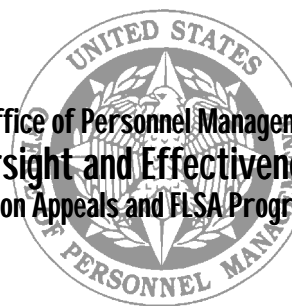


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



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

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

Appellant: [lead appellant's name (group appeal)]

Agency classification: File Clerk
GS-305-3

Organization: Radiology Service
Patient Care Services
[medical center's name]
Department of Veterans Affairs
[city, state]

OPM decision: File Clerk
GS-305-3

OPM decision number: C-0305-03-02

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

11/19/98
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:

[appellants' names and address of
lead appellant]

[name and address of appellants'
representative]

Chief
Human Resources Management Service
[name of medical center]
Department of Veterans Affairs
[address of appellant's servicing personnel
office]

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Personnel and
Labor Relations
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Introduction

The Dallas Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [name of appellants' representative] on behalf of [names of appellants] on July 9, 1998. [name of appellants' representative] is the designated representative of [names of appellants]. Their positions are currently classified as File Clerk, GS-305-3. However, they believe the classification should be File Clerk, GS-305-4. Both appellants work in the Radiology Service, Patient Care Services, [name of medical center], Department of Veterans Affairs, [city and state]. We have accepted and decided the appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellants' personal representative and their agency, including the official position description (PD No. [number of PD]). We also considered information obtained during telephone interviews with the appellants and their supervisor.

Position information

The appellants serve as file clerks under the supervision of the Radiology Service Administrative Officer. The appellants maintain radiology medical records and retrieve, file, and make available radiology medical records to authorized personnel, clinics, and wards. This work includes the assembly of radiographic film for interpretation by radiologists, filing radiographic reports and film jackets, checking films in and out, picking up film throughout the medical center, pulling film that is eligible for disposal or transfer, receiving film from outside the medical center, copying film, and relieving the receptionist when necessary. The position description and other material of record furnish more information about the duties and responsibilities.

Series, title, and standard determination

The classification standard for Mail and File Series, GS-305, is used to classify these positions. This standard includes positions involving clerical work related to the processing of incoming or outgoing mail and/or the systematic arrangement of records for storage or reference purposes, the scheduled disposition of records, and the performance of related work when such duties require the application of established mail or file methods and procedures, knowledge of prescribed systems for governing the flow and control of communications, and/or the filing or storage and retrieval of records, and knowledge of the organization and functions of the operating unit or units serviced. The appellants do not question the series or title of their positions. We find that the appellants' positions are properly assigned to the GS-305 series with the title of File Clerk.

Grade determination

The mail and file clerk standard uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES), which employs nine factors. Under the FES, each factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics needed to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher

level. The standard assigns specific points for each factor level. After all factors are evaluated, the total points are converted to grade levels based on the grade conversion table in the standard. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

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 those knowledges. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied.

File positions at Level 1-2 typically require a basic knowledge of the functions and organizational structures of the units serviced, a basic knowledge of the subject matter content of the materials being processed, and a knowledge of file processing and control procedures.

Positions at Level 1-3 typically require a thorough knowledge of the functions performed within the units serviced, a thorough knowledge of the subject matter content of the materials being processed, and a thorough knowledge of filing systems characterized as complex. This knowledge is used to classify and cross-reference materials in decimal and alphanumeric systems which may be extensively cross-referenced, or when the subject matter of the material is overlapping or difficult to discern.

The appellants' positions require a basic knowledge of the units serviced in order to assure that radiology files are sent to the appropriate location when requested. A thorough knowledge of the functions performed within the serviced units is not required. When placing film for interpretation by the radiologist, a basic knowledge of the radiographic views is required in order to assure the film is correctly displayed. This knowledge is usually attained during an initial orientation which make take three to four days. A thorough knowledge of the subject matter content of the materials is not required. A knowledge of the numeric filing system, based on the patient's Social Security number, is required. This system is not complex and does not require extensive cross-referencing of materials. We find that the knowledge required and applied in these positions is consistent with that described at Level 1-2.

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. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives.

Most assignments at Level 2-2 are performed independently according to established procedures and previous experience. Instructions are received from the supervisor on nonrecurring assignments, changes in procedures, or when problems arise for which there are no precedents.

At Level 2-3, the employee independently plans and adjusts the file function to meet the requirements of serviced units which are subject to relatively constant change. The employee must therefore independently recognize the need for and take action to establish new file procedures or systems and to otherwise adapt or change established procedures.

The appellants are supervised by the Radiology Administrative Officer. Work is performed independently with minimum supervision utilizing a filing system that is standardized throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs. While the various clinics may experience changes in the scheduled appointments requiring additional records to be pulled, this does not meet the criteria of constant change within the units serviced nor does it require new procedures or systems as envisioned by the standard. We find that the supervisory controls of the appellants' positions are consistent with those described for Level 2-2.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

Guidelines utilized at Level 3-1 may consist of both standing oral instructions and written guides, the majority of which are readily memorized. The guidelines are complete and specific, permitting little discretion in their application. The employee works strictly according to the guidelines, referring deviations to the supervisor for decision.

At Level 3-2, the guidelines consist of numerous standing oral instructions and written procedural guides which are applicable in differing work situations. Thus, employees must use judgment and initiative in selecting and applying the proper guide (e.g., in the reading and routing of materials to a number of serviced units when the functions of the units are very similar, in classifying and cross-indexing when the subject matter of the materials may be covered by several possible categories, etc.). Judgment is also used in selecting alternative means of locating materials missing from files when search information is inadequate or misleading and several locations are possible.

The guidelines applicable to the appellants' positions consist of the standardized filing procedures utilized throughout the agency and local standing operating procedures. These guidelines are well established and provide specific instructions for processing materials. Most of these guidelines are memorized and there is little interpretation necessary. Judgment may be applied in locating missing files or materials, but is not required to select and apply various guides as specified at Level 3-2. Therefore, we find that the guidelines applicable to the appellants' positions are consistent with Level 3-1.

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.

Positions at Level 4-1 require performance of clear-cut and repetitive tasks such as sorting mail into a few broad categories; routing mail by placing it in clearly identified slots, boxes, or pouches; sequencing and filing uniform materials in a subject matter or alphabetical filing system; performing a range of file tasks in a security classified or security materials storage area; or similar tasks where the actions and steps to be taken are easily discernible.

Work at Level 4-2 requires the performance of several related duties involving consideration of choices of appropriate procedures or actions to be taken in a variety of work situations. There is generally variety in the materials processed and in the activity required. Work of this type also requires a number of steps or processes involving several different types of mail and recognizing which procedure is appropriate for each type (e.g., registered, insured, certified, security classified, etc.); distinguishing among a large number of distribution points when the functions of some serviced units overlap; classifying to appropriate file categories based on subject-matter content of materials; searching for missing materials and locating requested materials when information varies or conflicts; or similar work.

The appellants work on a rotating two-week schedule which determines the specific duties for that period. Depending on the schedule, each file clerk will be assigned one of the following duties: filing records; responding to unscheduled requests for records (customer service); pulling records for the next day's scheduled appointments; or retrieving and marking film that has been read and loading the viewing board with new film to be read by the radiologists. While the appellants' work may involve a large volume of materials, there is only one type of material processed following standard procedures and utilizing a single filing system. We find that the complexity of the work is consistent with Level 4-1.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

Positions performing at Level 5-1 are concerned with well-established mail and/or file functions. Performance of these functions on a timely basis facilitates the work performed in the serviced units.

Positions at Level 5-2 are concerned with work involving the improvement of methods or procedures affecting the overall efficiency of the mail and file unit; or work which involves determining and selecting appropriate materials to be made available to serviced units for their use. Performance

affects the ability of personnel in the serviced units to perform their duties in an accurate manner, or provide services to others.

The purpose of the appellants' work is to provide prompt and accurate responses to requests for radiology records following well-established procedures. The appellants' work directly affects the performance of those serviced. The appellants' positions are not responsible for the overall efficiency of the file unit nor do they determine or select the materials made available to the serviced units. Each clinic's appointment schedule or as-needed requests by various customers determines which files are provided. We find that the scope and effect of the work is consistent with Level 5-1.

Factor 6, Personal contacts

This factor includes face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

Above the lowest level, points should be credited under this factor only for contacts which are essential for successful performance of the work and which have a demonstrable impact on the difficulty and responsibility of the work performed.

Personal contacts at Level 6-1 are primarily with employees in the immediate work unit, and also in related mail and file units.

Personal contacts at Level 6-2 are typically with personnel in serviced units and may also include personnel outside the organization.

The appellants routinely interact with personnel outside the immediate work unit including clinic personnel, radiologists, radiology technicians, patients, and other customers. We find that these personal contacts are consistent with Level 6-2.

Factor 7, Purpose of contacts

The purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives. The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for this factor must be the same as the contacts which are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6.

At Level 7-1, the purpose of contacts is to obtain or exchange information regarding performance of functions in the immediate work unit and (as required) to provide information to personnel in serviced units regarding mail and file operations.

The purpose of contacts at Level 7-2 is to work with personnel in serviced units in resolving such operating problems as delays in receipt of materials, improperly coded or classified files or materials, and problems of similar difficulty, including inadequacy of existing file categories.

Contacts by the appellants are primarily for the purpose of exchanging factual information concerning the radiology files. The resolution of operating problems is the responsibility of the supervisor. We find that the purpose of contacts is consistent with Level 7-1.

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 (e.g., specific agility and dexterity requirements) and the physical exertion involved in the work (e.g., climbing, lifting, pushing, balancing, stooping, kneeling, crouching, crawling, or reaching).

Work at Level 8-2 requires long periods of standing, walking, or bending; or requires recurring lifting and carrying of packages, pouches, or bags of moderate weight (under 50 pounds) and occasional lifting and carrying of heavier materials.

At Level 8-3, the work requires regular and recurring lifting and carrying of objects of heavy weight (over 50 pounds) and occasional lifting and carrying of heavier materials.

The appellants' positions require long periods of standing, walking, bending, and reaching. They routinely carry records of moderate weight and may push wheeled carts of records. During the annual purging of files, boxes of heavier materials may occasionally be handled. We find that the physical demands of the work is consistent with Level 8-2.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required. Although the use of safety precautions can practically eliminate a certain danger or discomfort, such situations typically place additional demands upon the employee in carrying out safety regulations and techniques.

The work at Level 9-1 is performed in an office setting that is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

At Level 9-2, work is performed on loading docks or other areas exposed to the weather, or in areas subject to high noise levels and vibration, and may require the use of protective clothing. This level also encompasses working around moving equipment.

The appellants work in an office setting consisting of two primary file rooms and a secondary basement location. These areas do not expose the appellants to the weather, high noise levels, vibration, or moving equipment. No protective clothing is required. We find that the work environment is consistent with Level 9-1.

Summary

In sum, we have evaluated the appellants' positions as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-2	200
2. Supervisory controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-1	25
4. Complexity	4-1	25
5. Scope and effect	5-1	25
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of contacts	7-1	20
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total points:		470

The appellants' positions warrant 470 total points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table of the standard, their positions are properly graded at GS-3.

Decision

The appellants' positions are properly classified as File Clerk, GS-305-3.