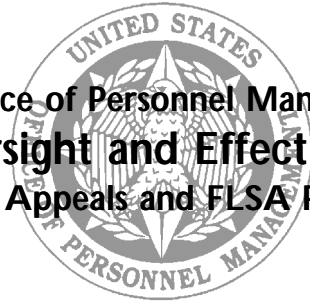


U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and FLSA Programs



Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, SW., Room 972
Atlanta, GA 30303

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

Appellant: [Appellants]

Agency classification: Medical Supply Technician
GS-622-5

Organization: Department of Veterans Affairs

OPM decision: Medical Supply Technician
GS-622-5

OPM decision number: C-0622-05-01

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

12/20/99
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]

[Human Resources Manager]
Department of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Ronald E. Cowles
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources Management
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Introduction

On September 23, 1999, the Atlanta Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), accepted a group appeal for the position of Medical Supply Technician, GS-622-5, [organizational location], Department of Veterans Affairs, [geographic location]. The appellants believe their position should be graded at the GS-6 level.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General Issues

The appellants believe that with the addition of purchasing duties, primarily a credit card purchasing system, the volume of work associated with these duties, and greater complexity of current medical supply technician duties, their position warrants a higher grade. They compare their position to other positions they believe to be similar to theirs but graded at a higher level.

By law, we must classify positions solely by comparing current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellants' position to others as a basis for deciding the appeal. Additionally, volume of work cannot be considered in determining the grade of a position.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellants and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with two of the appellants and their supervisor.

Position information

The appellants are assigned to position description number [#]. The appellants, their supervisor, and the agency have certified the accuracy of the position description.

The primary duties of the appellants' position include decontamination, instrument preparation, equipment maintenance, maintaining ward/clinic supply closets, linen room functions, and transporting clean/sterile supplies between facilities. The appellants decontaminate a wide range of reusable medical supplies, speciality carts, and equipment used in the medical facilities. This requires disassembling and reassembling equipment and instruments where the internal parts possibly become contaminated. The appellants are responsible for preparing the wide range of instrument trays and sets used at the medical facilities. This requires sorting the instruments by size and type and reassembling trays and sets based on recognition of key items or inventory needs based on preference lists. The appellants are responsible for the sterilization of medical instruments and equipment. This includes selecting the appropriate method for sterilizing and

performing tests to insure the sterilization process was successful. The appellants have various equipment duties which consist of delivering and troubleshooting, testing the operation of equipment, connecting medical gases, collecting used equipment, etc. The appellants spend approximately 25 percent of their time placing orders for needed supplies using credit cards and purchase orders. In addition, they receive and reconcile receipts for supplies ordered from various sources.

Standard determination

Medical Supply Aide and Technician Series, GS-622, July 1981.
Purchasing Series, GS-1105, March 1993.

Series and title determination

The appellants do not contest the agency determination that the position should be classified in the GS-622, Medical Supply Aide and Technician Series. The GS-622 series contains positions responsible for providing wards, clinics, operating rooms, and other hospital facilities with medical supplies, instruments, sets, and equipment. Duties require a knowledge of aseptic techniques and sterilization practices; the care, functioning, and uses of supplies, equipment, sets, and instruments; and methods for the preparation, storage, and issue of sterile and non-sterile medical supplies and the maintenance of adequate stock levels. We agree with the agency determination.

Medical Supply Technician is the title authorized for all nonsupervisory positions above GS-4.

Grade determination

The GS-622 standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory 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 levels. 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 that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required *and* applied. The agency rated this factor at Level 1-3.

Level 1-3 requires knowledge of the way infection is spread sufficient to understand the importance of clean and sterile medical supply operations and practices to patient care and the precautions to take with contaminated supply items. The level also requires knowledge of the technical names, general uses, physical characteristics, and the procedures for inspecting, disassembling, and reassembling; decontaminating; packaging; sterilizing; storing; and issuing the full range of medical supplies and equipment used in the wards and clinics of the hospital. In addition, the medical supply technician must have knowledge to operate various kinds of processing equipment such as washer-sterilizers, ultrasonic instrument cleaners, steam-vacuum and gas sterilizers, and aerators and to test the proper operation of the equipment, adjust operating conditions, and report malfunctions.

Level 1-3 is consistent with the knowledge required by the appellants' position. The appellants are required to understand the fundamentals of bacteriology, microbiology, human body defenses, and proper and safe sterilization and disinfection techniques. They must have the knowledge and skills to properly assemble the full range of trays and sets used at the facility and to understand the use of the equipment and its basic operation, assembly, disassembly, and maintenance instructions. They must be able to select, operate, test, and make adjustments to the various washers and sterilizers used and to choose the proper cleaning agents and techniques.

Level 1-4 requires a practical knowledge of microbiology, human anatomy and physiology, and medical and surgical procedures combined with an intensive knowledge of asepsis techniques. This level requires an intensive knowledge of the functions and activities of the wards, clinics, and operating room suites sufficient to meet recurring, emergency, or special individual medical supply and equipment needs and to advise medical personnel on the availability and economical use of supplies and equipment, appropriate sizes, possible substitutes, and the proper use and troubleshooting of equipment.

The position does not meet Level 1-4. The appellants are not required to use the degree of knowledge intended at this level, e.g., serving as an advisor to medical professionals on appropriate uses, sizes, possible substitutes, and advanced troubleshooting of equipment.

Level 1-3 is credited for 350 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. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. The 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. The degree of review of completed work depends upon the nature and extent of the review, e.g., close and detailed review of each phase of the assignment, detailed review of the finished assignment, spot-checks of finished work for accuracy, or review only for adherence to policy. The agency rated this factor at Level 2-3, the highest level described in the GS-622 standard.

At Level 2-3, the supervisor assigns employees to work areas on a continuing or rotational basis. The characteristics and use of new instruments, equipment, and aseptic techniques are taught through periodic formal training sessions. The employee completes work based on accepted work procedures. Normally, the employee will inform the supervisor of problems or unusual situations that arise with recommendations for appropriate action. On shift and weekend assignments, however, the employee independently resolves these situations through negotiation and consultation with other medical personnel. Completed work is reviewed through on-site inspection of work areas, work reports, and comments from users and customers.

The position meets Level 2-3. The appellants are supervised by a Supervisory Inventory Management Specialist, GS-2010-11, who expects the appellants to work with a high degree of independence. Additionally, the supervisor is responsible for providing supervision to both East and West Campus locations which further requires the appellants to work more independently. The appellants rotate through the various work functions and the medical center. They consult with the supervisor on unusual problems or situations which have not been previously encountered. The appellants are required to work without supervision on late shifts, weekends, and holidays which leaves them to resolve unusual problems independently. The work is reviewed by the supervisor through observation and by means of feedback from the facility staff who utilize the appellants' services.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3 - Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency rated this factor at Level 3-2, the highest level described in the GS-622 standard.

At Level 3-2, procedures for doing the work have been established, and a number of specific guidelines are available. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application and in making minor deviations to adapt the guidelines to specific cases. The employee may also determine which of several established alternatives to use. Situations to which the existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations from the guidelines are referred to the supervisor.

Level 3-2 is met. The appellants use specific guidelines and procedures such as the agency handbook and directives, publications on sterile supply operations, listing of content of trays or sets, operating and clinic schedules, manufacturers' catalogs and fact sheets on the various items, assembly and troubleshooting manuals, equipment operating instructions, and shelf-life guidelines. They select the appropriate guide depending on the situation. New or unusual situations are discussed with the supervisor.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 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. The agency rated this factor at Level 4-2, the highest level described in the standard.

At Level 4-2, the work consists of duties that involve related steps, processes, or methods. The decision regarding what needs to be done entails various choices that require the employee to recognize the existence of and differences among a few easily recognizable situations. Actions to be taken or responses to be made differ in such things as the source of information, the kind of transactions or entries, or other differences of a factual nature.

The appellants' position meets Level 4-2. Their duties involve selecting the correct series of steps from several alternatives in various work areas. For example, the appellants decontaminate a wide range of reusable medical supplies, speciality carts and equipment. They must select and perform the appropriate method for removing contamination. Additionally, the appellants must select the appropriate methods for sterilizing, balancing time constraints with possible detrimental effects of quicker methods.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 5 - Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, i.e., purposes, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. The agency credited this factor with Level 5-2, the highest level described in the standard.

At Level 5-2, the work involves completing the full range of tasks in any one or more of the various assignments in the medical supply unit, such as decontaminating and pre-sterilizing used materials, preparing trays and sets for sterilization, storing and issuing clean and sterile medical supplies, or maintaining normal stock levels on wards and in clinics. The work product can have a direct effect on the physical health of patients in the hospital.

Level 5-2 is met. The appellants perform the full range of tasks described at this level and their work directly affects the health of the patients within the medical center.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 5-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts

This factor includes face-to-face and telephone contacts 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. The agency credited this factor at Level 6-2, the highest level described in the standard.

At level 6-2, personal contacts are with employees in the same unit; with nursing and other medical personnel in the wards, clinics, and operating room suites; and occasionally with employees in other Federal and non-Federal hospitals.

Level 6-2 is met. The appellants have regular and frequent contacts with employees throughout the medical center.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 6-2 is credited for 25 points.

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 agency credited Level 7-1, the highest level described in the standard for this factor.

At Level 7-1, the purpose of the personal contacts is to exchange factual information concerning the work, such as contacts to receive requests for medical supply items, to state whether a medical supply item is available, to suggest an acceptable substitution for an unavailable item, to explain the need for limiting quantities of scarce supplies, or to obtain additional information about a requested item such as its use and shape.

Level 7-1 is met. The appellants provide a variety of information concerning their work. For example, they provide information on special orders, exchange information concerning needed medical supplies, and explain the need to conserve supplies.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 7-1 is credited for 20 points.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the medical supply aide and technician by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities (e.g., specific agility and dexterity requirements) and physical exertion involved in the work (e.g., climbing, lifting, pushing, balancing, stooping, kneeling, crouching, crawling, or reaching). To some extent, the frequency or intensity of physical exertion is also considered (e.g., a job requiring prolonged standing involves more physical exertion than a job requiring intermittent standing). The agency credited Level 8-2.

At Level 8-2, the work requires regular and recurring physical exertion such as standing for prolonged periods of time, carrying medical supply items weighing up to 50 pounds, pushing medical supply carts weighing up to 200 pounds, or frequent bending and stretching. The work requires dexterity in such tasks as inserting small rods into needle openings or precisely aligning component parts while reassembling medical equipment.

The appellants' position meets Level 8-2. Long periods of standing are required. They must lift baskets and trays of stainless steel instruments weighing up to 50 pounds and push loaded carts weighing up to 300 pounds.

The position does not meet Level 8-3 which requires regular and recurring strenuous physical exertion such as lifting medical supply items weighing more than 50 pounds and pushing heavy medical supply carts weighing as much as 600 pounds.

Level 8-2 is credited for 20 points.

Factor 9 - Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, 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 agency credited Level 9-2, the highest level described in the standard for this factor.

At Level 9-2, the work requires on a regular and recurring basis, moderate risks and discomforts such as exposure to dirty supply items; exposure to items contaminated by patients with contagious diseases; or working with or near equipment that has moving parts, is noisy, generates heat, or emits toxic fumes, such as a mechanized transport system, an ultrasonic unit, automatic washers, or gas and steam sterilizers. The employee must comply with special safety and health precautions and use protective clothing or gear such as aprons, gowns, caps, gloves, or ear plugs.

Level 9-2 is met. The appellants alternate between a contaminated environment and a carefully controlled clean environment. The work requires frequent exposure to ethylene oxide gases. They are required to wear special clothing, hair covers, and shoe covers. Exposure to infectious substances, gases, and materials used in sterilization pose potential risks for the appellants.

There is no information in the appeal record to indicate this level is exceeded.

Level 9-2 is credited for 20 points.

Summary

FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6. Personal Contacts	6-2	25
7. Purpose of Contacts	7-1	20
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	20
	TOTAL	985

A total of 985 points falls within the range for GS-5, 855-1100 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-622 standard.

PURCHASING DUTIES

The appellants believe that the addition of purchasing duties to their position warrants a higher grade. Specifically, the duties they perform include purchasing equipment and supplies through three methods: 1) Credit Card; 2) Logistics Management Service Warehouse Section; and 3) Issuances of Temporary Purchase Orders (Form 2237). Credit Card purchases are the most common method used. The appellants have a threshold limit of \$2500 per order and \$25,000 per month. Any purchases exceeding \$2500 are procured by a Purchasing Agent. The appellants are not responsible for verification of funds but are responsible for checking computer printouts to insure limits have not been reached. They use standard catalogs, ordering information, supply lists, etc., to place orders. They are also responsible for reconciliation of the quoted price with actual bills received. The process requires a substantial amount of clerical-type work associated with the credit card process.

These duties are evaluated by reference to the Purchasing Series Standard, GS-1105, and equate to grade GS-5. As shown in the summary table which follows, the addition of these duties has no impact on the overall grade of the position. However, those factors, which would ultimately affect the grade level, are further addressed to support the overall determination of this appeal decision.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position

As with the GS-622 standard, the position meets Level 1-3 where a knowledge of standardized regulations and procedures are required to make purchases. There is no evidence in the appeal to support the crediting of Level 1-4, which involves purchases with specialized and/or commercial requirements that have unstable price or product characteristics, hard-to-locate sources, or similar complicating factors.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls

Commensurate with the GS-622 standard, the position meets Level 2-3, where the employee plans and carries out successive steps necessary to make purchases and independently performs tasks. At Level 2-4, employees are responsible for resolving most conflicts that arise, coordinating their work with others, and interpreting policy on their own initiative to meet established objectives. Level 2-4, where the employee is also delegated considerable latitude in committing the agency to a course of action, is not met by the position.

Factor 3 - Guidelines

As with the GS-622 standard, the guidelines described at Level 3-2 are used by the appellants. At Level 3-2, there may be minor gaps in guidelines but the employee refers situations that require significant deviations to the supervisor or others for guidance or resolution. Level 3-3, where the employee independently uses judgment to interpret guidelines, adapt procedures, decide approaches, and resolve specific problems, is not evidenced in the position.

Summary

FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-3	350
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	2a	45
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	955

A total of 955 points falls within the range for GS-5, 855-1100 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-1105 standard.

Decision

The position is correctly classified as Medical Supply Technician, GS-622-5.