

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

San Francisco Oversight Division
120 Howard Street, Room 760
San Francisco, CA 94105-0001

Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Appellant's name]

Agency classification: Secretary (Office Automation)
GS-318-6

Organization: [Appellant's organization]
Department of the Navy

OPM decision: Secretary (Office Automation)
GS-318-6

OPM decision number: C-0318-06-03

Carlos A. Torrico
Classification Appeals Officer

December 19, 2000
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:

[Appellant's address]

Agency:

[Appellant's servicing personnel office]

[Appellant's regional personnel office]

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Introduction

On January 3, 2000, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [the appellant], whose position is classified as Secretary (Office Automation), GS-318-6. However, she believes that the position should be classified as Supervisory Secretary, GS-318-8. The appellant works in the [appellant's organization], Department of the Navy. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

General issues

This appeal decision is based on a careful review of all information furnished by the appellant and the agency. In addition, to help decide the appeal an Oversight Division representative conducted separate telephone interviews with the appellant and her immediate supervisor. Both the appellant and her supervisor have certified to the accuracy of the appellant's official position description.

Position information

The appellant serves as secretary to the director of the [appellant's organization] Department, which administers programs designed to maintain and improve the combat readiness of [appellant's installation] units. She independently accomplishes a wide variety of administrative tasks in support of a staff of 45 military and civilian personnel, and oversees the work of three clerical support staff in the Department.

The results of our interviews, the appellant's position description, and other material of record furnish much more information about her duties and responsibilities and how they are performed.

Series, title, and standard determination

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Secretary Series, GS-318, and she does not disagree. We concur with the agency's determination. As specified in the classification standard for the GS-318 series (dated January 1979, and reissued in HRCD-7 dated July 1999), employees assigned to positions in that series assist one individual, and in some cases subordinate staff of that individual, by performing general office work auxiliary to the work of the organization. Like the appellant's position, jobs in that series must serve as the principal office clerical or administrative support position. Her duties require knowledge of clerical and agency administrative procedures, various office skills, and the ability to apply such skills in a way that increases the effectiveness of others. The appellant's job also requires knowledge and skill in using a variety of microcomputer software programs and applications. However, since the GS-318 series best applies to her position, it is excluded from the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326.

The title for positions classified in the GS-318 series is Secretary. However, because the appellant's position requires significant knowledge of office automation systems (e.g., computer

hardware and software), and a fully qualified typist to perform word processing duties, as prescribed in the titling instructions of the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide (dated November 1990), page 2, the parenthetical title "Office Automation" is added to the position title.

The appellant's secretarial duties are evaluated by reference to the grade level criteria in the classification standard for the Secretary Series, GS-318. We have not evaluated the grade level of her office automation duties because our fact-finding disclosed that she spends less than 20% of her time performing them. Because those duties do not comprise a significant and substantial part of the overall position (i.e., occupying at least 25% of the employee's time), they are not grade controlling.

The appellant believes that her position should be classified as "supervisory" because she oversees the work of two Office Automation Clerks, GS-326-4, and one Student Trainee, GS-399-4, who are assigned to the Department. She indicates that she spends 25% of her work time overseeing their work. While we recognize that the appellant, as the principal office assistant, is responsible for assigning, reviewing, and coordinating the work of the three other clerical staff in the organization, we do not find that her position fully meets the coverage requirements for evaluation by application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), dated April 1998. As stated in the GSSG, it is used to grade GS supervisory work and related managerial responsibilities that (1) require accomplishment of work through combined technical and administrative direction of others, and (2) constitutes a major duty occupying at least 25% of the position's work time, and (3) meets at least the lowest level of Factor 3 in the guide, based on supervising Federal civilian employees, Federal military or uniformed service employees, volunteers, or other non-contractor personnel.

Although the appellant contends that she spends 25% of her work time monitoring the work of the three clerical staff members, and to a limited degree provides technical and administrative direction to them, her authority does not meet the lowest level of Factor 3 (i.e., Level 3-2 a, or b, or c) to the extent described in the GSSG. Unlike Level 3-2a, she does not plan and schedule ongoing production-oriented work on a quarterly and annual basis, or direct assignments of similar duration. Moreover, she does not adjust staffing levels or work procedures within the organizational unit to accommodate resource allocation decisions made at higher echelons. Unlike Level 3-2b, she is not involved with work which is contracted out, thus does not perform the wide range of technical input and oversight tasks described at that level. Unlike Level 3-2c, the appellant does not carry out at least three of the first four, and a total of six or more of the ten authorities and responsibilities described at that level. For instance, she does not plan work to be accomplished by subordinates, set and adjust short-term priorities, and prepare schedules for completion of work; does not formally evaluate the work performance of subordinates; does not interview candidates for positions in the unit, recommending appointment, promotion, or reassignment to such positions; does not effect minor disciplinary measures (e.g., warnings and reprimands), recommending other action in more serious cases; and does not develop performance standards. All of the preceding authorities rest with the appellant's supervisor. Based on the above information, the appellant's position cannot be evaluated as "supervisory."

Grade determination

The classification standard for the Secretary Series, GS-318, is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, 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. Our evaluation with respect to the nine FES factors follows.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position – Level 1-4, 550 points

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts which the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, principles, and concepts), and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply that knowledge. In the GS-318 standard, this factor consists of two elements, Knowledge Type and Work Situation.

As described on page 8 of the GS-318 standard, Knowledge Type III positions require, in addition to Type II knowledges, knowledge of duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff sufficient to perform non-routine assignments. Secretaries at this level are fully responsible for coordinating the work of the office with other offices and for recognizing the need for such coordination in various circumstances.

The appellant's position meets Knowledge Type III. Similar to that level, she must possess a thorough knowledge of the Department director's duties, priorities, policies, views, concerns and commitments sufficient to perform non-routine and special assignments. Her duties require knowledge of the different staff functions, organizations, and command relationships within [appellant's installation] in order to coordinate the work of her Department with other offices, and establish files, refer calls, and answer questions. Her work requires a practical knowledge of the purpose, operations, procedures, and guidelines of her unit, particularly as they relate to the clerical and administrative support functions involved.

The appellant's position does not require Type IV knowledge as described on page 9 of the GS-318 standard. Our review disclosed that she does not regularly perform tasks such as independently eliminating conflict and duplication in extensive office procedures, determining when new procedures are needed, systematically studying and evaluating new office machines and recommending the acceptance or rejection of their use, and studying the clerical activities of the office and subordinate offices to recommend specific restructuring of the way activities are carried out. Unlike the appellant's position, Type IV knowledge also requires the employee to apply a comprehensive knowledge of the supervisor's policies and views to perform such duties as developing material for the supervisor to use in speaking engagements, and briefing staff members or persons outside the organization on the supervisor's views on current issues facing the organization.

Given its functions, we judge that the [appellant's organization] Department, due to its extensive coordination responsibilities with other departments within [appellant's installation], meets the

second alternate organization described under Work Situation B (page 10). Like the appellant's department, such organizations have extensive responsibility for coordinating work outside the unit that require procedures and administrative controls that place demands upon the secretary that are significantly greater than those described in Work Situation A. The appellant regularly coordinates administrative and procedural activities with other large and complex departments within the command, whose activities differ in subject matter and function. These coordination functions have required establishing a system of formal internal procedures and administrative controls within the appellant's department.

With a combination of Knowledge Type III and Work Situation B, this factor is evaluated at Level 1-4 and 550 points are assigned.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls - Level 2-3, 275 points

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the secretary's responsibility, and the review of completed work. The agency has credited the appellant's supervisory controls with Level 2-3 (described on pages 12-13 of the standard) but the appellant believes that a higher level (i.e., Level 2-4, described on pages 14-15 of the standard) is warranted. We agree with the factor level assigned by the agency.

At Level 2-3 the supervisor defines the overall objectives and priorities of the work in the office and assists the secretary with some special assignments. The secretary plans and carries out the work of the office and handles problems and deviations in accordance with established instructions, priorities, policies, commitments and program goals of the supervisor, and accepted practices in the occupation.

At Level 2-4 the supervisor sets the overall objectives of the work. The secretary and the supervisor, in consultation, develop the deadlines and the work to be done. At this level, the secretary handles a wide variety of situations and conflicts requiring use of initiative to determine the approach to be taken or methods to use. This level is most likely to be found in organizations of such size and scope that many complex office problems arise which cannot be brought to the attention of the supervisor.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-3. Like that level, she performs her work following the established office procedures. She plans and carries out the day-to-day administrative work of the office independently, referring only very unusual office problems to the supervisor or other staff members. She receives telephone calls and visitors, screening those that can be handled without the supervisor's help and personally answers substantive questions not requiring technical knowledge. She keeps the supervisor's calendar, arranges meetings, corrects outgoing correspondence for procedural and grammatical accuracy, assists the supervisor's subordinates in expediting the work of the office, and signs routine correspondence of a non-technical nature.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-4. Unlike that level, she does not consult with the supervisor to any significant degree regarding the development of deadlines or work to be done. Level 2-4 involves a high degree of independence and initiative in determining the approach to be taken or methods to use. The appellant does not perform many of the duties listed

under Level 2-4, and she does not devise or install office procedures to the extent described at that level.

This factor is evaluated at Level 2-3 and 275 points are credited.

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

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency has credited the appellant's guidelines with Level 3-2 (described on page 15 of the standard) but the appellant believes that a higher level (i.e., Level 3-3, described on page 16 of the standard) is warranted. We agree with the factor level assigned by the agency.

At Level 3-2, guidelines typically include dictionaries; style manuals; agency instructions concerning such matters as correspondence, or the handling of classified information; and operating policies of the supervisor or organization served. The secretary locates and selects the appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures for application to specific cases, referring situations to which the existing guidelines cannot be applied or significant proposed deviations to the supervisor. The secretary may also determine which of established alternatives to use.

At Level 3-3, guidelines include a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices which are not completely applicable to the work or are not specific and which deal with matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than with procedural concerns. For example, they may include decisions made by the supervisor in cases that are similar, but not completely analogous. The level 3-3 secretary applies and adapts guidelines, such as regulations or the supervisor's policies, to specific problems for which the guidelines are not clearly applicable.

The appellant's position meets Level 3-2. She refers to [appellant's organization] Staff Organization and Regulations Manual, Navy Correspondence Manual, U.S. Navy regulations, and various other naval manuals and directives, including the Security Program Regulation. The appellant uses judgment in selecting the appropriate guideline and in determining how to interpret and apply the guideline for each specific situation. While she sometimes researches at the administration office, she consistently refers to many available manuals and documents. She consults with the supervisor or staff subject matter experts when there are questions regarding the applicability of a guideline.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3-3. Unlike that level, she does not work from a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices that are not completely applicable to her work and which deal with matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than with procedural concerns. She does not frequently use judgment to interpret and adapt guidelines to situations where the guidelines are not clearly applicable.

This factor is evaluated at Level 3-2 and 125 points are credited.

Factor 4, Complexity – Level 4-3, 150 points

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.

At Level 4-3 (page 17), the work includes various duties involving different and unrelated processes and methods. Decisions regarding what needs to be done, and how to accomplish them, are based on the secretary's knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the supervisor and staff, and involve analysis of the subject, phase, or issues involved in each assignment. The chosen courses are selected from many alternatives.

The complexity of the appellant's position meets Level 4-3, which is the highest level for Factor 4 described in the standard. Like Level 4-3, the appellant's work involves different and unrelated processes, requiring a complete knowledge of official procedures and protocol. The appellant is responsible for the proper functioning and efficiency of the [appellant's organization] Department's administrative processes in consonance with established policy. Like Level 4-3, she collects data from various sources for one-of-a-kind reports, taking into account the issues and relationships involved.

This factor is evaluated at Level 4-3 and 150 points are credited.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect – Level 5-2, 75 points

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

At Level 5-2 (page 18), the purpose of the work is to carry out specific procedures. The work affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes. Duties frequently appearing at this level include serving as liaison between the supervisor and subordinate units; consolidating reports submitted by subordinate units; and arranging meetings involving staff from outside the immediate office.

At Level 5-3 (page 18), the positions serve offices that clearly and directly affect a wide range of agency activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. The secretary at this level modifies and devises methods and procedures that significantly and consistently affect the accomplishment of the mission of the office. The secretary identifies and resolves various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization.

The appellant's position meets Level 5-2. The purpose of the appellant's position is to perform and coordinate the full range of specific procedural, administrative and clerical duties in support of the [appellant's organization] Department, as well as to communicate the policies and general

directions of her supervisor. She serves as liaison between the supervisor and other units, and consolidates reports submitted by staff of the various program functions within the Department. Similar to Level 5-2, her duties directly affect the accuracy, reliability, and acceptability of further processes.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-3. Her duties are specifically relevant to the efficiency of the Department's administrative work, but unlike Level 5-3 her work does not directly and significantly affect a wide range of agencywide or public activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. While we recognize that she sometimes has contact with parties outside her organization to receive information and to arrange meetings, her work does not identify and resolve various problems and situations that affect the orderly and efficient flow of work in transactions with parties outside the organization. Unlike Level 5-3, the appellant does not devise and modify methods and processes affecting accomplishment of the mission of the office.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-2 and 75 points are credited.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts – Level 6-2, 25 points

This factor includes face-to-face 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. The agency has credited the appellant's personal contacts with Level 6-2 (described on page 19 of the standard) but the appellant believes that a higher level (i.e., Level 6-3, described on pages 19-20 of the standard) is warranted. We agree with the factor level assigned by the agency.

At Level 6-2 the personal contacts are with employees in the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. People contacted generally are engaged in different functions, missions, and kinds of work, e.g., representatives from various levels within the agency such as headquarters, regional, district, or field offices, or other operating offices in the immediate installation; and/or the contacts are with members of the general public, as individuals or groups, in a moderately structured setting.

At Level 6-3 (pages 19-20), the personal contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting. For example, the contacts are not established on a routine basis, requiring the secretary to identify and locate the appropriate person to contact or to apply significant skill and knowledge in determining to whom a telephone call or visitor should be directed; the purpose and extent of each contact is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of the contact. Typical contacts at this level might include people in their capacities as attorneys, contractors, or representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public action groups when the office deals with them on a variety of issues.

The appellant's position meets Level 6-2. She interfaces frequently and on a continuing basis with persons in the same agency but outside the immediate organization. These include chiefs of

staff and assistant chiefs of staff of the six major Functional staffs; with the [appellant's supervisor] counterpart department heads, with secretaries and administrative assistants of other departments, division heads, [appellant's installation] staff Flag secretary and staff, Functional Wing staffs, and naval business offices for the purpose of coordinating the business of the [appellant's organization] Department. These contacts are made within a moderately structured setting.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 6-3. Unlike that level, her contacts are not with individuals outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting. Rather, the visitors and calls the appellant handles are frequently routine rather than out-of-the-ordinary. Contacts are not typically made outside the agency where the role and authority of each party is initially unknown and must be developed during the course of the contact.

This factor is evaluated at Level 6-2 and 25 points are credited.

Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts – Level 7-2, 50 points

This factor covers the purpose of personal contacts that may range from factual exchanges of information to resolving problems affecting the efficient operation of the office.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts fully meets Level 7-2 (page 20), which is the highest level for Factor 7 described in the standard. Like Level 7-2, the purpose of the appellant's work is to coordinate and advise on work efforts and to resolve operating problems. She ensures that reports and responses to correspondence are submitted by the staff on time and in the proper format and makes travel arrangements. She also disseminates information, sets up meetings and coordinates calendars.

This factor is evaluated at Level 7-2 and 50 points are credited.

Factor 8, Physical Demands – Level 8-1, 5 points

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment.

The appellant's position fully meets Level 8-1 (page 21), which is the only level for this factor described in the standard. Like that level the appellant's work is sedentary, and there are no special physical demands required to perform her duties.

This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and 5 points are credited.

Factor 9, Work Environment – Level 9-1, 5 points

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.

The appellant's work environment fully meets Level 9-1 (page 21) which is the only level for this factor described in the standard. Like that level the appellant's environment involves everyday risks and discomforts typical of an office, and the work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and 5 points are credited.

Summary

Our comparison of the appellant's duties to the nine FES evaluation factors in the GS-318 standard results in the following:

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550 Points
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275 Points
3. Guidelines	3-2	125 Points
4. Complexity	4-3	150 Points
5. Scope and effect	5-2	75 Points
6. Personal contacts	6-2	25 Points
7. Purpose of contacts	7-2	50 Points
8. Physical demands	8-1	5 Points
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5 Points</u>
Total points:		1260 Points

A total of 1260 points are credited to the appellant's position. By reference to the grade conversion table on page 6 of the GS-318 standard, we find that the appellant's work falls in the GS-6 range (1105-1350). Therefore, the position is classified at that grade level.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Secretary (Office Automation), GS-318-6.