

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

Dallas Oversight Division
1100 Commerce Street, Room 4C22
Dallas, TX 75242-9968

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

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Civil Engineer
GS-810-11

Organization: Engineering Division
Directorate of Public Works
U.S. Army Tank-automotive
and Armament Command
U.S. Army Materiel Command
Department of the Army
[geographic location]

OPM decision: Civil Engineer
GS-810-11

OPM decision number: C-0810-11-07

/s/ Bonnie J. Brandon

Bonnie J. Brandon
Classification Appeals Officer

August 20, 2001

Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision. There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

[name and address of appellant's
designated representative]

[name and location of Civilian Personnel Operations Center]
Office of the Assistant Secretary
(Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
Department of the Army

Chief, Position Management and
Classification Branch
Office of the Assistant Secretary
Manpower and Reserve Affairs
Department of the Army
Attn: SAMR-CPP-MP
Hoffman Building II
200 Stovall Street, Suite 5N35
Alexandria, VA 22332-0340

Deputy Assistant Secretary (Civilian Personnel
Policy)/Civilian Personnel Director for Army
Department of the Army
Room 23681, Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0300

Director, U.S. Army Civilian Personnel
Evaluation Agency
Department of the Army
Crystal Mall 4, Suite 918
1941 Jefferson Davis Highway
Arlington, VA 22202-4508

Chief, Classification Appeals Adjudication
Section
Civilian Personnel Management Service
Department of Defense
1400 Key Boulevard, Suite B-200
Arlington, VA 22209-5144

Introduction

The Dallas Oversight Division of the Office of Personnel Management accepted a position classification appeal on September 26, 2000, from [the appellant], submitted through his designated representative, [name]. [The appellant] is employed in the Engineering Division, Directorate of Public Works, U.S. Army Tank-automotive Command, U.S. Army Materiel Command, Department of the Army, at [geographic location]. His position is currently classified as Civil Engineer, GS-810-11. The appellant believes the duties and responsibilities warrant classification to the GS-12 grade level. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

In 1998, the appellant's supervisor submitted some revised engineering position descriptions for review by the [servicing] Civilian Personnel Operations Center. The Center found the duties and responsibilities in the proposed position descriptions to be classifiable at the GS-12 grade level. However, the installation commander at [the appellant's facility] holds classification authority for those positions and would not decide on the reclassification until the position management review committee made a recommendation on the proposed actions. The commander had established the committee to review all new and/or changed positions and organizational structures to recommend improved organizational and position structure. After reviewing the proposed actions for the Engineering Division, the committee recommended that the job growth promotions not be approved. The committee also recommended that the appellant's supervisor be directed to become more involved in all of the more complex projects worked by the engineers, to furnish technical guidance and instructions, and to make the decisions which have significant impact on project completion. The commander accepted the committee's recommendation.

After learning of management's decision, the appellant and a GS-830-11 engineer in the Engineering Division filed appeals at the same time with our office. The appellant is still assigned to the original GS-11 position description, number [number].

In reaching our classification decision, an Oversight Division representative conducted telephone interviews with the appellant and the Director of Public Works. We have reviewed the information obtained during the interviews and all information of record furnished by the appellant and his agency, including his official position description.

Position information

[The appellant's facility] is a large industrial complex that supports combat and tactical systems worldwide. Its maintenance mission includes the repair, rebuild, overhaul, and conversion of tactical wheeled vehicles as well as the light tracked combat vehicle fleet, including the Bradley Fighting Vehicle and Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and their secondary items. [The appellant's facility] also serves as an ammunition storage center where activities include renovation and demolition of conventional munitions and repair and storage of missile systems. The Directorate of Public Works (DPW) provides maintenance and repair support for all facilities, utilities, and equipment at [the facility]. The Engineering Division is responsible for coordination of all engineering services, major and minor construction, modification, alteration, and maintenance and repair projects.

The appellant is assigned to the Engineering Division as a member of the Facility Engineers Self-Managed Work Team. The team includes a total of 11 members. There are eight professional engineers, all of whom are at the GS-11 grade level: one GS-801 General Engineer; two GS-810s (a Structural Engineer and the appellant); two Mechanical Engineers, GS-830; and three Electrical Engineers, GS-850. The team also includes an Industrial Engineering Technician, GS-895-9, an Engineering Technician, GS-802-7, and an Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-6. The Director of Public Works, a Supervisory General Engineer, GS-801-14, now supervises the team.

The appellant's position involves preparing designs and cost estimates and determining appropriate sites and layout of facilities and structures. Briefly, the appellant is responsible for conducting engineering studies and making written recommendations as to improvements or the need for additional or replacement of facilities and structures. He provides such supporting documents as cost estimates, material specifications, drawings, and design data. He prepares plans and specifications for projects or reviews the work prepared by Architecture and Engineering (A&E) contractors. The appellant collaborates with engineers in other specializations for aspects of projects that require that expertise. He may be designated as the Contracting Officer's Representative.

Series, title, and standard determination

The appellant does not question the series or title of his position. We concur with the agency's determination that the position is properly assigned to the GS-810 series and titled *Civil Engineer*.

To determine the grade of the appellant's position, we used the grading criteria in Part II, Planning and Design, of the standard for Civil Engineering Series, GS-810, and the GS-800 General Grade-Evaluation Guide for Nonsupervisory Professional Engineering Positions.

Grade determination

Evaluation using the GS-810 standard

The grade level criteria in Part II of the standard cover the actual performance of the planning and design functions; coordination, review, and analysis of such work done by other engineers or contract engineering firms; review of plans and designs submitted by applicants for project approval; and development of techniques and methodology for carrying out these functions.

Grade levels are defined in terms of (1) the inherent complexity of the planning and design problems assigned and (2) the level of judgment and authority exercised. The standard uses the terms *conventional work* and *advanced work* to indicate levels of complexity. Conventional work can be accomplished by applying or adapting standard references, criteria, and precedents. Advanced work requires searching out and selecting laws, formulas, principles and materials and applying them to novel situations. Advanced work may involve using new methodology or evolving new design concepts and criteria for systems, structures, or materials.

At the GS-11 level, engineers are expected to be well versed in the standard theory and practices in their field and to proceed without technical instructions or guidance. Assignments of

conventional work are received with a general indication of results expected and the engineer must identify the limits of the problems involved, the kinds of controlling data needed, and the criteria and techniques to be applied. Conventional work often requires consideration of and selection from several alternative approaches or solutions to arrive at the best treatment and sometimes requires substantial adaptation of standard guides and criteria. In cases of critical or overriding problems of cost versus optimum technical solutions, the priority of operational needs to be accommodated, or conflicting political or public interest pressure, the engineer obtains guidance or a decision from the supervisor or higher authorities. GS-11 engineers are normally responsible for coordinating their phase of work with engineers responsible for related phases. At this level, the engineer may be assisted by and give technical guidance to lower graded engineers and technicians.

At the GS-12 level, engineers must be able to identify and define the nature and scope of obscure problems and to project assumptions and derive criteria from inconclusive or variable data. Individual assignments at the GS-12 level deal with systems or facilities that require intensive search and study of the approaches applied and results obtained in similar situations, the findings of research and study on related problems, manufacturer's and laboratory reports on materials and equipment, or other sources of information. Guidance given to the engineer at this level is mostly an indication of the results desired with limits placed by the approved project scope and findings. The supervisor is kept apprised on controversial problems and is involved in proposed actions that may require policy decisions.

Of the appellant's project assignments, the largest is a series of BRAC-related projects to relocate portions of the industrial operations to the reduced footprint of the [appellant's] facility. (BRAC refers to the Base Closure and Realignment Act.) The appellant accepted these projects upon retirement of another engineer at the completion of the first phase. Phase II involved design for the renovations of the buildings where the operations were to be moved. The appellant was involved in the purchase of new compressors and relocation of the facility's air compressor building and relocation of the hazardous/flammable storage buildings, the electroplating shop, and a paint booth. Other assignments included roof repair projects for four different buildings, replacement of concrete parking areas for three buildings, and design for an enclosed deck area for a multipurpose cabin. The appellant is also currently designated as A&E Coordinator. A&E contracts are negotiated by the Corps of Engineers in [a specific city], and the winning firm serves the A&E needs of the area for the term of the contract. The appellant's assignment involves serving as the primary point of contact between the current A&E firm and the project engineering staff at [the appellant's facility]. Technical review of A&E design proposals and any comments or corrections are the primary responsibility of the assigned project engineer.

Requests for work orders at [the appellant's facility] are initially directed to the Facility Maintenance Division of DPW. After the requests are entered into the computer, the planners determine those tasks that will be performed in-house, those to be completed by service contract, or those requiring engineering services. Project priorities are determined by the DPW real property planning board. The DPW supervisor makes the final determination on whether a job will be done in-house or contracted with an A&E firm. He gives project assignments for the Engineering Division to the team leader, a member of the self-managed work team. The team leader, a rotational assignment that changes quarterly, serves as a facilitator only. New projects are discussed at weekly meetings. Members of the self-managed work team volunteer to accept

projects, based on their engineering specialization and current workload. The assigned project engineer then plans and carries out that work assignment independently, coordinating with users, other engineers, contractors, and others as needed. While the supervisor is available to answer questions and provide assistance on nonroutine projects, the engineering staff is well experienced and generally operates with a high level of independence. Most projects are of a straightforward design. A technical review board, which includes the DPW supervisor and fire, safety, and environmental staff, reviews final drawings. The DPW supervisor must approve any modification to a contract and any other documents that obligate government funds.

Overall, we find the complexity of the planning and design problems assigned to the appellant and the judgment and authority he exercises to be most comparable to the GS-11 level as described in the standard. By comparison with examples given in the standard of both conventional and advanced work, the appellant's assignments are conventional in nature. Projects are primarily of a renovation and repair nature. Work assignments are made for individual task orders rather than responsibility for a complete large project. Assigned projects are not of the scope or complexity described at the GS-12 level. The supervisory controls and the degree of coordination required on assigned projects are comparable to the GS-11 level described in the standard.

The appellant's position does not exceed the GS-11 level.

Evaluation using the GS-800 guide

The Guide uses two evaluation factors: nature of assignment and level of responsibility.

Nature of assignment

Type I work is conventional in nature and is accomplished primarily by application, modification, adaptation, or compromise with standard guides, precedents, methods, and techniques. Type II work involves solving novel or unusual problems, extending the boundaries of existing knowledge, or improving the state of the art as typical of Type II. At the GS-11 level, engineers perform assignments of Type I work that involve combinations of a few complex features. A complex feature at that level may occur when the engineer must choose from among two or more standard methods from the standpoint of economy and engineering feasibility. Also illustrative of a complex feature at the GS- 11 level is when the engineer finds it necessary to modify the design for load and stresses, to keep changes and costs to a minimum, and to modify standards and specifications to meet limitations of existing facilities, when modifying or altering existing facilities. Situations may also exist when special planning is required to provide for continuing use of existing facilities. The appellant's work assignments are typical of Type I work described at the GS-11 level. His assignments do not involve the many, varied complex features typical of the GS-12 level where engineers are especially versatile and innovative in adapting, modifying, or making compromises with standard guides, precedents, methods, and techniques.

Level of responsibility

At the GS-11 level, supervisors make assignments of Type I work in terms of the purpose of the work and possible complex features. At that level, engineers complete assignments with little

guidance except in cases of controversial complex features or policy questions. Supervisors normally accept the technical correctness of methods and techniques used and review completed work for overall technical adequacy and conformance with the objectives. GS-11 engineers initiate work relationships within the agency to exchange ideas and information concerning assignments. There may be frequent contacts with other agencies, contractors, private industry, and public groups. The level of responsibility for the appellant's position is comparable to the GS-11 level.

At the GS-12 level, engineers adapt, modify, and make compromises with guides more frequently and use more originality in planning and organizing work than engineers at the GS-11 level. In contrast to engineers at the GS-11 level, GS-12 engineers get their assignments in terms of broad, general objectives and work with considerable freedom from technical control in selecting and establishing methods for resolving complex features. Their work is reviewed for adequacy in terms of the broad objectives and for compliance with agency policies and regulations. The appellant's level of responsibility falls short of the GS-12 level.

Summary

The appellant's position meets the GS-11 level for both the nature of the assignment and level of responsibility.

Decision

The position is properly classified as Civil Engineer, GS-810-11.