

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness
Classification Appeals and ELSA 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]

Agency classification: Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist
GS-647-6

Organization: Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Department of Veterans Affairs

OPM decision: Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist
GS-647-7

OPM decision number: C- 0647-07-01

Kathy W. Day
Classification Appeals Officer

8/6/98

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).

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing personnel office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description and a Standard Form 50 showing the personnel action taken. The report must be submitted within 30 days from the effective date of the personnel action.

Decision sent to:

[appellant]

[appellant's personnel office]

Mr.
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Personnel and Labor Relations
Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

Introduction

On April 8, 1998, the Atlanta Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) received a classification appeal from [appellant] who is currently classified as Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist, GS-0647-6, in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Department, [city\state]. The appellant believes his position should be classified at grade GS-7. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

To help decide the appeal, an Atlanta Oversight Division representative conducted telephone interviews with the appellant and his immediate supervisor and the servicing classifier. In reaching our classification decision, we have reviewed the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description number [pd number]

General issues

The appellant believes the current evaluation of his position does not recognize his level of responsibility or the complexity of his work. He disagrees with Factor 2 of the agency's evaluation. This decision will provide an analysis of that particular factor only. The remaining factor level determinations made by the agency will be discussed in general since we have reviewed each factor and agree with the agency's determination.

Position information

The appellant is in charge of the Radiology Department in an outpatient clinic which has radiologists onsite one or two days per week. The remainder of the time, he is responsible for independently managing the day-to-day operations of the department. He performs a variety of complex radiologic examinations. He receives requests and/or instructions for radiologic procedures, interprets requests and/or instructions of physicians for procedures, secures confidence and cooperation of patients during examination, determines the technical factors or variables to demonstrate requested structures, sets the controls and operating radiographic equipment in order that the portion of the body specified receives the correct calculated exposure, protects the patient from direct or secondary radiation by using proper exposures, films, filters, screens, etc. He reports the malfunctioning of equipment to the supervisor. The appellant assists radiologists during fluoroscopic examinations. He mixes contrast media, prepares syringes for radiologists or other medical officers to administer, and adjusts controls on equipment. He states that he is authorized to inject patients with contrast media with the understanding that a physician is available in case of an emergency.

The appellant removes and inserts spot film cassettes exposed for permanent record during the fluoroscopic examination. He independently performs tomographic scanning of heads, bodies, and extremities for diagnostic purposes. He operates all radiographic and fluoroscopic equipment for complex X-rays. He may perform minor nursing practices such as CPR, intravenous injections, and other sterile practices as related to radiology.

The appellant performs clerical duties such as recording radiographic exposures on the patient's chart, compiling daily work reports showing number and identification of patients, identifying X-ray films

with the names of patients, and recording technical factors and materials used in studies where no guidelines are available. He schedules and receives patients and explains the required procedures. Other clerical duties include making filing jackets and keeping them up-to-date, registering patients in the computer, and maintaining a log of all examinations performed in the clinic.

Overall supervision is provided by the Chief Technologist who is situated at a different location; however, the appellant works under the general direction of the radiologist who comes onsite once or twice a week and provides general instructions as to the type of work performed by the appellant. Typically, the appellant determines the methods to be used and the approaches to be taken in solving routine problems within his section. The work is reviewed for quality, quantity, and methodology.

Series determination

The primary purpose of the appellant's position is to perform, under the direction of a physician, diagnostic radiological examinations of medical patients using tomographic equipment. This work is covered by the Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist Series, GS-647, which includes positions requiring the performance or supervision of technical work in the field of diagnostic radiologic examinations, performed under the direction of a physician, and involving the operation of radiologic equipment in a hospital or clinic environment as part of a diagnostic plan for patients.

The appellant's position is, therefore, appropriately placed in the Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist Series, GS-647.

Title determination

The authorized title for nonsupervisory positions in this series at grade GS-6 and above is *Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist*.

Standard determination

Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist, GS-647, October 1990.

Grade determination

The GS-647 standard instructs that positions in this series should be evaluated on a factor-by-factor basis, using one or more of the OPM Benchmark Descriptions for Diagnostic Radiologic Technician or Technologist, as appropriate. If the factor descriptions in the benchmarks do not provide a good match with the position being classified, then the factor level descriptions should be used to determine the appropriate point values.

In the Factor Evaluation System (FES), 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.

The appellant's duties and level of responsibility most closely match Benchmark #7-1. Our application of this Benchmark, with appropriate references to the GS-647 factor level descriptions, follows:

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 1-5.

The knowledge required of the appellant meets Level 1-5, as described in Benchmark #7-1 and the factor-level description in the standard. The position requires knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and basic nursing practices, as well as thorough knowledge of radiation protection standards, devices, and techniques. Like the benchmark description, the appellant must understand the operation of the X-ray equipment; calculate technical factors to determine proper exposure, density and contrast; interpret physician's instructions; and position patients to achieve optimum radiographic examinations.

Level 1-5 is credited for 750 points.

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. We believe that Level 2-3 is more appropriate.

At Level 2-2, as illustrated in Benchmark #6-1, the employee works under the supervision of a higher grade technologist or supervisor. Repetitive assignments are made with general instructions as to type of work, quality and quantity. The supervisor provides detailed instructions on new procedures and techniques and advises on technical problems. Work is spot checked for diagnostic value and methods used in conducting the examination. When assisting with difficult procedures such as carotid arteriograms, the employee receives direct instruction as to the duties to be performed.

Level 2-3 in the GS-647 standard covers work situations where supervision is primarily administrative rather than technical. At this level, assignments made by the supervisor cover operating policies, priorities, and work schedules. When working as a team member with a radiologist, the technologist's knowledge of complex procedures is accepted. Instructions are limited to such things as medical abnormalities to be expected or discussion of the suitability of available equipment for particular special techniques. The technologist plans, lays out, and performs the work in accordance with previous training and accepted practices in the occupation. Work is reviewed on the basis of accomplishing work schedules and overall acceptability of films produced.

The appellant's responsibility is comparable to Level 2-3 as illustrated in Benchmark # 7-1 and the factor-level description in the standard. At this level, the fully trained technologist receives virtually no technical supervision, except for general guidance from the part-time radiologist in the performance of especially unusual procedures. The technologist plans the day-to-day work of the section. Like the benchmark description, the appellant independently runs the Radiology Department on a day-to-day basis and receives only minimal supervision. He receives administrative supervision from his immediate supervisor who is at a different location (out of state). He works with the radiologist who comes onsite once or twice a week or with the physician at the clinic but independently sets up protocols and parameters for examination in accordance with accepted practices. He plans his own work, prepares for the X-rays, determines if the procedures require a radiologist, and performs a variety of routine radiographic exams. According to the supervisor, the appellant is required to accept more responsibility since he is the only radiologic technologist at the clinic. Because of his recognized technical skills, he independently performs examinations such as Intravenous Pyelograms. The work is reviewed for overall production and for quality and demeanor as indicated by the physician. The supervisor spot checks the film work for acceptance.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3 - Guidelines:

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

We find that the appellant works within the standardized procedures typical of Level 3-2 illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. Standard operating procedures cover the number and sequences of exposure, the positioning of patients, and settings of the equipment. Guidelines are available as needed. Like Level 3-2, the appellant adapts the general procedures and techniques to the specific conditions of the patient according to established precedents and technical calculations.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125 points.

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.

The appellant's work compares best to Level 4-3 illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. The work is linked to performing routine radiographic examinations and a number of complex examinations under the direction of a radiologist. These examinations require a number of different processes and methods, the use of examining equipment, and the positioning of patients.

Level 4-3 is credited for 150 points.

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.

The appellant meets Level 5-2, the only level described in the GS-647 factor-level description in the standard and illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. The purpose of the work is to provide X-ray studies for diagnosis and treatment of patients for various accident trauma and a wide variety of defects and diseases. The X-ray studies taken affect the accuracy and reliability of physicians' diagnoses and treatment.

Level 5-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 6 - Personal Contacts:

This factor measures face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The agency credited Level 6-2.

Level 6-2, the only level described in the GS-647 standard and illustrated in Benchmark #7-1, is met. The appellant's personal contacts are with patients, fellow employees, and with physicians and staff radiologists.

Level 6-2 is credited for 25 points.

Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts:

In General Schedule occupations, the purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, and objectives. The personal contacts which serve as the basis for the level selected for this factor

must be the contacts which are the basis for the level selected for Factor 6. The agency credited Level 7-2.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts compares closely to Level 7-2 as illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. The appellant resolves problems and exchanges information concerning equipment and procedures and scheduling patients. Contacts with patients are to explain procedures to be performed and obtain information. Contacts with radiologists and physicians are to coordinate work efforts and resolve operating problems.

Level 7-2 is credited for 50 points.

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 8-2.

Level 8-2 is met, the only level described in the GS-647 standard and illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. The appellant's work requires long periods of standing and walking. There is some bending and lifting and carrying of moderately heavy items such as film cassettes for rapid film changers. There is occasional lifting of moderately heavy items such as one- or two-gallon containers of film processing chemicals and lifting or positioning patients.

Level 8-2 is credited for 20 points.

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 9-2.

Level 9-2 is met, the only level described in the GS-647 standards and illustrated in Benchmark #7-1. The appellant's work area is well lighted, heated, and ventilated. Special safety precautions are used to reduce exposure to X-rays. These include using minimum current settings in the X-ray machine and never operating the machine except from behind a protective screen or when wearing protective clothing such as a lead apron.

Level 9-2 is credited for 20 points.

SUMMARY		
FACTOR	LEVEL	POINTS
1. Knowledge Required by the Position	1-5	750
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	6-2	25
7. Purpose of Contacts	7-2	50
8. Physical Demands	8-2	20
9. Work Environment	9-2	20
	TOTAL	1490

A total of 1490 points falls within the range for GS-7, 1335 to 1600 points, according to the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-647 standard.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist, GS-647-7.