

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Human Resources Assistant
GS-203-8

Organization: [area] Region HR Office
National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior
[city, state]

OPM decision: Human Resources Assistant
(Use of authorized parenthetical
specialties at agency discretion)
GS-203-8

OPM decision number: C-0203-08-04

Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager
Center for Merit System Accountability

November 30, 2007

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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, state]

[HR Specialist]
HR Specialist
National Park Service
[area] Region HR Office
Department of the Interior
[address]
[city, state]

Mr. Nathaniel Deutsch
Chief Office of Human Resources
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
1201 Eye Street NW, 12th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Introduction

On April 27, 2007, the Chicago Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant]. The appellant currently occupies a position classified as Human Resources (HR) Assistant, GS-203-08, located in the [area] Region HR Office, National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Department of Interior (DOI), in [city, state]. The appellant believes her position should be reclassified as an HR Specialist, GS-201-9. We received the complete agency administrative report on June 25, 2007. We accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

To help decide the appeal, we conducted a telephone audit with the appellant on June 20, 2007, and a telephone interview with her supervisor on June 22, 2007, and follow up calls to complete our fact-finding. In reaching our decision, we carefully considered the audit and interview findings and all other information of record furnished by the appellant and the agency, including the official position description (PD) which we find contains the major duties and responsibilities assigned to and performed by the appellants; and we incorporate it by reference into our decision.

General issues

The appellant's position was audited in September 2005 and upgraded to the HR Assistant, GS-203-08. At the time, the HR Office staff reported to a Chief of Administration, who managed the HR office, contracting office, and the support services office. The office has since been reorganized to establish a position for an HR Officer who reports directly to the Associate Regional Director.

The appellant is assigned to position description (PD) # [xxxxxxx]. The appellant and her supervisor have certified to its accuracy, but the appellant disagrees with the grade-level determination and the series assigned to the official position title. The appellant appealed the classification of her position directly to OPM.

A PD is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by a responsible agency official; i.e., a person with authority to assign work to a position. A position consists of the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal based on the duties assigned by management and performed by the employee. We classify a real operating position, and not simply the PD. Therefore, this decision is based on the actual work assigned to and performed by the appellant.

The appellant makes various statements about the classification review process conducted by her agency and compares her work to higher graded HR positions. By law we must classify positions solely by comparing their current duties and responsibilities to OPM position classification standards (PCS) and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of her position. Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to others, which may or may

not be classified correctly, as a basis for deciding her appeal. Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Because our decision sets aside any previous agency decision, the classification practices used by the appellant's agency in classifying her position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

The appellant's agency has primary responsibility for ensuring that its positions are classified consistently with OPM appeal decisions. If the appellant considers her position so similar to others that they all warrant the same classification, she may pursue the matter by writing to her agency's headquarters HR office. In doing so, she should specify the precise organizational location/installation, classification, duties, and responsibilities of the positions in question. If the positions are found to be basically the same as hers, the agency must correct their classification to be consistent with this appeal decision. Otherwise, the agency should explain to her the differences between her position and the others.

Position information

The HR Office provides policy direction for the entire region and operates as the servicing HR office for the regional headquarters staff, six Natural Resources-associated program offices, and 23 parks, and is responsible for processing personnel actions for approximately 2,559 employees. The office provides advice concerning staffing, classification, and employee benefits. It also provides oversight, guidance, and backup support to the other eight servicing personnel offices within the region.

The appellant works under the general supervision of the acting Regional HR Officer ("Supervisory HR Officer, GS-201-13"), and the lead HR Specialist (Staffing), GS-201-12. The HR Officer supervises 5 employees, two HR Specialists (Staffing) GS-201-12, and an HR Specialist (Classification), one HR Assistant, GS-203-8 (the appellant), and two HR Assistants, GS-203-6. The HR Officer has full authority and responsibility for planning, directing, and coordinating all Federal mandated HR programs, including its internal regional HR evaluation efforts.

The appellant spends forty percent of her time providing staffing support necessary to plan and carry out routine recruitment and placement activities, exercising judgment in resolving the less complicated issues and referring unusual or sensitive matters and those without clear precedents to either the lead HR Specialist (Staffing), who is available for technical guidance, or her supervisor.

The appellant works with management to fill vacant positions within defined parameters by using a variety of merit promotion or delegated examining (DE) recruitment strategies in the absence of any formal strategic recruitment planning process. She ensures current certification for all persons working on DEU matters, assuring initial certification and recertification training is scheduled and completed. She is responsible for setting announcement open periods and posting vacancy announcements on the USAJOBS Web site. She reviews the job analysis template to ensure required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) are appropriate, and checks the rating guide materials established for the position. The appellant reviews applications to determine the applicant's qualifications, sets up rating panels, transmutes scores, and submits a

certificate of eligibles to the selecting official that complies with the agency's internal merit promotion policy, particularly for veterans' preference, and the rule of three. She also handles suitability processing for non-sensitive background investigations. The appellant creates, consolidates, and maintains employee official personnel folders (OPFs) using OPM's *Guide to Personnel Recordkeeping Operating Manual*. She serves as the Regional HR office point of contact for the Federal Personnel Payroll Systems (FPPS), setting up accounts and setting and resetting passwords and is responsible for ensuring FPPS access is limited only to authorized persons and that proper security requirements are implemented. In completing periodic personnel reports, the appellant pulls required information from certain fields from FPPS and other databases.

The appellant spends another 40 percent of her time handling employee benefits and retirement matters, resolving a wide range of problems. She provides guidance to supervisors, employees, and employees' relatives about the Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Program, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), Federal Employee Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program, long-term care insurance, flexible spending accounts, unemployment insurance (with the exception of workers' compensation which is handled by an HR Specialist), the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), regular and offset, the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), and Social Security under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). Her retirement functions include preparing annuity estimates and processing retirement applications, including disability retirements and death cases.

She interviews employees and beneficiaries to develop facts; gather and analyze data to determine creditable service and retirement coverage; and search for, interpret, and apply case law and Federal regulations. The appellant carries out her assigned duties independently, signing off on all retirement packages and benefit forms for submission to OPM, and her final work products are generally not reviewed. This includes explaining eligibility requirements, reviewing the employee's correct service computation date (SCD), calculating complex annuity estimates, and processing final retirement packages. Prior to performing a retirement calculation, the appellant must verify that the employee's Master Record is correct by closely examining the employee's OPF to ensure the SCD has been accurately calculated; to verify retirement eligibility or coverage under FICA; and to identify any periods of part-time or intermittent service.

The appellant spends 10 percent of her time processing leave sharing and leave restoration requests, as well as recommending approval or disapproval of employee leave restoration requests to the Midwest Regional Director. She spends another five per cent of her time compiling data for reports for the DOI random drug test program coordinating scheduling of tests with supervisors, employees, and the testing clinic. She spends the remaining five per cent of her time assigning work and exercising technical supervision of two HR Assistants, GS-203-6, who perform routine, straightforward retirement calculations, and reviewing the retirement calculations completed by the two assistants for accuracy.

Title, series, and standard determination

The agency has classified the appellant's position in the Human Resources (HR) Assistance Series, GS-0203, and applied the Job Family Position Classification Standard (JFS) for Assistance Work in the Human Resources Management Group, GS-0200, for grade-level determination. The appellant disagrees with her agency's assignment of her position to the GS-203 series and believes her work warrants classification to the HR Management, GS-201 series, because of her program duties and responsibilities in staffing and retirement counseling.

The GS-203 series covers one-grade interval administrative support positions that supervise, lead, or perform HR assistant work requiring substantial knowledge of civilian and/or military HR terminology, requirements, procedures, operations, functions, and regulatory policy and procedural requirements applicable to HR transactions. This work does not require the broad knowledge of Federal HR systems or the depth of knowledge about HR concepts, principles, and techniques. HR assistants provide support for HR specialists in using information systems and in delivering services in the various specialty areas of HR.

The GS-201 series covers two-grade interval administrative positions that manage, supervise, administer, advise on, or deliver HR management products or services. Since some tasks are common to both administrative and support occupations, it is not always easy to distinguish between assistants classified in one-grade interval administrative support occupations and specialists classified in two-grade interval administrative occupations.

Both GS-201 and GS-203 JFSs discuss how to distinguish between specialist and assistant work. Guidance on distinguishing between administrative and support work is also contained in *The Classifier's Handbook*. Support work usually involves proficiency in one or more functional areas or in certain limited phases of a specified program. Normally a support position can be identified with the mission of a particular organization or program. The work usually does not require knowledge of interrelationships among functional areas or organizations. Employees performing support work follow established methods and procedures. Specifically, HR assistants have boundaries narrowly restricting their work. They use a limited variety of techniques, standards, or regulations. The problems HR assistants deal with are recurring and have precedents. These limitations affect the breadth and depth of knowledge required limiting the complexity of problem-solving, the applicability of guidelines, and the closeness of supervisory controls. In general, HR assistant duties are not designed to progress to HR specialist positions, but to support the work of HR specialists or the HR Officer.

On the other hand, administrative work primarily requires a high order of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of (1) the functions, processes, theories, and principles of management, and (2) the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information. Administrative work also requires skill in applying problem-solving techniques and skill in communicating both orally and in writing. Administrative positions do not require specialized education, but they do involve the types of skills typically gained through college-level education or through progressively responsible experience. In particular, full-performance

level HR specialists use broad HR management knowledge, concepts, and principles to perform a wide variety of work in one or more HR specialty areas.

Two-grade interval examining work typically entails initial job analysis for new positions performing difficult and complex work or substantially revising such rating. In contrast, the appellant checks previously developed rating guide materials for the vacant position as described previously. She ensures the certificate of eligibles submitted to the selecting official complies with the agency's internal merit promotion policy, particularly for veterans' preference and the rule of three. While this work is demanding, it is highly procedural. The record shows that in contrast to administrative occupations, the appellant's staffing support work does not require applying the high level of analysis or judgment as described in the GS-201 JFS.

As the primary retirement and benefits counselor in the office, the appellant refers to applicable laws and regulations, OPM handbooks and guides, and agency-specific procedures to advise employees, annuitants, and family members on a wide range of retirement benefits-related matters. This routinely requires conducting Internet searches on the OPM Web site. In contrast to administrative occupations, however, the appellant's retirement support work does not require applying a high level of analysis or judgment to make the information gathered fit a particular situation. Due to the nature of the work, the appellant cannot make decisions based on her research; she is limited to sharing this information with her clients to assist them in making more informed choices. Therefore, the collection of data is typically the end in itself rather than as a means to an end. In the area of employee benefits, two-grade interval GS-201 work extends beyond the case advisory functions vested in the appellant's position. It includes programmatic responsibilities which are not assigned to or performed by the appellant.

Consequently, we find the appellant's position is properly classified to the GS-0203 series. The basic title authorized for this occupation is HR Assistant which can be used with or without a parenthetical specialty title for those positions that include two or more specialized HR functions when none predominates or when there is no established specialty. However, when situations dictate, the GS-203 JFS permits the use of any combination of authorized parenthetical specialty titles; e.g., HR Assistant (Recruitment & Employee Benefits). Therefore, the proper title is HR Assistant with the use of authorized parenthetical titles left to the agency's discretion.

Grade determination

To evaluate the appellant's HR support work, we applied the grading criteria in the GS-0203 JFS which is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under FES, which employs nine factors, 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. In contrast, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the JFS.

The agency credited Levels 1-5, 2-3, 3-3, 4-3, 5-3, 6/7-2B, 8-1, and 9-1. Since the appellant disagrees with the basis for the agency's evaluation of her position, we will assess all nine factors.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that the employee must understand to do acceptable work (e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, regulations, and principles) and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

At Level 1-5, which is the highest level described in the JFS, the work requires knowledge of, and skill in applying, a comprehensive body of HR rules, procedures, and technical methods sufficient to carry out limited projects, analyze a variety of routine facts, research minor complaints or projects that are not readily understood, and summarize HR facts and issues. Examples of work at this level include making presentations following established lesson plans for routine administrative support subjects; conducting interviews to identify and organize pertinent facts of a situation; and providing advice to employees regarding minor problems of employee conduct, dissatisfaction, or poor work habits.

The appellant's retirement support work meets but does not exceed Level 1-5. It closely matches a Level 1-5 illustration where the HR assistant applies knowledge of, and skill in applying, a comprehensive body of HR rules, procedures, and technical methods concerning employee benefits sufficient to research, identify, and explain complicated and in-depth employee benefit-related issues, such as health benefits conversion and complicated annuity calculations. Typical of such work, she interviews retirement eligibles, gathers data to determine creditable service for retirement eligibility, identifies and researches potential issues, and prepares retirement estimates and packages to be forwarded to OPM. Her work is complicated as more individuals are being placed in an erroneous retirement system; service histories are difficult to piece together due to missing, incorrect, or incomplete personnel actions in the OPFs; and the appellant advises disabled employees on their available options ranging from being placed into a light-duty position to applying for disability retirement. If the individual chooses a disability retirement, the appellant advises the employee on eligibility requirements, disability annuity estimates, and duration of annuity.

As at Level 1-5, the appellant performs work which demonstrates a working knowledge and clear understanding of the governing rules and regulations by informing and assisting employees, their spouses, and families about eligibility requirements for qualifying for retirement and explaining the different types of retirement, including voluntary, disability, early out, buy-out, and related survivor benefits of the different retirement systems, including CSRS pension offset, if applicable. The appellant cited cases where retirees are covered by multiple systems including CSRS offset, FERS, and Social Security under FICA. While lower graded co-workers handle routine cases, the appellant's work also involves preparing complicated retirement estimates and creditable service computations. She processes retirement applications, computes and explains complex annuity estimates, and discusses health and life insurance options. In administering the local Federal employee benefits program, she applies an extensive, yet fundamental, set of HRM laws, principles, systems, policies, methods, and practices as they apply to the Federal employee

benefits program. While the appellant does work in the absence of a higher-level HR Specialist, provides advice and information independently, and has signatory authority for the retirement packages prepared for submission to OPM's Center for Retirement and Insurance Services (RIS) Programs, her advice is provided within well-established guidelines, practices, and procedures. Her work does not exceed the degree of research, judgment, and analytical skills as indicated at this level.

As at Level 1-5, the appellant provides information and assistance to employees concerning issues and intricate employee benefits provisions needed to resolve problems employees are having in understanding the benefits requirements and obtaining benefits. She also works with management to fill vacant positions by using a variety of merit promotion or DE recruitment strategies. The appellant performs work which is a direct match to the illustration for HR assistants (recruitment and placement) described at this level; e.g., requiring a knowledge of, and skill in applying, a comprehensive body of HR rules, procedures, and technical methods concerning recruitment and placement sufficient to: conduct recruitment/examining activities for common lower-grade positions; make appropriate modifications to standard or precedent announcement(s); review applications to assess applicants' basic qualifications; prepare appropriate certificate; take appropriate action upon selection; and advise selecting official on hiring procedures and requirements.

Level 1-5 is met. Her employee benefits work closely matches the description of work at this level. Furthermore, while some of her duties; e.g., recruiting for all vacant jobs under the Federal Wage System and for vacant positions up through GS-15 level under the General Schedule (GS), may exceed in some aspects the criteria spelled out at Level 1-5, her work may not be credited at a higher level because this work follows established procedures using precedential vacancy announcements and crediting plans developed by higher level HR personnel. In addition, when difficult or precedential matters arise, she refers them to the lead HR (Staffing) Specialist, who is available for technical guidance, or her supervisor. Therefore, Level 1-5 must be assigned.

This factor is evaluated at Level 1-5 and 750 points are credited.

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 to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. 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 changes to instructions; and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives.

At Level 2-3, which is the highest level identified in the JFS, HR assistants plan the work, carry out successive steps of assignments, resolve problems, and make adjustments using established practices and procedures. In addition, they recommend alternative actions to the supervisor;

handle problems and/or deviations that arise in accordance with instructions, policies, and guidelines; and refer new or controversial issues to the supervisor for direction.

The appellant's support work meets but does not exceed Level 2-3. As at this level, the appellant plans her own work, resolves problems, and makes adjustments within established policy or overall objectives and priorities defined by the supervisor. The supervisor or lead specialist defines continuing assignments, provides information on new tasks, and assists with unusual or controversial problems with no clear precedents. The appellant keeps the lead specialist and her supervisor informed of events or issues that may have an impact on succession planning by the HR office; e.g., suspected turnover, or the pending retirement, of an individual in a high-level, critical, and/or hard-to-fill position. As illustrated at Level 2-3, the appellant also has drafted limited policy statements related to HR programs for which she is responsible. In addition, her work is largely driven by customer demand and she carries out these recurring assignments independently without specific instructions. Typical of Level 2-3, the appellant's work does not receive a detailed review as these duties are handled largely in accordance with established instructions, policies, and guidelines. Therefore, Level 2-3 is assigned.

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

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor considers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them.

At Level 3-3, which is the highest level identified in the JFS, HR assistants use guidelines that have gaps in specificity and are not applicable to all work situations. The employee selects the most appropriate guidelines and decides how to complete the various transactions. Assistants use judgment to devise more efficient methods for procedural processing, gather and organize information for inquiries, or resolve problems referred by others. In some situations, guidelines do not apply directly to assignments and require the employee to make adaptations to cover new and unusual work situation.

The appellant's support work meets but does not exceed Level 3-3. The appellant handles all retirement questions, which requires her to research and interpret laws and regulations. The appellant regularly deals with individuals coded to an improper retirement system and frequently must reconstruct complex and confusing service histories. She advises employees and their family members of their various options. Comparable to Level 3-3, her guidelines do not always apply directly to her assignments and require her to adapt to cover new work situations. For example, while many of the types of decisions she handles are difficult, most determinations can be adapted from the examples of the different retirement systems covered by OPM's *Retirement Information System Manual*. Other available guidelines include title 5 U.S.C., title 5 CFR, agency-specific policies and procedures, and various handbooks. OPM also provides additional information on retirement and other benefits on its Web site. Again, difficult questions are referred to the lead HR specialist, or her supervisor for guidance. Therefore, Level 3-3 is assigned.

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

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, which is the highest level identified in the JFS, the work consists of different and unrelated steps in accomplishing HR assignments and processes. HR assistants at this level consider factual data, identify the scope and nature of the problems or issues, and determine the appropriate action from many alternatives. Assistants identify and analyze HR issues and/or problems to determine their interrelationships and to determine the appropriate methods and techniques needed to resolve them.

As stated previously, the appellant provides support to the Regional HR Officer in delivering staffing and retirement benefits services. This requires her to use a variety of merit promotion or DE recruitment strategies necessary to staff vacant positions. She provides guidance and direction on hiring for temporary positions, both competitive and excepted service and on hiring for term positions. She orients new employees providing them with informational pamphlets and brochures; she advises them on leave procedures, retirement and health and life insurance coverage. The appellant performs a wide range of transactions in the area of HR management and provides technical assistance to managers, supervisors, employees, and field HR staffs.

The appellant's staffing work meets but does not exceed Level 4-3. It closely matches a Level 4-3 illustration where the HR assistant evaluates applications and ranks applicants for a variety of lower-grade positions and provides information and assistance to employees concerning issues and intricate benefits provisions. She identifies major duties of the positions being filled, compares requirements of the positions being filled with the backgrounds of applicants to determine that minimum eligibility requirements have been met, determines the relative degree to which applicant experience meets various rating factors, and ranks applicants based on their demonstrated ability to perform specific work. The appellant's retirement and benefits support work also meets but does not exceed Level 4-3. Illustrative of this level, the appellant provides information and assistance to employees concerning retirement issues and intricate employee benefits provisions. She works with employees to resolve problems and insure they obtain benefits. Therefore, this factor is assigned Level 4-3.

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

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

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 5-3, which is the highest level identified in the JFS, the work involves treating a variety of routine problems, questions, or situations using established procedures, such as explaining

benefits options available to employees based upon analysis of individual cases and processing claims that require identifying and substantiating relevant information.

The appellant's position meets but does not exceed Level 5-3. Work at this level affects the quality and adequacy of services the employee benefits program provides. The appellant's work includes advising on and providing assistance regarding FEHB, TSP, FEGLI, and several retirement programs (e.g., CSRS, FERS, and disability retirement). The appellant assists employees and family members on retirement matters, prepares annuity estimates and paperwork, reviews all benefits forms, determines creditable Federal service, and reviews OPFs for accuracy. The appellant resolves retirement issues and related problems; e.g., she identifies and corrects problems of employees who have been placed in the wrong retirement system or who may have errors found in the calculation of SCDs due to improper credit given for non-qualifying appointments based on military service records. She also resolves technical problems in accordance with established criteria, guidelines, and/or practices. Like Level 5-3, the appellant's work has a direct effect on the quality and adequacy of employee records, program operations, and services provided through the HR office that includes a variety of employee retirement problems, questions, and situations, such as ensuring accurate and timely retirement calculations, and providing accurate and timely advice.

The appellant's staffing work meets but does not exceed Level 5-3. It closely matches a Level 5-3 illustration where the HR assistant rates employees for promotion and proposes order of selection according to established examining criteria and technical methods. Her benefits work is also a direct match where the appellant explains benefits options available to employees based upon analysis of individual cases. Therefore, Level 5-3 is assigned.

This factor is evaluated at Level 5-3 and 150 points are credited.

Factor 6 and 7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

Personal contacts include 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. These factors are interdependent. The same contacts selected for crediting Factor 6 must be used to evaluate Factor 7. The appropriate level for personal contacts and the corresponding level for purpose of contacts are determined by applying the point assignment chart for Factors 6 and 7.

Personal Contacts

At Level 2, the highest level described in the JFS, personal contacts are generally with employees and managers in the agency, inside and outside the immediate office or related units, as well as with applicants, retirees, beneficiaries, and/or the general public, in moderately structured settings.

The appellant's personal contacts fully meet Level 2. Her contacts are with management officials, supervisors, all levels of clerical, technical and professional employees, other personnel

specialists within the agency, and co-workers in the unit. Contacts outside the National Park Service include job applicants, State Employment and Rehabilitation Department officials, college placement and counseling personnel, and other Federal personnel officials.

Purpose of Contacts

At Level A, the purpose of contacts is to acquire, clarify, or exchange facts or information needed to complete assignments. In contrast, the purpose of Level B contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts, or to resolve issues or operating problems by influencing or persuading people who are working toward mutual goals and have basically cooperative attitudes.

The purpose of the appellant's personal contacts fully meet Level B, as her contacts are to provide technical assistance, administer staffing programs, and to obtain and provide advice on benefits and retirement matters.

This factor is evaluated at Level B.

By application of the matrix point assignment chart in the JFS, the juncture where Factor 6 (Level 2) intersects with Factor 7 (Level B) results in a total of 75 points.

Factors 6 and 7 are evaluated at Level 2B and credited with 75 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

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

As at Level 8-1, which is the only level identified in the JFS, the appellant's work is primarily sedentary and does not involve any special physical effort. Some work may require periods of standing or carrying light items such as OPFs, pamphlets, or handbooks. This factor is evaluated at Level 8-1 and credited with 5 points.

Factor 9, Work Environment

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.

As at Level 9-1, which is the only level identified in the JFS, the appellant's work environment consists of an area that is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. Her work involves everyday risks or discomforts requiring normal safety precautions. The appellant's work environment meets but does not exceed Level 9-1. This factor is evaluated at Level 9-1 and credited with 5 points.

Summary

| <i>Factor</i> | <i>Level</i> | <i>Points</i> |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Knowledge Required by the Position</i> | 1-5 | 750 |
| 2. <i>Supervisory Controls</i> | 2-3 | 275 |
| 3. <i>Guidelines</i> | 3-3 | 275 |
| 4. <i>Complexity</i> | 4-3 | 150 |
| 5. <i>Scope and Effect</i> | 5-3 | 150 |
| 6 & 7. <i>Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts</i> | 2-B | 75 |
| 8. <i>Physical Demands</i> | 8-1 | 5 |
| 9. <i>Work Environment</i> | 9-1 | <u>5</u> |
| <i>Total</i> | | 1,685 |

A total of 1,685 points falls within the GS-8 range (1,605 - 1,850 points) on the grade conversion table in the JFS. Therefore, the appellant's position is graded at the GS-8 level.

Decision

The position is properly classified as HR Assistant, GS-203-8, with the use of authorized parenthetical specialties left to the discretion of the agency.