

**OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
ATLANTA OVERSIGHT DIVISION
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS OVERSIGHT AND EFFECTIVENESS
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION

Under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code

Appellant: [Appellant]

Position: Management Assistant (Office Automation), GS-344-05

Organization: [Installation]
Department of the Navy
[Installation city and state]

Decision: Management Assistant (Office Automation), GS-344-06
(Appeal Granted)

OPM decision number: C- 0344-06-02, 8/8/96

Background

On April 26, 1996, the Atlanta Merit Systems Oversight Division, Office of Personnel Management, accepted an appeal for the position of Management Assistant (Office Automation), GS-344-05, [installation], Department of the Navy, [installation city and state]. The appellant is requesting that her position be changed to Management Assistant, GS-344-06.

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.

Sources of Information

This appeal decision is based on information from the following sources:

1. The appellant's letter of April 24, 1996, appealing the classification of her position.
2. The agency's letter of May 28, 1996, providing position and organizational information.
3. A telephone interview with the appellant on July 30, 1996.
4. A telephone interview with the appellant's immediate supervisor on August 6, 1996.
5. A telephone interview with the appellant's former supervisor, on August 6, 1996.
6. A telephone interview with the servicing classifier on August 7, 1996.

Position Information

The appellant is assigned to Position Number XTAOX. The appellant, supervisor, and agency have certified to the accuracy of the position description.

The appellant performs assignments that support the management of forms, reports, and directives. She reviews each directive for compliance with the standards issued by the agency by ascertaining the currency, need, completeness, and possible overlap of or conflict with other directives. She writes and revises directives, reviews their distribution, and maintains a case file of all directives published by the command. She receives requests for new or revised forms from areas of the command and determines if there is an existing form that will suit the need of the requester. She designs forms and maintains and logs all forms issued by the command. She reviews reports and develops recommendations for eliminating, consolidating, and simplifying routine reports. She assists higher level employees in conducting organizational analyses. Her

position requires the skills of a qualified typist to operate word processing and associated equipment.

The appellant receives direction from the support services supervisor, who provides general standing instructions on what is to be done. The appellant independently carries out recurring assignments without specific instructions. Problems and unfamiliar situations not covered by instructions are referred to the supervisor. Finished work and methods used are checked for technical accuracy and compliance.

Standards Referenced

Management and Program Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-344, May 1993.
Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide, November 1990.

Series and Title Determination

The appellant does not contest the title or occupational series of her position.

Series

The GS-344 series includes positions involved in supervising or performing clerical and technical work in support of management analysis and program analysis, the purposes of which are to evaluate and improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of organizations and programs. The work requires a practical knowledge of the purposes, methods, and techniques of management analysis and/or program analysis and the structures, functions, processes, objectives, products, services, resource requirements, and similar features of Government programs and organizations. We agree with the agency's decision that the assignments given to the appellant fall within the purview of the Management and Program Clerical and Assistant Series, GS-344.

Title

Management Assistant is the title for all positions GS-05 and above that primarily involve performing work in support of management analysis functions and processes.

The Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide states that positions requiring both typing and office automation skills should be identified by adding the parenthetical title Office Automation to the basic title.

The appellant's position is properly titled and coded as Management Assistant (Office Automation), GS-344.

Grade Determination

The standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and the qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor 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 point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect which meets a higher level. The total points assigned are converted to a grade by use of the grade conversion table in the standard.

Under FES, positions which significantly exceed the highest factor level or fail to meet the lowest factor level described in a classification standard must be evaluated by reference to the Primary Standard, contained in Appendix 3 of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. The Primary Standard is the "standard-for-standards" for FES.

Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position:

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, such as the steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts; and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. The agency credited Level 1-3 for this factor. We find that Level 1-4 best describes the knowledge required of the position.

At Level 1-4, the work requires knowledge of an extensive body of management and/or program analysis technical rules, guidelines, regulations, and precedents. It also requires knowledge of the basic objectives and policies governing various management or program operations. Some work also requires skill in applying basic data gathering methods, such as standard interviewing or surveying techniques, to collect various types of factual information. Some employees also use writing skills to prepare clear, concise reports that describe the data collection techniques and other processes and procedures used, conditions of management or program operations, and recommended improvements. Employees apply this knowledge to individual, nonstandard technical assignments whether the nature of these assignments stems from a changing mix of work or represents diversity within a defined management or program operation. Assignments may involve limited aspects of higher level work.

Level 1-4 is meet. Illustration 1 on page 11 of the GS-344 standard best describes the duties of the appellant in directives management. An extensive knowledge of technical rules and programs is required of the appellant in order to determine the currency and need for, or possible overlap with other directives. Although the appellant does not necessarily change the content of the directives she uses writing skills to ensure the directives are clear and concise, and she sometimes

streamlines them. She makes grammatical changes, verifies that references are cited correctly, makes revisions and recommends changes, and makes sure that the format of directives or forms are appropriate. This level best describes the knowledge required of the appellant.

Level 1-5, as described in the Primary Standard, is not met. At this level, the work requires knowledge (such as would be acquired through a pertinent baccalaureate educational program or its equivalent in experience, training, or independent study) of basic principles, concepts, and methodology of a professional or administrative occupation, and skill in applying this knowledge in carrying out elementary assignments, operations, or procedures. In addition, a practical knowledge of technical methods is required to perform assignments such as carrying out limited projects that involve use of specialized complicated techniques. The appellant is not required to possess the conceptual knowledge or to perform under the circumstances described at this level nor does her position require more than a practical knowledge of established standards. This level is not met.

Level 1-4, 550 points, is credited for this factor.

Factor 2 - Supervisory Controls:

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for carrying out assignments, and how completed work is reviewed. The agency credited Level 2-2 for this factor. We find that Level 2-3 is more appropriate.

At Level 2-3 the supervisor or higher level employee defines the objectives, priorities, and deadlines for projects or assignments and assists the employee with unusual situations, problems, or studies that do not have clear precedents. The employee plans and carries out the successive steps of management or program analysis technical projects and assignments and handles problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies, previous training, or accepted practices. The supervisor or higher level employee evaluates reports and other completed work for technical soundness, appropriateness of conclusions or recommendations, consistency, relevance of support material, and compliance with policies and requirements. The methods used in arriving at the end results are not reviewed in detail.

Level 2-3 is met. The appellant plans and carries out the assigned work projects independently without detailed supervision. Problems and deviations are handled according to previous training and accepted practices. Unusual situations or problems that do not have clear precedents are referred to the supervisor. This is consistent with Level 2-3.

Level 2-4, as described in the Primary Standard, is not met. At this level, the supervisor sets the overall objectives and resources available. The employee and supervisor, in consultation, develop deadlines, projects, and work to be done. The employee, having developed expertise in the line of work, is responsible for planning and carrying out the assignment, resolving most of the conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with other as necessary, and interpreting policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives. In some assignments, the employee also determines the approach to be taken and the methodology to be used. The employee keeps the supervisor

informed of progress and potentially controversial matters. Completed work is reviewed only from an overall standpoint on terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements or expected results. The appellant does not exercise this type of responsibility and works under closer supervision than is described at Level 2-4.

Level 2-3, 275 points, is credited for this factor.

Factor 3 - Guidelines:

This factor covers the nature of guidelines used, and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency credited Level 3-2 for this factor.

At Level 3-2 a number of established instructions and procedures for doing the work are readily available and clearly applicable to most assignments. Typical guidelines include organizational operating procedures; instructions and procedures for management or program analysis functions and processes; automated system procedures and requirements; forms, records, or other administrative or information management procedures and requirements; program audit reports; data on program resource use and productivity; staffing allowances; organization and workflow charts; mission and function statements; program goals and objectives; and similar information. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating, selecting, and applying the most appropriate instructions, references, or procedures to management or program analysis clerical or technical assignments.

Level 3-2 is met. Established guidelines are readily available to the appellant. She uses judgment in selecting, interpreting, and applying the appropriate guidance when doing the work.

At Level 3-3 because of the unique or complicating characteristics of the assignments, guidelines lack specificity or are not completely applicable to the work requirements, circumstances, or problems. The employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting guidelines to apply to specific situations such as evaluating the appropriateness of justifications for changes in clerical staffing levels; determining the cause or extent of deviations from established production rates or resource use; or determining whether an organization's proposed of their established delegated authority or assigned function.

Level 3-3 is not met. The guidelines used by the appellant are specific and applicable to the work assignments. The appellant does use some judgment in applying and interpreting guidelines but not for the purpose of evaluating the appropriateness of justifications for forms, reports, and directives.

Level 3-2, 125 points, is 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. The agency credited Level 4-3 for this factor.

At level 4-3 the work consists of various duties, projects, or assignments involving different and unrelated management or program analysis technical processes and procedures. Assignments or projects involve:

- various actions or steps that are completely standardized or prescribed in instructions, guidelines, or precedent cases;
- adaptation or modification of established procedures and methods;
- various types and sources of information;
- nonrecurring problems, trends, or issues;
- management or program operations with varying or changing conditions (e.g., work units or program areas with different functions or requirements or with periodic changes in workplaces, budgets, staff levels, work processes, or program objectives); or
- similar features.

The employee decides what needs to be done by considering the characteristics, practices, objectives, and interrelationships of various work units, program areas, and/or management or program operations. The employee selects, adapts, and applies the most suitable practices, procedures, methods, and precedents to collect and analyze various types of information, formulate conclusions, define needs, and/or make recommendations for resolving problems to higher level employees.

Level 4-3 is met. The appellant's work consists of various aspects of paperwork management, including forms management, reports management, and directive management. The steps and processes for doing the work require creativity and the application of accepted management techniques. The appellant selects and applies the most suitable methods when performing the work, much as described at Level 4-3.

At level 4-4, as described in the Primary Standard, the work typically includes varied duties that require many different and unrelated processes and methods, such as those relating to well established aspects of an administrative or professional field. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include the assessment of unusual circumstances, variations in approach, and incomplete or conflicting data. The work requires making decisions concerning such things as interpretation of considerable data, planning of the work, or refinement of the methods and techniques to be used.

The appellant does not meet Level 4-4. Her work typically does not include varied duties that require many different and unrelated processes and methods. The appellant's assignments make use of related procedures and steps, and decisions regarding what needs to be done do not typically require refining methods and techniques.

Level 4-3, 150 points, is credited for this factor.

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 assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization. The agency credited Level 5-2 for this factor.

At Level 5-2, the purpose of the work is to apply specific rules, regulations, or procedures to perform a full range of clerical or technical tasks, duties, and assignments. These assignments typically comprise a complete segment of a brief management or program analysis project, study, or process. The work affects the accuracy, reliability, quality, and timeliness of management or program analysis products, recommendation, studies, projects, and processes. Some of the work affects the consistent use and control of publications, forms, records, directives, and other systems in local offices and organizations with similar administrative or information management needs.

The appellant meets level 5-2. The purpose of her work is to provide for the efficient operation of the forms, reports, and directives management programs. Her work affects the reliability and accuracy of forms, reports, and directives, which in turn affect the organizational performance of the units served.

At Level 5-3, the purpose of the work is to plan and carry out assignments or projects to improve the efficiency and productivity of organizations or program operations. Employees use established methods, practices, and criteria to identify, study, and recommend solutions for resolving conventional problems or questions. The work affects the design of organizational structures and workflow; the evaluation and improvement of operating program efficiency and effectiveness; the use and management of staff, funding, equipment, and other resources; and the design or use of similar management or program operations. Some of the work also affects the management of administrative or information systems throughout a wide range of offices or organizations with different administrative or information management needs.

The full intent of level 5-3 is not met. The appellant's assignments do not directly impact on the efficiency and productivity of organizations served, and typically do not involve the solution of problems or questions relating to organizational performance. Her work does not have the impact described at this level, and the level cannot be credited.

Level 5-2, 75 points, is credited.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts:

These factors measure face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain and the purpose of those personal contacts. The same personal contacts must serve as the basis for the level selected for both factors. The agency evaluated these factors at Level 2a. We believe that Level 2b is more appropriate.

Personal Contacts:

At Level 2, contacts are with employees of the same agency, but outside the immediate organization. Persons contacted are managers, employees, and other representatives of the programs involved or organizations served. This level also covers contacts with members of the general public, as individuals or groups, in a moderately structured setting.

At Level 3, contacts are with individuals from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting (e.g., contacts are not established on a routine basis, 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 of contacts at this level are those with persons in their capacities as attorneys, contractors; or representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public groups.

Similar to Level 2, the appellant's recurring contacts are with employees in the immediate office and personnel in various organizations throughout the command and outside of the command. Level 3 is not met, since the appellant's personal contacts outside her agency are established on a regular basis, and the role and authority of the persons contacted are known to the appellant in advance of the contact or established early in the contact.

Personal contacts are credited at Level 2.

Purpose of Contacts:

Level b is met, where the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems by clarifying discrepancies in information submitted by serviced organizations, resolving automated system problems causing erroneous transaction records, or seeking cooperation from others to resolve complicated supply actions. This is the highest level illustrated in the GS-344 standard. The appellant plans work efforts by assisting in the development of reporting systems and the preparation of adequate directives; she advises on reporting requirements and obtains information unavailable from her counterparts; and she works with others in finalizing work projects. The purpose of the appellant's contacts matches this level.

At higher levels, as described in the Primary Standard, the purpose of contacts is to influence, motivate, interrogate, or control persons or groups who may be fearful, skeptical, uncooperative, or dangerous, and require skill in approaching the person or group to obtain the desired effect, such as gaining compliance with established policies and regulations by persuasion or negotiation,

or gaining information by establishing rapport with a suspicious informant. The appellant does not encounter contacts such as are described at this level.

Level b is credited for this factor.

The combination of contacts at Level 2 and the purpose of contacts at Level b equates to 75 points, according to the matrix on page 19 of the GS-344 standard.

Factor 8 - Physical Demands:

This factor measures the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee in performing the work assignment, including the agility and dexterity required, and the extent of physical exertion. The agency credited Level 8-1 for this factor.

Level 8-1 is met, where the work requires no special physical demands. It may involve some walking, standing, bending, or carrying of light items. The appellant's work essentially matches this level.

Level 8-2, as described in the Primary Standard, is not met. At this level, the work requires some physical exertion, such as long periods of standing, walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces; recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching, or similar activities; or recurring lifting of moderately heavy items. There is no evidence in the appeal record that the appellant must exert this level of effort.

Level 8-1, 5 points, is credited for this factor.

Factor 9 - Work Environment:

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings, and the safety precautions required. The agency credited Level 9-1 for this factor.

Level 9-1 is met, where the work is performed in an office or similar setting requiring normal safety precautions against everyday risks or discomforts. This matches the appellant's work environment.

Level 9-2, as described in the Primary Standard, is not met. At this level the work involves moderate risks or discomforts that require special safety precautions, e.g., working around moving parts, carts, or machines; exposure to contagious diseases or irritant chemicals. There is no evidence in the appeal record that the appellant is exposed to such environments.

Level 9-1, 5 points, is credited for this factor.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-3	150
5. Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	6-2 7a	75
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	1260

A total of 1260 points converts to GS-6, and falls within the range of 1105-1350 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS- 344 standard.

The appellant's office automation work facilitates the primary work of the position, and is not grade-impacting. An evaluation of that work, summarized as follows, shows that the work does not exceed the GS-3 level:

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-2	200
2. Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and Effect	5-2	75
6. Personal Contacts and 7. Purpose of Contacts	1A	30
8. Physical Demands	8-1	5
9. Work Environment	9-1	5
	TOTAL	640

A total of 640 points falls within the range for a GS-3, 455 to 650 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide.

Summary

In summary, the appellant's management assistant work is evaluated at the GS-6 level and the office automation work is evaluated at GS-3. Consequently, the position is properly graded at GS-6, which is the highest level of work performed for a substantial portion of the time.

Decision

This position is properly classified as Management Assistant (Office Automation), GS-344-06. This decision constitutes a classification certificate issued under the authority of section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This certificate is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government.