

**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

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

Appellant:	[The appellant]
Agency classification:	Office Automation Clerk GS-326-4
Organization:	[The appellant's installation] U.S. Department of the Navy
OPM decision:	Office Automation Clerk GS-326-4
OPM decision number:	C-0326-04-01

Carlos A. Torrico
Classification Appeals Officer

August 27, 1999

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).

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Introduction

On December 3, 1998, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant]. Her position is currently classified as an Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-4. However, the appellant believes that the position should be classified as a Trouble Desk Clerk, GS-303 at a grade higher than GS-4. The appellant works in the [the appellant's organization]. We have accepted and decided her appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

General issues

This appeal decision is based on careful review of all information submitted by the appellant and her agency. Both the appellant and her immediate supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official position description (number PKD523F).

In her appeal letter to OPM, the appellant suggests that she has been performing the work of two positions, those of an office automation clerk and those of a trouble desk clerk, for a long period of time without appropriate compensation. The appellant's apparent belief that taking on duties formerly performed by another employee should be the basis for receiving additional pay is incorrect. By law, positions are classified by comparing duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines. Assumption of additional duties does not necessarily have an effect on a position's classification. The appellant's official position description clearly includes trouble desk clerk duties. We have fully considered these duties, and all other duties assigned to and performed by the appellant in our decision.

Position information

The appellant performs a wide variety of general clerical tasks most of which require the ability to use office automation equipment and associated software. Duties include: receipt, processing, and recording of Emergency and Service Work Authorizations; assembling data; updating tracking reports; and a range of general clerical and administrative tasks including typing, filing, document preparation, and telephone coverage. The official position description, and other material of record provide additional information about the duties and responsibilities of this position and how they are carried out.

Series, title and standard determination

The appellant's position is currently classified to the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326. The appellant believes that her position is more properly classified to the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303.

As stated in the classification standard for the GS-326 series (dated November 1990) work in that series includes:

. . .all positions the primary duties of which are to perform office automation work, which includes word processing, either solely or in combination with clerical work, when such work is performed in the context of general office clerical support. . . Positions in this series require: (1) knowledge of general office automation software, practices, and procedures; (2) competitive level proficiency in typing; and (3) ability to apply these knowledges and skills in the performance of general office support work.

As defined in the classification standard for the GS-303 series (dated January 1979) work in that series includes:

. . .positions the duties of which are to perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. The work requires a knowledge of the procedures and technique involved in carrying out the work of an organization and involves application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines.

Positions classified in the GS-303 series involve work which is one-grade interval in nature, and where the primary work of the position involves specialized work for which no appropriate occupational series has been established.

As is typical of positions classified to the GS-326 series, the appellant's position primarily requires a knowledge of office automation software, competitive level typing skills, and the ability to apply these skills in the performance of general office support work. The official position description documents that nearly all of the appellant's work time is spent on general office support work. In our judgement, the appellant's trouble desk work (as described in the second paragraph under the major duties section of the appellant's position description) is not sufficiently specialized to warrant classification to the GS-303 series. We acknowledge that this is a subtle point. However, even if the trouble desk work were to be classified to the GS-303 series, the GS-326 series remains the best overall choice for the appellant's position for the following reasons:

- The GS-326 series definition is a more precise and complete description of the appellant's duties.
- The trouble desk work occupies only 25 percent of the appellant's work time. The large majority of the appellant's time is spent on clearly general office clerical support work in combination with office automation skills as is typical of the GS-326 series.

- As mentioned above, one essential criterion for classifying a position to the GS-303 series is that the primary work of the position is not classifiable in any other series. Since the primary work of the appellant's position is covered by the GS-326 series, classification to the GS-303 series would not be appropriate.

We find that the appellant's position is properly classified to the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326 and titled Office Automation Clerk.

To evaluate the grade level of the appellant's office automation duties we have applied the grading criteria in the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, dated November 1990 (reissued in HRCD-6, dated January 1999). To assess the grade of the appellant's general office clerical work we have applied the grading criteria discussed in the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, dated June 1989 (reissued in HRCD-6, dated January 1999). Our application of the grading criteria of these two guides to the appellant's position follows.

Grade level determination

Evaluation of Office Automation Duties

The Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide 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.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position, Level 1-3, 350 points

The appellant's office automation duties fully meet the knowledge described in the guide at Level 1-3 (pages 11-12). As is typical of Level 1-3, the appellant uses word processing, E-mail, spreadsheet, and data base software to produce a variety of reports, letters, memoranda, and other documents. To perform these tasks, she must apply knowledge of the varied range and advanced functions of one or more software types. At Level 1-4 (pages 12-13) sufficient knowledge is required to: use the more advanced functions of a variety of software, select the appropriate software for a new task, integrate data from different software into a single document, regularly devise new methods of automated office support, or complete nonstandard assignments. The knowledge required for the appellant's duties does not meet Level 1-4. Unlike that level she is not required to develop new methods of automated office support, or complete nonstandard assignments using a variety of office automation technologies. Factor 1 is properly evaluated at Level 1-3 and awarded 350 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls, Level 2-2, 125 points

The supervision received by the appellant fully meets Level 2-2 (page 14). As is typical of Level 2-2, the supervisor provides general instructions for standard office automation tasks, and most of the appellant's work is covered by standing office practices and procedures. When given new, unusual or particularly difficult assignments the supervisor provides more specific additional guidance. The appellant works independently in carrying out her regular and recurring assignments. The appellant is responsible for the accuracy of the reports she produces. Much of her work is reviewed through its use by maintenance technicians. Since nearly all of the appellant's work is covered by standing office practices and procedures, the opportunity for the appellant to act on her own initiative to resolve problems not covered by standard procedures as expected at Level 2-3 is limited (page 14). Factor 2 is properly evaluated at Level 2-2 and awarded 125 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines, Level 3-2, 125 points

The appellant's guidelines are best described at Level 3-2 (pages 16-17). Similar to that level, her guidelines typically include a variety of agency instructions, style manuals, user manuals, and standard office practices and procedures. These include both step-by-step instructions and general procedural guidelines. The appellant finds and applies the appropriate guideline. The regular deviation from existing guidelines, the development of new procedures that often become guidelines for other employees, and the need to search manuals and other guidelines for new methods that can be adapted and applied to current automation problems typical of Level 3-3 (page 17) are not present in the appellant's position. Factor 3 is properly evaluated at Level 3-2 and awarded 125 points.

Factor 4, Complexity, Level 4-2, 75 points

As is typical of Level 4-2 (pages 19-20), the appellant produces a number of different reports, correspondence and other documents each requiring a varying number and sequence of steps to complete. She makes choices between established alternatives in completing her assignments. For example, she selects the appropriate software for the job, and formats documents as required. She is expected to recognize errors and question originators in such matters as formatting, spelling, grammar, or punctuation, missing information, or discrepancies between the nature of the material and the processing instructions cited. The three work illustrations for Level 4-2 each describe assignments similar to those performed by the appellant. Assignments described in the guide at Level 4-3 (pages 20-22) are significantly more complicated than those assigned to the appellant. At Level 4-3 the employee performs a broad range of office automation duties. For example, using word processing and graphics software to prepare reports and briefing documents, spreadsheet software to maintain a unit's fiscal records, and project management software to track the status of a number of projects assigned to the unit. Or, performing complex office automation

duties requiring different approaches and methods. For example, using different word processing packages to edit lengthy and complicated technical reports and resolving incompatibility problems in transferring text from one software package to another. Each of the three illustrations provided by the guide for Level 4-3 involve regular responsibility for developing new and improved ways to automate office functions. The appellant's duties do not reach this level of complexity. Factor 4 is properly evaluated at Level 4-2 and awarded 75 points.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect, Level 5-1, 25 points

The guide's first paragraph describing Level 5-1 (page 22) is a precise match to the appellant's position. Like that level, the purpose of the work is to perform specific, recurring tasks required to maintain electronic records and to produce various items. Also, as expected at Level 5-1 the appellant's work facilitates the work of the originators of the documents or the users of the data maintained. The appellant's work does not affect the way in which other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information as is expected at Level 5-2 (page 22). Factor 5 is properly evaluated at Level 5-1 and awarded 25 points.

Factor 6, Personal contacts and Factor 7, Purpose of contacts, Level 6-1/7-A, 30 points

As is typical of Level 6-1 (page 23), the appellant's contacts are generally within her work unit or related support units. She is not regularly in contact with employees at various levels throughout the agency who are affected by her work on automated office procedures as is typical of Level 6-2. Personal contacts are evaluated at Level 6-1.

As is typical of Level 7-A (page 23), the purpose of the appellant's contacts is to exchange information about her assignments or methods to be used to complete assignments. She does not regularly make contacts for the purpose of planning, coordinating, and integrating office automation issues between and among work units. Purpose of contacts is evaluated at Level 7-A.

With Personal contacts evaluated at Level 6-1 and Purpose of contacts evaluated at Level 7-A, the total points awarded by application of the chart on page 23 of the guide is 30 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands, Level 8-1, 5 points

The appellant's work is sedentary, which meets Level 8-1 (page 23) and 5 points are credited.

Factor 9, Work environment, Level 9-1, 5 points

The appellant's work is generally performed in an office which involves only minimal risks and is typical of Level 9-1 (page 23). Five points are awarded for Factor 9.

Summary

We have evaluated the appellant's office automation duties as follows:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-1	25
6. Personal contacts	Level 6-1	30
7. Purpose of contacts	Level 7-A	--
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total points:		740

The appellant's office automation duties warrant 740 total points. Therefore, in accordance with the grade conversion table contained on page 7 of the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, the appellant's office automation work is properly graded at GS-4.

Evaluation of General Office Clerical Duties

As previously noted, we will use the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work to evaluate the appellant's general office clerical work. The clerical guide uses two classification factors: Nature of Assignment and Level of Responsibility. Our evaluation by reference to these factors follows.

Nature of Assignment

Work at the GS-4 level (pages 9-11) consists of performing a full range of standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems. We find that the appellant has comparable work assignments. The record indicates several standard clerical assignments, such as receiving emergency and service work authorizations and entering them into the appropriate data base, preparing standard reports, updating project files, ordering office supplies, and providing telephone coverage.

The clerical guide also notes that work at the GS-4 level requires the ability to recognize differences among a variety of recurring situations and that actions to be taken or responses to be made differ in nature and sequence because of differences in the particular characteristics of each case. The appellant's position favorably compares to the GS-4 level. For example, the record indicates that the appellant is responsible for gathering information for inclusion in recurring reports, controlling various documents and reporting on status, and maintaining project control logs.

According to the clerical guide, in addition to knowledge of how to carry out procedures, GS-4 level work requires some subject-matter knowledge of an organization's programs and operations, and a body of standardized rules, processes or operations. We find that the appellant's position requires similar knowledge. She must be knowledgeable of office procedures in order to answer questions and provide information.

We note that the GS-4 work example, while clearly different in terms of the specific subject matter, is very similar to the appellant's position.

According to the clerical guide, work at the GS-5 level (page 12) consists of performing a full range of standard and nonstandard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of nonrecurring problems. The record shows that the appellant is responsible for a range of general clerical tasks as described above. The purpose of her work and contacts is mainly to exchange information and to deal with routine questions where a simple remedy or answer exists, and that the focus of her work is on carrying out standard clerical assignments. Persistent and difficult issues and problems are referred to her supervisor.

The clerical guide indicates that GS-5 level work also requires extensive knowledge of an organization's rules, procedures, operations, or business practices to perform more complex, interrelated, or one-of-a-kind clerical processing procedures. The example given in the clerical guide involves the use of extensive knowledge including knowledge of the Tariff Act, (Customs) Inspectors Manual, and other guides, to perform not only standard, recurring tasks, but nonstandard, complex ones, such as discerning whether entries require further analysis by inspectors because of possible fraud, controlled substances, and prohibited cargo. The record provides no evidence that the appellant regularly uses knowledge as extensive as that described as typical of the GS-5 level.

Level of Responsibility

The appellant's responsibilities are most similar to the GS-4 level (page 10). For example, the standard indicates that GS-4 level employees use initiative to complete work in accordance with accepted practices. Similarly, the appellant's position description indicates that she is responsible for performing her day to day work independently. She is accountable for the accuracy and

validity of her work. Similar to the GS-4 level, her supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments. However, unusual problems or assignments not previously encountered are discussed with the supervisor.

The clerical guide indicates that the procedures for the work of the GS-4 level employee have been established, and a number of specific guidelines are available. We find that the guidelines used by the appellant meet this level. The record indicates that extensive office procedures and practices exist covering all important aspects of her work.

Contacts at the GS-4 level involve co-workers, and others outside the organization to exchange information, and in some cases, to resolve problems in connection with the immediate assignment. We find that the appellant's contacts as indicated in her position description are comparable to the GS-4 level. We note that the purpose of the appellant's contacts is to exchange information typically relating to the status of various work projects, which is comparable to the GS-4 level. The GS-4 level is met.

The level of responsibility of the appellant's position fails to meet the GS-5 level (page 12) where the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines, and where completed assignments are evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting goals. In addition, at the GS-5 level, due to the number and similarity of guidelines and work situations, the employee uses judgement to locate, select and adapt the most appropriate guides. In contrast, similar to the GS-4 level the appellant independently plans and performs recurring work in accordance with accepted practices and within overall objectives and priorities, resolving normal conflicts according to established procedures and previous experience, and occasionally making minor deviations from guidelines. Like the GS-4 level only unusual or nonrecurring assignments may require assistance from the supervisor. The record provides no evidence that the appellant regularly receives assignments that require the kind of direction and review typical of the GS-5 level, nor does she routinely adapt guides to the extent envisioned in the clerical guide at the GS-5 level.

Since both classification factors of the clerical guide have been evaluated at the GS-4 level, the appellant's general clerical duties are properly graded at that level.

In summary, both the appellant's office automation duties and her general office clerical duties are graded at GS-4, therefore her position overall is properly graded at that level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-4.