



United States
Office of Personnel Management

Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
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Standard: [Agronomy Series, GS-0471](#) (February 1961)
Factor: N/A
Issue: Titling and selecting a classification standard for the Research Agronomist specialization

Identification of the Classification Issue

This issue arose in an Office of Personnel Management region's consideration of a classification appeal. The GS-12 position involved the development and evaluation of application methodology and equipment for weed control and plant regulation. The agency had avoided the "Research Agronomist" title, expressing concern that use of the Research Grade Evaluation Guide would be mandated when they felt it would not be appropriate. The Office of Personnel Management had to determine whether the position should be titled "Research Agronomist," and, if so, the appropriate standard for grade determination.

Resolution

The Office of Personnel Management region found the position to be specifically covered by the Research Agronomist specialization as discussed in the GS-0471 Agronomy Series standard. Concerning this specialization, the standard states, ". . . there are some areas of research where the work tends to specialize along particular lines that do not necessarily follow the two general approaches indicated. This would include . . . the development, use and specific application of weed controls and plant regulators; etc." Therefore, a title of "Research Agronomist" was found to be appropriate for the position.

The Office of Personnel Management agreed with the agency that use of the Research Grade Evaluation Guide was inappropriate, notwithstanding the research title. The Office of Personnel Management determined that the assignment in the appealed position clearly fell in the area of

development, test, and evaluation. The Research Grade Evaluation Guide is focused on the basic and applied research end of the spectrum of research and development activities. Therefore, it was not appropriate for this position, which involved principally development functions.

The Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide crosses occupational lines to cover development work in professional engineering and physical science positions. Like research, development advances the state of the art, but it is further characterized by the creation of new or substantially improved end items in the form of equipment, systems, materials, processes, procedures, and techniques. The grading criteria in the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide are broadly written (for coverage across professional engineering and physical science occupations) and are readily extrapolated to comparable development work in the biological sciences. Therefore, the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide was determined to be the most appropriate standard for classifying the "Research Agronomist" position.

Applying the Equipment Development Grade Evaluation Guide, the Office of Personnel Management evaluated all four factors at Degree C for 15 points and a grade of GS-12. Thus, only the title was changed.