

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

Atlanta Field Services Group
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 1018
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Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Training Instructor (Manpower)
GS-1712-9

Organization: [organization]
[organization]
Manpower and Personnel Training Flight
Air Education and Training Command
Department of the Air Force
[location]

OPM decision: Training Instructor (parenthetical title
at option of agency)

GS-1712-9

OPM decision number: C-1712-09-02

/s/Virginia L. Magnuson
Virginia L. Magnuson
Classification Appeals Officer

October 24, 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]
[address]
[location]

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Introduction

On July 31, 2003, the Atlanta Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant]. He is employed as Training Instructor (Manpower), GS-1712-9, in the [organization], [organization], Manpower and Personnel Training Flight, Air Education and Training Command (AETC), Department of the Air Force, [location]. The appellant requests that his position be upgraded to Training Instructor (Manpower), GS-1712-11. We received the complete administrative report from the agency on July 28, 2003. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

The appellant believes that the analytical skills, particularly mathematical analysis, proficiency in statistics, and the comprehensive approach utilized in training exercises and projects were not captured adequately or completely in the evaluation of his position. He believes that the conceptual nature of the materials makes the course more difficult to teach. The appellant stated that the numerous years of experience required in the manpower field in order to effectively create lesson plans, study guides, and progress checks. He also pointed out that the agency's evaluation did not compare the classification of his position to positions in the finance career field where the civilian instructors are classified at the GS-11 level.

In evaluating positions, agencies are required to classify positions according to the work done in them; that is, positions are classified based on the duties and responsibilities of the position and the qualifications required to perform that work. An employee's qualifications may be considered only to the extent that they are required to perform the work of the position. By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guides (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 other positions as a basis for deciding his appeal.

We conducted a telephone audit with the appellant and telephone interviews with his immediate supervisor, as well as the Chief of Training and Development Element (TDE), Manpower and Personnel Training Flight, and the Training Manager for the AETC Manpower Career Field. In deciding this appeal, we fully considered the audit, the interview findings, and all information of record provided by the appellant and his agency, including his current work assignments and position description of record.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to position description number [#]. Both the appellant and his supervisor certified the accuracy of the position description. Based on the appeal record, we find that the position description of record contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned by management and performed by the appellant and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

[organization]Air Force Base is responsible for nearly 500 training courses both locally and at other bases. The [organization] manages training for more than 60 courses in 15 Air Force specialties and for more than 6000 students annually. Training is provided to Air Force officers and enlisted members, as well as its civilian employees at all ranks from services of many countries. Courses deal with manpower management, military personnel, personnel systems management, and manpower personnel wartime contingency.

The primary purpose of the appellant's position is to conduct classroom and laboratory instruction. The appellant is one of several civilian and military positions authorized to teach the Manpower Apprentice course, E3ALR3UO31 003. The course provides an introduction to the manpower career field, work identification and measurement, requirements determination, manpower programming and resource management, organization structure and performance management. There are six blocks of instruction and the course runs for 39 academic days or 312 hours. While the appellant is able to teach all blocks, he is primarily responsible for teaching blocks 2, 3, and 5 to enlisted military and civilian personnel. He develops study guides (or workbooks) and other instructional materials and examples to enhance the course and his presentation. Attendees must have current proficiency in algebra.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant does not contest the agency's title or series determination for his position. The primary function, as well as the career path of the position, is instruction. The agency placed the appellant's position in the Training Instruction Series, GS-1712, and titled it Training Instructor. We concur. Because the position requires a specialized knowledge of manpower, the agency chose to add the parenthetical title of Manpower to the basic title in accordance with titling instructions in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

As specified in the GS-1712 series, the position is titled and evaluated by application of the Grade Level Guide for Instructional Work. The type of work performed by the appellant determines the official title as well as whether Part I or II of the Guide is used to determine the grade level. The grade level criteria in the Guide are divided into two parts: Part I for instructor work and Part II for instructional specialist work. The instructor work performed by the appellant is characteristic of that described in Part I. Part I grading criteria is used for evaluation.

Grade determination

The criteria in the Guide cover two broad classification factors: *Nature of assignment* and *Level of responsibility*.

Nature of assignment

This factor encompasses such aspects as the knowledge, skill, and ability required to perform the work, and the complexity and difficulty of the duties and responsibilities assigned.

At the GS-9 level, the courses cover a wide variety of topics in well-established areas of a subject-matter field. They include courses taught by a technical service school in the

fundamentals and skills of a technical occupation; courses taught at the secondary through basic undergraduate levels; or all subjects taught at an elementary school level. They require thorough familiarity with the assigned subject-matter area and use of a wide range of teaching methods or tools depending on the students' learning requirements. They are usually well structured and have ample training materials. These courses generally involve instructional problems that require organization, illustration, and interpretation of course material in order to reach and motivate students who may pose typical problems of communication and motivation, e.g., diverse ages, backgrounds, and levels of interest in the course. GS-9 instructors need to give concrete expression to the abstract principles and concepts taught at this level. They make recommendations for changes that involve substantive rather than procedural matters. Obtaining and adapting current instructional material is typical of this level.

At the GS-11 level, the courses cover advanced technical systems or subject-matter areas comparable to the upper-division undergraduate level. These courses are not in standardized or prestructured form, and they typically have source material problems (e.g., source materials may be excessively numerous, may be difficult to locate, or may be difficult to adapt). GS-11 instructors are responsible for overall maintenance of their assigned courses and determine the need for and initiate changes or updates in course content due to subject matter or student problems. Subject-matter problems result from technological changes or new developments in the field and require frequent updating of knowledge and course content by the instructors. The student problems relate to students with complicated, specialized, or persistent learning difficulties requiring the instructors to modify courses to meet their needs. GS-11 instructors are substantially involved in the development or modification of the courses that are taught and frequently demonstrate techniques to trainee instructors and evaluate the performance of lower level instructors.

The duties of the appellant's position are characteristics of the GS-9 level. His primary responsibility is to teach the Manpower Apprentice course to enlisted military and civilian personnel in the Manpower career field. The purpose of the training is to build core competencies in the manpower career field. Comparable to the GS-9 level, the blocks of instructions taught by the appellant are in a well-established area of a subject matter field in a technical service school. The students do not have special learning problems that would require the instructor to modify the course material. As at the GS-9 level, the blocks are well structured and standardized and have ample training materials. The course content and duration are dictated and provided in the Plan of Instruction (POI). The POI contains the qualitative requirements for the apprentice course in terms of objectives for each unit of instruction and shows planned time, training standard correlation, and support materials and guidance. The appellant develops his lesson plan and work slides within the confines of the POI. He exercises latitude in the presentation, developing study guides and other instructional materials and examples to enhance the course as well as his presentation. The subject matter skills taught and the well-structured training packages are typical of the GS-9 level.

The appellant's duties do not meet the characteristics of the GS-11 level. The courses taught by the appellant are equivalent to those taught by a technical service school and are not comparable to the upper-division undergraduate level as described at the GS-11 level. The appellant's courses do not compare to the unstructured courses typical of the GS-11 level that have source

material problems. As a subject matter expert, the appellant, as well as the other instructors, participates in curriculum review and modification. However, unlike the GS-11 level, the appellant does not determine the need for and initiate changes or updates in course content. The Training Manager, on a biennial basis, reviews the course and any changes to the course contents are done in concert by the Training Manager and the TDE. The appellant's participation and contribution in the course development and revision are limited (which the position description of record credits to be five percent of appellant's work time) and do not approach the GS-11 grade level. The abundance and the standardization of course materials, as well as lack of student problems, preclude evaluation at the GS-11 grade level.

This factor is evaluated at the GS-9 level.

Level of responsibility

This factor includes such things as independence (e.g., the degree to which work and decisions are supervised or reviewed); the extent to which guidelines for the work are available or must be developed; and the kinds of contacts required to perform the work.

At the GS-9 level, the instructors independently plan and carry out their training sessions within the prescribed course framework. They resolve normal classroom problems and make outside contacts for supplemental information and materials. On unusual matters or questions of program objectives and policy, they obtain guidance before taking action. Recommendations for course modification receive review for consistency with overall course material, for technical accuracy, and for educational adequacy. At this level, the courses of instructors are audited and evaluated periodically by higher level instructors. The GS-9 instructors may participate in task analyses for determining training requirements or in special staff studies of training and testing materials, for which they receive specific guidance on coverage, methodology, approaches, and sources to use.

At the GS-11 level, the instructors may receive course assignments with the source objectives, topics to be covered and general content in a prescribed form, but they typically participate in original course content development and in its subsequent modification. Within the framework of approved course objectives and topics to be covered, instructors at the GS-11 level use such methods as they believe will be most effective. They determine the need for additional subject-matter information and may meet with representatives of outside organizations in order to obtain it. They develop or adapt new or revised training or testing materials for normal course use. The supervisor may review the material for technical accuracy, consistency with course objectives, educational effectiveness, and program policy. Illustrations of work for GS-11 instructors include responsibility for complete courses.

The appellant's level of responsibility matches the GS-9 level. The appellant works independently, performing the full range of training and instruction. The appellant performs his duties without detailed or specific guidance from his supervisor. The supervisor is available to assist the appellant if there are conflicts. The appellant is expected to handle the technical aspects of the manpower instruction, drawing from his own experience and in accordance with established manpower methods, practices, and regulatory guidelines. The work is reviewed in

terms of the quality of training provided to students, as well as effectiveness in meeting course objectives. As at the GS-9 level, the supervisor may also observe during classes to determine the adequacy of the instruction.

The GS-11 level of responsibility is not met. The appellant is considered a subject matter expert, but is primarily responsible for the maintenance and currency of course materials for the blocks of the course that he teaches. While the appellant, as part of a team and through delegation, may contribute to necessary revisions, he does not have significant responsibility for course development, e.g., outline and content, for subject matter comparable to the upper-division undergraduate level typical of the GS-11 level. The TDE Training Specialists review the course materials. The Chief of TDE, in concert with the Training Manager, is responsible for the overall development and revision of courses to ensure compliance with the AETC instructions. The presence and exercise of manpower training expertise and source content responsibility of those positions, coupled with the standardized course material and review of work, preclude evaluation at the GS-11 level.

This factor is evaluated at the GS-9 level.

Summary

Since both factors are credited at the GS-9 grade level, we find that the appellant's work is properly evaluated at the GS-9 grade level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Training Instructor, GS-1712-9 (parenthetical title at option of the agency).