

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

Washington Oversight Division  
1900 E Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20415

**Classification Appeal Decision  
Under Section 5112 of Title 5, United States Code**

<b>Appellant:</b>	[name]
<b>Agency classification:</b>	Program Support Assistant GS-303-5
<b>Organization:</b>	Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Service [medical center] Department of Veterans Affairs [city and state]
<b>OPM decision:</b>	GS-303-5 (title at agency discretion, with parenthetical designation of "Office Automation")
<b>OPM decision no.:</b>	C-0303-05-07

---

Richard Quasney  
Classification Appeals Officer

June 9, 1999  
Date

---

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a classification 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 the conditions and time limits specified in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, sections 511.605, 511.613, and 511.614, as cited in the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

**Decision sent to:**

[appellant]

Mr. Ronald E. Cowles  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resource  
Management (05)  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, DC 20420

[servicing personnel officer]

## **Introduction**

On February 2, 1999, the San Francisco Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who is employed as a Program Support Assistant, GS-303-5, in the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service, [medical center], Department of Veterans Affairs, in [city and state]. (The appeal was subsequently reassigned to the OPM Washington Oversight Division.) [Appellant] requested that her position be classified at the GS-6 level. This appeal was accepted and decided under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

The appellant initially appealed the classification of her position to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Department denied the appeal for a higher grade, but concluded that the position should be reclassified from Secretary (Typing), GS-318-5, to Program Support Assistant (Office Automation), GS-303-5, by decision dated October 2, 1998.

An telephone audit was conducted by a Washington Oversight Division representative on May 19, 1999, and an interview with the appellant's first-line supervisor, [name], on June 2, 1999. This appeal was decided by considering the audit findings and all information of record furnished by the appellant and her agency, including her official position description, number 687-3197, reclassified by the servicing personnel office as Program Support Assistant, GS-303-5, on October 9, 1998.

## **Position Information**

The purpose of the appellant's position is to provide support services to the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service. As the sole support position in the laboratory, this includes the performance of general clerical and administrative functions, such as receiving and screening incoming telephone calls; reviewing and distributing incoming correspondence and preparing outgoing correspondence; keeping the supervisor's calendar; maintaining the laboratory filing system; keeping time and attendance records; preparing scheduled reports; taking and typing minutes of staff meetings; and typing various forms. The appellant maintains the laboratory's budget records, tracks the status of funds, orders all laboratory and office supplies, and verifies bills for payment. The appellant also performs other specialized support services for the laboratory, to include packing specimens for shipment; notifying duty drivers of blood bank pickups and deliveries; receiving requests for patient test results, pathology reports, and autopsy results, and verifying whether information can be released; checking for completion of laboratory tests, transmitting results to physicians, and notifying physicians of duplicate test orders; and scheduling autopsies with the pathologist and notifying the mortuary upon completion.

## **Series Determination**

Although the appellant performs general office work in the capacity of secretary, she also performs other, more specialized clerical support work that is not classifiable to any established series. As such, the appellant's position is properly assigned to the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, which covers positions the duties of which are to perform clerical,

assistant, or technical work for which no other series is appropriate, and which require knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of the organization and the application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. Neither the appellant nor the agency disagrees.

### **Title Determination**

There are no prescribed titles for the GS-303 series. Therefore, the appellant's position may be titled at agency discretion, with the parenthetical designation of "Office Automation" in recognition that the position requires skill in the use of various computer software applications, such as word processing and spreadsheets.

### **Grade Determination**

The various functional responsibilities of the appellant are evaluated below using the corresponding position classification standards.

#### ***Evaluation using GS-1105 standard***

The appellant's duties involving the procurement of laboratory supplies were evaluated by application of the position classification standard for the Purchasing Series, GS-1105, dated March 1993. This standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are to be assigned for each of the following nine factors, with the total then being converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor level description, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level.

#### ***Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position***

This factor measures the nature and extent of information an employee must understand in order to do the work, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

The knowledge required by the appellant's position matches Level 1-3, where work requires knowledge of standardized purchasing regulations and procedures, established commodities and markets, and common business practices to purchase commercial items of average complexity. This includes making noncompetitive open market purchases (through oral solicitations or calls against blanket purchase agreements) or priced purchases under established contracts; identifying supply sources and determining the adequacy of the items offered; and assessing the reasonableness of the price using well-established references, such as price lists and previous

history files. Correspondingly, the appellant purchases laboratory and office supplies by researching and comparing price quotes and item descriptions from vendors and charging the items against a Government credit card, or by placing orders against blanket purchase agreements.

Level 1-4 is not met, because the appellant does not purchase items involving specialized requirements, unstable price or product characteristics, hard-to-locate sources, many critical characteristics, or similar complicating features. This would include purchasing new items that require preparing detailed written solicitations with special terms and conditions, or evaluating prices on items with inadequate price history or special cost features (e.g., travel expenses for on-site repair services by non-local vendors.) The appellant purchases common laboratory supplies, such as reagents, syringes, glassware, tape, gloves, cotton balls, etc., and certain testing services from established sources under existing contracts. These are repetitive purchases, with no specialized requirements, that can be obtained from many different vendors.

Level 1-3 is credited.

350 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, and the review of completed work.

The appellant's level of responsibility is consistent with Level 2-2, where the supervisor assigns work with standing instructions on applicable procedures and policies, performance expected, and priorities and deadlines. At this level, the experienced employee works independently in making purchases for a variety of standardized requirements at varying dollar values. The supervisor reviews completed work to ensure technical accuracy and compliance with established procedures. Comparatively, the appellant carries out repetitive purchases on her own initiative within set limits, although the supervisor must authorize certain transactions.

Level 2-3 is not met, since that level involves independently resolving problems and deviations inherent in more difficult purchases (such as purchases with fluctuating price and item characteristics, that are sole source, are urgently required, or new to the market.) This would include independently performing such tasks as negotiating price with sole source vendors, persuading reluctant vendors to bid, and determining price reasonableness for new requirements. Since the appellant's purchases are not this complex (i.e., they are recurring rather than new requirements and can be obtained from any medical supply company), they do not afford her the opportunity to operate at this level of responsibility.

Level 2-2 is credited.

125 points

### *Factor 3, Guidelines*

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

The guidelines used by the appellant match Level 3-2, where established procedures and specific guidelines are available. These include procurement history files, Federal Supply Schedules or other established contracts, standard operating practices, and regulations governing small purchases and delivery orders. At this level, the employee uses judgment in resolving such situations as determining whether an item meets requirements, judging whether quotes are for equal items, or suggesting item substitutes. Correspondingly, the appellant's work is covered by ample guidelines governing the conduct of her purchasing duties, although she must exercise judgment as to cost comparability when researching prices for particular items.

Level 3-3 is not met, since at that level guidelines are often not applicable because of the unique or complicated nature of the requirements or circumstances. This would apply to specialized purchases with no directly related reference sources. In contrast, the appellant purchases common, standardized items that are used by the laboratory on a continual basis rather than any unique items or materials to meet specialized needs.

Level 3-2 is credited.

125 points

### *Factor 4, Complexity*

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of the tasks or processes in the work performed, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The complexity of the appellant's work is comparable to Level 4-2, where the work involves performing a variety of related tasks using primarily simple noncompetitive purchasing methods, such as placing orders against single award Federal Supply Schedules and other similar contracts, or using credit card accounts. At this level, the employee decides whether to solicit additional sources or question a price, and recommends awards using primarily price and/or delivery as determining factors. The appellant uses solely noncompetitive purchasing methods, either placing orders against blanket purchase agreements or using a credit card account. If an established source raises its price on a particular item, she investigates whether a lower price can be obtained elsewhere. As at this level, her primary considerations in making purchases are price and availability of the item.

Level 4-3 is not met, because at that level the work is less standardized and more choices have to be made on how to procure particular items. For example, the employee may use different purchasing methods and various clauses and provisions depending on the type, quantity, dollar value, or urgency of the requirement. In addition to considering price and delivery, at this level the employee often must analyze various tradeoffs (e.g., cost of renting vs. purchasing, free

services included, vendor reputation or previous performance) in deciding on a purchasing strategy. The appellant indicated that many of her purchases are made against standing agreements. For other items, she researches and selects sources based primarily on item price and availability. The purchases are not complex enough to require special provisions or that other considerations (i.e., costs vs. benefits) would have to be weighed.

Level 4-2 is credited.

75 points

*Factor 5, Scope and Effect*

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The scope and effect of the appellant's work are comparable to Level 5-3 (the highest level described under this factor), where the purpose of the work is to purchase various commercial or specialized requirements and where the work involves applying conventional practices to resolve a variety of purchasing problems. At this level, the advice and decisions made directly affect the ability of the serviced organizations to conduct business adequately. The appellant purchases all supplies needed by the laboratory and resolves any problems that arise, such as late or damaged deliveries, discontinued items, and price increases. Her provision of purchasing services directly affects the operation of the laboratory.

Level 5-3 is credited.

150 points

*Factor 6, Personal Contacts*

and

*Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts*

These factors include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain, and the purposes of those contacts. The relationship between Factors 6 and 7 presumes that the same contacts will be evaluated under both factors.

Under *Persons Contacted*, the appellant's contacts match Level 2, in that she has contacts with employees in the same agency but outside the immediate organization, and with commercial suppliers and contractors. Level 3 is not met because she does not have contacts with technical or legal representatives of firms who are negotiating substantial purchase order changes, terminations for default, or who are protesting the basis for nonselection for award. These functions are performed by the medical center's contracting personnel.

Under *Purpose of Contacts*, the appellant's contacts match Level a, where contacts with customers are to obtain information on requirements, advise on status of work, and get approval for substitutions or changes in delivery dates, prices, quantities, etc., and where contacts with vendors are to obtain information on items, prices, discounts, and delivery dates. This basically expresses

the purpose of the appellant’s contacts. Level b is not met, since the appellant’s contacts do not involve discussion of more complicated issues, such as whether to rent or purchase, whether product specifications are too restrictive, or to negotiate prices, terms, or the waiver of penalties with vendors.

Level 2a is credited. 45 points

*Factor 8, Physical Demands*

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

The appellant’s position matches Level 8-1, which covers sedentary work.

Level 8-1 is credited. 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.

The appellant’s position matches Level 9-1, which describes a typical office environment.

Level 9-1 is credited. 5 points

*Summary*

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge Required	1-3	350
Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
Guidelines	3-2	125
Complexity	4-2	75
Scope and Effect	5-3	150
Personal Contacts/ Purpose of Contacts	2a	45
Physical Demands	8-1	5
Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		880

The total of 880 points falls within the GS-5 range (855-1100) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.



### ***Evaluation using GS-561 standard***

The appellant's duties related to monitoring and tracking the laboratory's budget were evaluated by application of the position classification standard for the Budget Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-561, dated March 1983, likewise written in FES format.

#### ***Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position***

Level 1-2 is met, which involves knowledge of basic arithmetic and ability to discern numerical relationships among categories of line items in budget records. This knowledge is used to record financial data (e.g., quantities of goods purchased or delivered, costs of services performed, and dollar balances in accounts) and to enter and maintain running totals of funds available and expended by line item, object class, and account code. The appellant keeps track of the funds available in three basic accounts by validating the receipt of items purchased on incoming invoices and recording the amount expended in each account.

Level 1-3 is not met, which requires detailed knowledge of procedures and regulations for the allotment and distribution of funds, and code structures of accounts for assigned activities (e.g., supply, personnel, travel, transportation, utilities, and procurement). This knowledge is used to make and adjust entries to reflect the current status of funds in different accounts involving many different object classes and line items within the same appropriation or revolving fund. The accounts maintained by the appellant are not as varied as those expected at this level, in that they involve only three basic categories of purchases (laboratory supplies, send-out testing services, and blood bank orders), and are not further subdivided. The appellant only records individual bills and keeps track of the money available in each account.

Level 1-2 is credited.

200 points

#### ***Factor 2, Supervisory Controls***

Level 2-2 is met, where the employee carries out recurring assignments within prescribed time limits, selecting the proper procedures from among a limited range of instructions, and where completed work is reviewed for accuracy and compliance with accepted procedures. Correspondingly, the appellant carries out her recurring budgetary duties independently, keeping track of expenses and moving funds from the main account to individual accounts on a monthly basis as needed. Her supervisor periodically reviews her accounts to determine the status of funds.

Level 2-3 is not met, because that level involves independently planning and carrying out the most difficult and technical processing of budgetary transactions, including unusual or one-of-a-kind transactions that are without precedent. The appellant does not encounter transactions of this level of difficulty since the laboratory's expenses tend to be repetitive. Thus, there is no opportunity for her to operate at this level of responsibility.

Level 2-2 is credited.

125 points

*Factor 3, Guidelines*

Level 3-2 is met, where specific guides are available for entering, recording, checking, verifying, and consolidating budgetary data. At this level, the employee must use judgment in transferring funds between accounts, object classes, and line items, and in adjusting figures in related forms and schedules to obtain internal agreement and consistency with overall totals. In the appellant's case, guidelines for recording data are clear and specific, although she must use judgment in moving funds between accounts to cover expenses and in zero-balancing records on a monthly basis.

Level 3-3 is not met, as that level covers assignments where the employee must independently adapt guidelines to cover new and unusual work situations, such as major shifts in program funding or transactions for which no clear procedures have been established. The appellant maintains budgetary records for laboratory expenses related to the purchase of supplies and certain technical services. These needs are continuous and not affected by larger program funding shifts. The transactions recorded by the appellant are recurring and would rarely involve any new or unusual expenses not covered by existing guidelines.

Level 3-2 is credited.

125 points

*Factor 4, Complexity*

Level 4-2 is met, where the employee must identify the appropriate budget account, object class, and line item from job orders, vouchers, funding requests, or other transactions; enter cost information according to the type of transaction; and verify that all necessary procedures have been followed in documenting transactions. An example provided by the standard is that of an employee who maintains budgetary records covering travel and transportation of the organization's employees, where the work involves verifying the validity of travel and transportation documents and the availability of funds, and recording obligations and expenditures to reflect the current status of funds in each account. Correspondingly, the appellant maintains budgetary records covering expenses for laboratory supplies and services, to include validating invoices, checking for availability of funds in the designated account, and recording expenditures to reflect the funds remaining in each account.

Level 4-3 is not met, as that level involves working with a number of diverse and different accounts (e.g., supplies, services, revenue, equipment, contracts, grants, utilities, etc.) with an extensive system of allotments and suballotments, each subject to different rules, regulations, and procedures. The appellant's budgetary records do not include this level of diversity or complexity, in that the accounts are limited to expendable laboratory supplies and certain testing services and are not further subdivided.

Level 4-2 is credited.

75 points

*Factor 5, Scope and Effect*

Level 5-2 is met, which is the appropriate level for most operating-level positions such as the appellant's.

Level 5-3 is not met, since this level covers positions in budget or program offices with responsibility for the overall review, coordination, and consolidation of budgetary activities of subordinate budget or program offices. This does not apply to the appellant's case as there are no offices subordinate to the laboratory.

Level 5-2 is credited.

75 points

*Factor 6, Personal Contacts*

Level 6-2 (the highest level described under this factor) is met, where contacts are with persons outside the immediate organization, such as accounting, budget, program, and administrative personnel at various echelons of the agency.

Level 6-2 is credited.

25 points

*Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts*

Level 7-1 is met, where contacts are to obtain or provide information concerning the status of funds in accounts and the procedures for obtaining, using, or replacing funds.

Level 7-2 is not met, as that level involves coordinating and providing advice or instructions on procedures for the preparation, maintenance, and submission of budgetary forms and reports. Since there are no subordinate organizations submitting budgetary data through the appellant's laboratory, there is no occasion for these types of contacts.

Level 7-1 is credited.

20 points

*Factor 8, Physical Demands*

Level 8-1, covering sedentary work, is met.

Level 8-1 is credited.

5 points

*Factor 9, Work Environment*

Level 9-1, describing an office setting, is met.

Level 9-1 is credited.

5 points

*Summary*

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge Required	1-2	200
Supervisory Controls	2-2	125
Guidelines	3-2	125
Complexity	4-2	75
Scope and Effect	5-2	75
Personal Contacts	6-2	25
Purpose of Contacts	7-1	20
Physical Demands	8-1	5
Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		655

The total of 655 points falls within the GS-4 range (655-850) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

***Evaluation using the GS-318 standard***

The appellant's duties involving the performance of general office management work were evaluated by application of the position classification standard for the Secretary Series, GS-318, dated January 1979, also in FES format.

*Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position*

Under *Knowledge Type*, the appellant's position matches Knowledge Type II, where the employee must know an extensive body of rules, procedures, or operations applied to clerical assignments, and must understand the organization and functions of the office in order to perform all of the procedural work of the office. This includes obtaining a full range of office support services, such as printing, maintenance, and supplies; requesting personnel training; and preparing a wide variety of recurring internal reports. Correspondingly, the appellant performs all of the clerical and administrative work of the laboratory, including procuring supplies, preparing requests for personnel action, and collecting data and preparing reports.

Knowledge Type III is not met, in that positions at this level require knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff sufficient to perform non-routine assignments such as independently noting and following-up on commitments made at meetings and conferences by staff members; shifting clerical staff in subordinate offices to take care of fluctuating workloads; or locating and summarizing information from files and documents when this requires recognizing which information is or is not relevant to the problem at hand. At this

level, the secretary is responsible for coordinating the work of the office with the work of other offices, often including advising secretaries in subordinate organizations concerning such matters as the information to be provided for use in conferences and reports. This level applies to organizations of greater administrative complexity than the appellant's. The laboratory staff consists of the appellant, her supervisor, six medical technologists/technicians, and one nurse, with no subordinate offices. The clerical work performed by the appellant is relatively routine and for the most part recurring.

Under *Work Situation*, the appellant's position matches Work Situation A, which covers organizations that are small and of limited complexity, i.e., where the supervisor directs the staff primarily through face-to-face meetings, and internal procedural and administrative controls are simple and informal. The laboratory, with only seven nonsupervisory employees besides the appellant and no subordinate sections, meets this description.

Work Situation B is not met, as that level requires that the staff be organized into subordinate segments with intermediate supervisors.

Knowledge Type II, regardless of work situation, equates to Level 1-3.

Level 1-3 is credited.

350 points

### *Factor 2, Supervisory Controls*

Level 2-3 is met, where the supervisor defines the overall objectives and priorities of the work and the employee plans and carries out continuing assignments independently in accordance with established policies and instructions. At this level, the employee performs such work as receiving, screening, and personally handling telephone calls and visitors as appropriate; keeping the supervisor's calendar and scheduling appointments without prior approval; receiving requests for program information which can be assembled from the record and preparing it personally; reading incoming correspondence and drafting replies to general inquiries; and signing routine correspondence. The appellant likewise performs these duties with the same degree of latitude.

Level 2-4 is not met, since positions at that level are normally found in organizations of such size and scope that many complex office problems arise which cannot be brought to the supervisor's attention. This would include such duties as arranging for the staff to implement commitments made by the supervisor at meetings or to represent the organization at conferences; resolving policy conflicts in outgoing correspondence; drafting letters of acknowledgment or commendation on his/her own initiative; ensuring that the supervisor's official social obligations are met; and gathering information when the subject matter must be obtained orally from a variety of sources. The appellant's work situation, a relatively small laboratory with only nine employees, does not afford the opportunity for the performance of these types of duties.

Level 2-3 is credited.

275 points

*Factor 3, Guidelines*

Level 3-2 is met, where guidelines include dictionaries, style manuals, agency instructions governing time, leave, and correspondence, and operating policies of the supervisor. The work performed by the appellant is generally governed by these standard secretarial reference materials.

Level 3-3 is not met, where guidelines include a large body of unwritten policies, precedents, and practices which are not completely applicable to the work or are not specific and which deal with matters relating to judgment, efficiency, and relative priorities rather than procedural concerns. Considering the secretarial duties performed by the appellant, which consist of relatively routine and procedural office management functions, there would be limited instances where the appropriate course of action would be unclear.

Level 3-2 is credited.

125 points

*Factor 4, Complexity*

Level 4-2 is met, where the employee performs the full range of procedural duties in support of the office, including requisitioning supplies, printing, or maintenance services; filling out travel forms; arranging for meeting rooms; and preparing scheduled reports from information available in the files. The appellant performs all of the procedural, office support functions required by the laboratory.

Level 4-3 is not met, where the work involves the performance of more complicated, non-standardized duties, such as preparing one-of-a-kind reports when the information has to be collected from a variety of sources and relevant information must be gleaned from various correspondence and reports, or setting up conferences, including travel and hotel arrangements, when this is based on knowledge of the schedules and commitments of the participants. Individual assignments at this level are not recurring but rather differ each time in significant aspects. The appellant's work cannot be characterized in this manner. Her secretarial duties are limited and standardized, such as reading and distributing mail, screening telephone calls, typing reports and correspondence, maintaining the filing system, preparing T&A's, keeping the supervisor's calendar, reserving conference rooms, and preparing recurring reports from office files.

Level 4-2 is credited.

75 points

*Factor 5, Scope and Effect*

Level 5-2 is met, where the purpose of the work is to carry out specific procedures and where the work affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes. The appellant carries out basic office management tasks that facilitate the work of the laboratory and are instrumental in conveying needed data and information to outside parties.

Level 5-3 is not met, in that positions at this level serve offices that clearly and directly affect a wide range of agency activities, operations in other agencies, or a large segment of the public or business community. The laboratory in which the appellant works does not have this level of impact on the agency as a whole or the general public.

Level 5-2 is credited.

75 points

*Factor 6, Personal Contacts*

Level 6-2 is met, where contacts are with employees in other parts of the agency and with members of the general public, as individuals or groups. Contacts at this level are typically found in offices where visitors and callers contact the office, or are contacted by the office, for several different purposes. The appellant has contacts with other administrative staff of the medical center, medical personnel from other hospitals and laboratories, individuals inquiring about test results, and vendors.

Level 6-3 is not met, which includes such non-routine contacts as attorneys, contractors, representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public action groups when the office deals with them on a variety of issues and the exact purpose is frequently unclear. The appellant has no contacts of this nature.

Level 6-2 is credited.

60 points

*Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts*

Level 7-2 (the highest level described under this factor) is met, where contacts are to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts or to resolve operating problems.

Level 7-2 is credited.

50 points

*Factor 8, Physical Demands*

Level 8-1, covering sedentary work, is met.

Level 8-1 is credited.

5 points

*Factor 9, Work Environment*

Level 9-1, describing an office setting, is met.

Level 9-1 is credited.

5 points

*Summary*

<u>Factors</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
Knowledge Required	1-3	350
Supervisory Controls	2-3	275
Guidelines	3-2	125
Complexity	4-2	75
Scope and Effect	5-2	75
Personal Contacts	6-2	60
Purpose of Contacts	7-2	50
Physical Demands	8-1	5
Work Environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		1020

The total of 1020 points falls within the GS-5 range (855-1100) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

***Evaluation using Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work***

The appellant's duties involving the provision of specialized clerical support services for the laboratory were evaluated by application of the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work, dated June 1989. This guide is written in a narrative format, with grade level criteria expressed in terms of two factors: Nature of Assignment and Level of Responsibility.

*Nature of Assignment*

The appellant's assignments are comparable to the GS-4 level, where work consists of performing standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems. At this level, the actions to be taken differ in nature and sequence because of differences in the particular characteristics of each transaction. The work requires a moderate amount of training and working knowledge of a body of standardized rules, processes, or operations. Correspondingly, the appellant's laboratory support functions consist of standardized actions and steps governed by clearly-defined procedures (e.g., specific instructions for packing various specimens, requirements for releasing patient information). Problems encountered are recurring, such as identifying that duplicate tests have been ordered, or that the required release forms have not been signed.

The GS-5 level is not met, where work involves performing both standard and non-standard clerical assignments and resolving a variety of non-recurring problems. At this level, the employee must identify and understand the issues involved in each assignment and determine what steps and procedures are necessary. 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. The appellant's laboratory support duties are



limited and standardized. They involve carrying out specific and well-defined procedures that allow virtually no latitude for independent judgment or discretion. Any out-of-the-ordinary problems encountered would be referred to the supervisor for resolution.

### *Level of Responsibility*

The appellant's level of responsibility is consistent with the GS-4 level, where the supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments and the employee uses initiative to complete work in accordance with accepted practices. At this level, procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available, although the employee may make minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in specific cases. The employee has contact with co-workers and those outside the organization to exchange information and to resolve problems in connection with the immediate assignment. This basically expresses the appellant's level of responsibility, in that her assignments are recurring and she carries them out by following established procedures. Her external contacts are basically for the purposes of coordinating actions (such as pick-ups and deliveries), requesting or verifying information (such as the receipt of shipments), or obtaining needed documents (such as release forms).

The GS-5 level is not met. At that level, the number and similarity of guidelines used and work situations encountered require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines for application and adapting them to fit the circumstances. A number of procedural problems may arise which also require interpretation and adaptation of established guides. Contacts are with a variety of persons within and outside the agency for the purposes of receiving or providing information relating to the work or resolving operating problems in connection with recurring responsibilities. The guidelines used by the appellant apply specifically to the work to be performed and require little or no interpretation or adaptation. Her contacts relate to specific actions; recurring problems or broader concerns are referred to the supervisor for resolution.

### *Summary*

Since both factors meet the GS-4 level, GS-4 is the appropriate grade for the duties evaluated using this guide.

### **Decision**

Considering the above separate grade-level analyses for the appellant's various functional responsibilities, the highest level of work performed is GS-5. Thus, the appellant's position is properly classified as GS-303-5, with the title at agency discretion and the parenthetical designation of "Office Automation."