of major importance to the agency's mission.

This basically describes the manner in which the appellant operates. She is responsible for stimulating and guiding an integrated agency effort within the area of molecular epidemiology research. She has a broad base of both governmental and nongovernmental contacts within the scientific community and speaks for the agency in respect to her areas of expertise. Her supervisor exercises only administrative direction over her activities, related primarily to such issues as funding, feasibility, and policy considerations.

The degree of authority vested in the appellant's position does not meet the GS-15 level. GS-15 scientists are responsible for playing a major role in the formulation of agencywide program objectives, plans, policies, and criteria. They formulate the posture of the agency for the support of research in broad and important areas of national interest. GS-15 scientists advise the highest levels of agency management in major areas of importance in overall policy and program direction and serve as spokespersons for the agency in this regard with the scientific community. Contacts and participation with eminent scientists are typical. Their advice and direction are recognized within the agency and by leading figures in the scientific community. Supervision at this level is nominal. GS-15 scientists carry out the programs within the framework of enabling legislation, overall agency policies, missions, objectives, and resources. Their work is not susceptible to review except in terms of the fulfillment of broad program objectives and national goals, the effect of their advice and influence in managing and achieving a quality research program, and their contribution to the advancement of research in their broad field to meet exceptionally important new and changing national interests.

This level of responsibility basically implies a significant degree of program management authority, i.e., where the scientist is responsible for directing a major program with the attendant policy-making and budgetary authorities. The appellant does not direct a program, nor does she formulate agencywide research plans and policies. She works within the context of the broader [country] program in providing technical leadership and expertise to the accomplishment of particular research endeavors. Her area of expertise is relatively narrow and has focused primarily on the study of extreme radiological exposure found within a segment of the [country's] workforce. Although this may have some application for the detection and treatment of radiation illnesses in this country, it does not represent a broad area of national interest typical of the GS-15 level. She works under administrative supervision, but this supervision is not nominal as would be the case for a program manager whose work is reviewed only for the accomplishment of broad program goals. Rather, since her work is more circumscribed, the supervisory review is more defined, relating to, for example, whether the assigned cooperative agreements are being effectively administered.

Decision

The appealed position is properly classified as GS-601-14, with the title at the discretion of the agency.