

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

Chicago Oversight Division
230 S. Dearborn Street, DPN-30-6
Chicago, IL 60604-1687

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Information Technology Specialist
GS-2210-11

Organization: Management Support Group
Defense Contract Management Agency [location]
Defense Contract Management Agency [location]
Defense Contract Management Agency
Department of Defense
[city and state]

OPM decision: Information Technology Specialist
GS-2210-11

OPM decision number: C-2210-11-01

(s) Ricardo Sims

Ricardo Sims
Operations Supervisor

February 21, 2002

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]
[address]
[city and state]

[personnel officer]
Acting Director, Human Resources
Defense Contract Management Agency
Defense Contract Management District [location]
[address]
[city and state]

Defense Contract Management Agency
Attn.: DCMA-HRC
[address]
[city and state]

Chief, Classification Branch
Field Advisory Services Division
Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200
Arlington, VA 22209-5144

Introduction

On October 16, 2001, the Chicago Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant]. The appellant's position is currently classified as Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210-11. He believes that his position should be classified as an Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210-12. The position is located in the Management Support Group, Defense Contract Management [location], Defense Contract Management Agency [location], Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA), Department of Defense, in [city and state]. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. We received the complete appeal administrative report on November 29, 2001.

General issues

In March 2000, the appellant submitted a proposed position description (PD) to his supervisor that, if accepted, he believed would have upgraded his position from a then GS-334-11 to a GS-334-12. The appellant's position was audited on February 7, 2001 by a Personnel Management Specialist at the DCMA Chicago office. The audit findings sustained the series and grade level of the appellant's position and found that the current PD ([#number]), other than adding COGNOS training duties as an addendum, accurately covered the work performed by the appellant. On November 15, 2001, as part of the administrative report, the appellant certified the accuracy of his current PD but believed it should be higher graded. His supervisor also certified as to the PD's accuracy.

Subsequent to the audit performed by DCMA [location], the appellant filed a classification appeal with the Department of Defense, Civilian Personnel Management Service. That decision issued August 21, 2001, applying the recently issued Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200 Job Family Standard (JFS), reclassified his position as Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210-11.

In addition, the appellant claims that his position is classified inconsistently with other similar positions in other sectors within DCMA. Like OPM, the appellant's agency must classify positions based on comparison to OPM standards and guidelines. Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others as a basis for deciding his appeal. However, the agency also has primary responsibility for ensuring that its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers his position so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, he may pursue the matter by writing to his agency personnel office. In doing so, he should specify the precise organizational location, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as his, the agency must correct their classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to him the differences between his position and the others.

Position information

The position is one of seven IT Specialist positions (one GS-12 and six GS-11s) in the Management Support Group, DCMA [location]. The appellant provides desktop, local area network (LAN), and mainframe support to DCM [location] employees. These duties include installing, configuring, testing, and maintaining desktop hardware/software, LAN servers and their associated peripheral devices (printers, tape backups, CD-ROMS, etc.), and connectivity to remote mainframes. These duties include installing, maintaining, testing, and upgrading of personal computers (PCs) and server operating systems and associated system and desktop software packages. The appellant assists users in designing, developing, and testing practical applications of PC software and selecting appropriate software for use with specific applications. In addition, the incumbent supports, develops, and conducts training and prepares user-help manuals for hardware/software use.

The appellant's supervisor, who is located in [location], establishes the overall objectives of the work. The appellant is responsible for planning and carrying out assignments, including resolving most problems, coordinating the work with others, and interpreting policy in terms of established objectives. Completed work is reviewed only in terms of effectiveness in meeting objectives and compatibility with other activities.

Series, title and standard determination

The agency has placed the appellant's position in the Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210, and titled it *Information Technology Specialist*, and used the GS-2200 JFS for grade level determination. The appellant agrees and we concur with the agency's series, title and standard determination.

Grade determination

The GS-2200 JFS is written in the Factor Evaluation Systems (FES) format which derives a position's grade level by evaluation of nine factors. Each factor is evaluated separately and is assigned a point value with factor level definitions described in the standard. The total points are converted to a grade level by use of a standard grade conversion table. Under the FES, for a position 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 lower point value must be assigned.

The agency credited Levels 1-7, 2-4, 3-3, 4-3, 5-3, 6-2, 7-B, 8-1, and 9-1. The appellant disagrees with the agency's evaluation of Factors 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, and this decision specifically addresses only those factors. We concur with the agency's findings on the remaining factors.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-3, employees use a wide variety of guidelines but they are not completely applicable or gaps exist in significant areas. When issues are more general, precedents outline the recommended approach. The employee is required to adapt guides for application to a specific issue or gather necessary information to supplement gaps or lack of specificity to particular problems. Judgment is required in relating guides and precedent approaches to specific situations.

At Level 3-4, guides and precedents provide general direction but little specificity regarding the approach to be followed in accomplishing the work. Assignments require considerable interpretation and adaptation of procedures and precedents in deviating from established approaches or researching trends and patterns to adapt or refine broad guidelines. Problems encountered are complex and intricate and resolution requires the employee to be resourceful and use initiative in order to develop new methods or formulate criteria.

As at Level 3-3, the appellant has numerous guides available ranging from agency standards and policies that detail DCMA's standard IT architecture, to operating manuals and CDROMS for operating systems and software applications, to internet technical support services. In addition, technical specialists such as those responsible for agency developed software are available to provide assistance when problems encountered by the appellant involve unusually complex features or when guidelines have significant gaps. Because the appellant's guidelines do not always provide direct guidance in resolving a specific user or system problem, he must use seasoned judgment to interpret, select, and adjust program criteria to meet the specifics of the situation. For example, the appellant's involvement in establishing a cross district network connection between offices previously unconnected required modifying existing procedures related to establishing "trust relationships" and USERID recognition and is indicative of Level 3-3 work.

The appellant's use of guidelines and precedents fails to meet Level 3-4 requirements. Unlike at Level 3-4, where employees must deviate from established methods to develop new methods and criteria or to propose new polices and practices because of the unusual complexity or intricacy of the problems encountered, the appellant typically works with established guidelines and methods. Guidelines for assignments at this level are often scarce or have gaps in specificity requiring considerable interpretation in order to apply them to a given issue or problem. Such assignments are completed by higher graded employees in other positions within the organization. Therefore, the adaptation and modification of standard guidelines and operating procedures, such as that required of the appellant, fall short of Level 3-4 criteria.

Level 3-3 (275 points) is assigned.

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.

At Level 4-3, work consists of assignments that require analysis of issues in order to select the appropriate course of action from among acceptable alternatives. Such analysis is characterized by assessing factors and conditions to understand the interrelationships among various IT functions and activities when applying a series of different and unrelated processes and methods.

At Level 4-4, assignments consist of projects, studies, or evaluations characterized by the need for substantial problem analysis. Typically, concern is with project assignments that require a variety of techniques and methods. In these assignments, deciding what has to be done typically involves assessing unusual circumstances complicated by conflicting or insufficient data and may involve refining established methods and techniques.

The appellant's duties meet Level 4-3. His work requires manipulating software applications using established techniques for extracting and displaying data from a large existing database and installing and upgrading new programs. He monitors network and PC performance making improvements through such projects as identifying common outdated software and writing batch files to delete them off the system at one time rather than file-by-file. The appellant also provides advice to management regarding system improvements such as recommending new software to enhance network performance by more effectively removing excess file space or more effective antivirus software. Such recommendations are based on the appellant's review of system specifications and analysis of available software that best meet the needs identified and may lead to modifying existing procedures or methods.

Unlike at Level 4-4, where substantial problem analysis is required when resolving issues and recommending solutions to meet system network requirements supporting multiple organizational levels, the appellant's focus is on monitoring and improving the component pieces of a network system at a single organizational level, DCM [location]. He is not hampered by conflicting or insufficient data. In most instances information is available through running diagnostic tests or by researching commercially available products. When unusually complex situations are encountered, the appellant has several sources of technical assistance including the Sector Administrator, a GS-334-13, Lead Specialist at DCMA [location], a GS-334-12, as well as specialists with primary responsibility for agency developed software. The appellant's duties do not rise to the level of resolving problems or making recommendations that would fundamentally change major system configurations, rather they make modifications to the system within its current design.

Level 4-3 (150 points) is assigned

Factor 5, Scope and effect

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

At Level 5-3, the work involves resolving a variety of problems using established methods and criteria. The work affects service reliability and quality and includes responsibility for projects

that, while in some instances affect activities or individuals throughout the agency, are primarily to facilitate a local operation.

At Level 5-4, the work involves investigating and analyzing a variety of unusual problems, issues, or conditions; formulating projects or studies such as those to substantially alter major systems; or establishing criteria in an assigned application. The work at this level affects a wide range of agency activities, activities of non-governmental organizations, or functions of other agencies.

The appellant's position matches Level 5-3 in that he is responsible for desktop and LAN support for the Rockford field location, managing user accounts, monitoring performance, and troubleshooting and network restoration. Typical of this level, he recommends software upgrades and enhancements within the defined network infrastructure. In addition, his responsibility as the COGNOS instructor for the [location] sector where he conducts user training and develops course materials is also characteristic of this level.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-4. His work does not impact a wide range of agency activities at numerous sites around the country, nor does his work affect the operations of other agencies; such duties are tasked to higher level positions in the agency like the Sector Administrator. The appellant does not oversee the implementation of project activities that involve assigning and prioritizing the work of other specialists or, for example, provide training to other specialists on technical issues or new technology typical of Level 5-4.

Level 5-3 (150 points) is assigned.

Factors 6 & 7, Personal contacts and Purpose of Contacts

These factors are used to describe and measure the contacts required, the difficulty in communicating with those contacts, the setting in which the contacts take place, and the nature of the discourse. Personal contacts are face-to-face and through remote dialogue (e.g. telephone, email, video conference, etc.).

At Level 6-3, contacts are often in moderately unstructured settings requiring the employee to discern the responsibility and authority of counterpart contacts. Contacts within the agency may include higher level management and outside contacts likely include consultants, contractors, vendors, etc.

At Level 6-4, contacts are typically with high-ranking officials from within and outside the agency such as agency heads, mayors, governors, or executives of private sector companies, in highly unstructured situations.

Consistent with Level 6-3, the appellant's personal contacts are nonroutine and are made internally with other DCMA employees and managers and externally with contractors and system software vendors (e.g., working with contractors to set up communication lines for new offices, making recommendations to DCMA District IT management for software improvements, and working with DCMA employees to make more effective use of software applications). The

appellant's contacts fall short of Level 6-4. He does not routinely have contact with senior executives at the national and international levels including Members of Congress and their staff, top officials at other Federal agencies, or corporate executives.

At Level 7-B, the nature of the contact requires the employee to use influence or persuasion to reach agreement with individuals who have common goals and are essentially cooperative. Contacts such as these entail identifying options to plan, coordinate, advise on, or resolve problems.

At Level 7-C, employees must use skills in persuasion and negotiation to influence others who are likely resistant, to accept or implement findings and recommendations.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts is to coordinate, advise on, and work with others to resolve problems or to implement plans where circumstances are mutually agreeable. When resolving user or system problems, the appellant is serving the interests of the individual or larger organization to reach a common goal of effective use of the IT system. In making recommendations for software improvements, they are consistent with established agency IT goals. This is consistent with Level 7-B.

Unlike Level 7-C, the purpose of the appellant's contacts is not to persuade others to accept his recommendations in situations where there are competing interests as might result from issues such as organizational conflict or resource problems, where for example, other specialist might present competing proposals for a major system alteration. Again, contacts of this nature are the responsibility of other higher graded DCMA positions.

Level 3-B (110 points) is assigned.

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, as well as the extent of physical exertion involved in the work.

At Level 8-1, the work is generally sedentary. Employees may be required to walk and stand as necessary with travel or carry light items but such work does not require any special physical effort.

At Level 8-2, the work requires some physical exertion and may necessitate abilities such as above-average agility and dexterity in some instances. Physical demands of the employee may include long periods of standing; recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching; or recurring lifting of moderately heavy items of less than 50 pounds.

The work of the appellant is routinely performed at a desk or moving about in an office setting. However; on a regular and recurring basis his position requires physical exertion related to the maintenance and installation of IT hardware requiring bending, crouching, and stretching to cable and wire computer equipment and lifting moderately heavy items (e.g., monitors, CPUs,

printer, etc.) that on average weigh approximately thirty pounds. This is consistent with the appellant's PD, and meets Level 8-2.

Level 8-2 (20 points) is assigned.

Summary

Factor	Level	Points
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-3	275
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts and	----	----
7. Purpose of contacts	3-B	110
8. Physical demands	8-2	20
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
	Total	2,410

A total of 2,410 points falls within the GS-11 grade level point range of 2,355-2,750 points on the Grade Conversion Table.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Information Technologist, GS-2210-11.