

**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:	[appellant's name]
Agency classification:	Program Support Assistant (OA) GS-303-5
Organization:	Veterans Affairs Medical Center Department of Veterans Affairs
OPM decision:	GS-303-5 Title to be determined by the agency to include (OA)
OPM decision number:	C-0303-05-09

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

8/19/99

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:

[appellant's name and address]

[appellant's agency name and address]

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

Introduction

On May 28, 1999, the Atlanta Oversight Division, U. S. Office of Personnel Management, accepted an appeal for the position of Program Support Assistant, GS-303-5, Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Department of Veterans Affairs, [city/state]. The appellant is requesting that her position be classified as Program Support Assistant, GS-303-6.

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 appellant believes additional duties assigned to her position description have increased the complexity and the extent of judgment required and warrant an increase in her grade.

The position description does not state that the appellant must be a qualified typist. According to the supervisor, a qualified typist is required for this position. Therefore, a statement should be added to the position description stating that a qualified typist is required.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to [position description number]. The appellant, supervisor and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant performs a variety of administrative and clerical duties in support of the [section] of the Medical Center. She maintains a computerized data base program for storing, filing, retrieving, and printing information for reports and forms. She prepares and submits the documents required for the renewal of clinical privileges. She prepares and submits documents for the pulmonary fellows' residency program. She processes physician requests for sleep apnea disorder patients, schedules appointments for patients, reports analyses of disorders, follows-up orders for treatments, and resolves complaints for the Sleep Study Program. She orders and receives supplies and tracks expenditures for cost purposes. She ensures completion and accuracy of all paper work. Clerical duties include routing incoming and outgoing materials, responding to and referring calls, taking minutes at meetings, and maintaining office files and logs. Other duties include processing time and attendance, travel orders, SF 52s, training forms, and performing other miscellaneous office support duties.

The appellant receives direction from the Chief of [section] who makes assignments, defines the desired results, and determines priorities. The appellant plans and carries out assignments using initiative and judgment and handles most problems following established procedures. She refers unusual situations or problems to the supervisor. The work is checked for efficiency and appropriateness.

Series determination

The agency placed the position in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303. The appellant does not contest the occupational series determination. The Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, 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 knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization and involves application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. The basic work processes associated with the appellant's assignments are clerical in nature. The appellant performs a number of support functions requiring knowledge of information management and clerical and administrative procedures, instructions, regulations, and directives as they relate to her employing organization. We find the appellant's position is properly placed in the GS-303 series.

Title determination

The GS-303 series does not specify titles. Therefore, the agency may designate an appropriate title by following the guidance in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. The parenthetical title *Office Automation (OA)* is added since the position requires a qualified typist, as well as skill in the use of office automation equipment.

Standard determination

Miscellaneous Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-303, January 1979.
Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, June 1989.
Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, November 1990.

Grade determination

The Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work provides general criteria for use in determining the grade level of nonsupervisory clerical and assistance work. Administrative support of the kind described in the guide is performed in offices, shops, laboratories, hospitals, and numerous other settings in all Federal agencies. The guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 through GS-7 and uses two criteria for grading purposes: *Nature of Assignment* (which includes the knowledge required and complexity of the work) and *Level of Responsibility* (which includes supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts).

The position is evaluated as follows:

Nature of Assignment

At GS-5, work consists of performing a full range of standard and nonstandard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of nonrecurring problems. Work includes a variety of assignments involving different and unrelated steps, processes, or methods. The employee must identify and understand the issues involved in each assignment and determine what steps and procedures are necessary and the order of their performance. Completion of each transaction typically involves selecting a course of action from a number of possibilities. The work requires extensive knowledge of an organization's rules, procedures, operations, or business practices to perform the more complex, interrelated, or one-of-a-kind clerical processing procedures.

At GS-6, work typically entails processing a wide variety of transactions for more than one type of assigned activity or functional specialization. Assignments are subject to different sets of rules, regulations, and procedures. Such issues must be examined that a course of action has substantive impact on the outcome of the assignment. Additionally, the work requires comprehensive knowledge of rules, regulations, and other guidelines relating to completing assignments in the program area assigned. This knowledge is usually attained through extensive, increasingly difficult, and practical experience and training in the subject-matter field. The work also requires ability to interpret and apply regulatory procedural requirements to process unusually difficult and complicated transactions.

The appellant's work compares to the GS-5 level. She performs a variety of assignments that involve both related and unrelated processes and procedures. She maintains the funds control which consists of contacting companies for price and product information, ordering supplies, and tracking purchases. She assists with the clinical credentialing and privileging which consists of preparing and submitting the paper work for the physicians to renew their clinical privileges; and she prepares, reviews, and submits the pulmonary fellows' residency requirements. Outside of her regular duties, she assists the primary care physicians with critical and noncritical patient care for the Sleep Study Program. This duty involves calling patients to set up appointments, explaining the procedures to them and determining whether the sleep apnea test can be done at home instead of the clinic. The appellant identifies the issues associated with each assignment and determines processes needed to complete the assignment. This level requires that the appellant be knowledgeable of the organization's practices in terms of completing forms, editing and reviewing medical orders, operating a computer and other office equipment to create and produce reports, and communicating with contractors and patients.

The appellant's work approaches the GS-6 level work; however, the full intent is not met. The work performed by the appellant may require comprehending the rules and regulations of the Pulmonary Section, but her duties do not meet the increasingly difficult complicated transactions intended to credit this level. The appellant works closely with the physicians in a collaborative manner to ensure that orders are followed and treatment is implemented, medical records and appropriate forms are processed, and the patients' files are completed. She makes determinations such as which contractor would best suit the patient's needs, to which physician the patient should

be referred, and she schedules appointments. She follows up on physicians' orders to ensure treatment was administered, and she assists patients by listening to their complaints to determine the urgency of their needs and refers the information to the physicians. Decisions made by the appellant are based on information readily available such as forms, records, and instructions from the physicians. The Sleep Study Program duties require understanding the program for the purpose of processing the actions to get the patients the help that they need. These transactions are mostly repetitive in terms of regulations and procedures to be applied and problems to be handled.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Level of Responsibility

At GS-5, the supervisor assigns work by defining objectives, priorities, and deadlines and provides guidance on assignments which do not have clear precedents. The employee works in accordance with accepted practices and completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, appropriateness, and effectiveness in meeting goals. Extensive guides in the form of instructions, manuals, regulations, and precedents apply to the work. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines for application and adapting them according to circumstances of the specific case or transaction. A number of procedural problems may arise which also require interpretation and adaptation of established guides. Often, the employee must determine which of several alternative guidelines to use. If existing guidelines cannot be applied, the employee refers the matter to the supervisor. Contacts are with a variety of persons within and outside the agency for the purpose of receiving or providing information relating to the work or for the purpose of resolving problems in connection with recurring responsibilities.

At GS-6, the supervisor reviews completed work for conformance with policy and requirements. The clerical employee is recognized as an authority on processing transactions or completing assignments within a complicated framework of established procedures and guidelines, often where there are no clear precedents. This recognition typically extends beyond the immediate office or work unit to the overall organization or, in some cases, outside the organization. The employee is regarded as an expert source of information on regulatory requirements for the various transactions, and is frequently called upon to provide accurate information on short notice. Guidelines for the work are numerous and varied, making it difficult for the employee to choose the most appropriate instruction and decide how the various transactions are to be completed. Guidelines often do not apply directly, requiring the employee to make adaptations to cover new and unusual work situations. This may involve deviating from established procedures to process transactions which cannot be completed through regular channels or involve actions where guidelines are conflicting or unusable. Contacts are with employees in the agency, in other agencies, or with management or users or providers of agency services. The employee provides information, explains the application of regulations, or resolves problems relating to the assignment.

The appellant meets the GS-5 level. She independently carries out the day-to-day administrative and clerical assignments and assists with the other aspects of the program. She uses judgment to determine the appropriate course of action to take when performing her duties. The work requires the use of a number of applicable guidelines and procedures. Contacts are with employees within the medical center, patients and their families, other medical staff in other centers, and contractors. The purpose of the contacts is to plan, coordinate, gather and provide information for the Pulmonary Section.

The GS-6 level is not fully met. The appellant performs the full range of administrative and clerical duties in support of a single program and generally covered by applicable regulations and procedures. The supervisor is available for unusual or controversial matters that require the interpretation of guides or alternatives when guidelines or precedents are not applicable, and the supervisor provides additional instruction on special projects. Additionally, the appellant's contacts are primarily for the purpose of gathering or exchanging factual and/or technical information as opposed to identifying and resolving problems or coordinating work when guidelines and precedent cases do not apply or do not exist.

This factor is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Since both factors are evaluated at GS-5, the overall evaluation of the clerical and administrative support functions is GS-5.

OFFICE AUTOMATION WORK

The office automation work is evaluated against the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide which is written in the Factor Evaluation System format. These duties do not impact the grade of the position, therefore, only a summary evaluation 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 and 7. Purpose of Contacts	1a	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	Total	740

In accordance with the grade conversion table in the guide, a total of 740 points falls within the range of GS-4, 655 to 850 points.

Summary

The highest level of substantive work is evaluated at the GS-5 level. The office automation work is evaluated at GS-4. The position is properly evaluated at the GS-5 level.

Decision

This position is properly classified as GS-303-5, with the title to be determined by the agency to include (OA).