

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Division for Human Capital Leadership & Merit System Accountability
Classification Appeals Program

Dallas Field Services Group
1100 Commerce Street, Room 441
Dallas, TX 75242

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

Appellant: [appellant]

Agency classification: Office Automation Assistant
GS-326-7

Organization: Soil Survey Staff
Major Land Resources Area, Region [#]
[state] State Conservationist's Office
Natural Resource Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
[city and state]

OPM decision: Office Automation Assistant
GS-326-5

OPM decision number: C-0326-05-02

\s\ Judith L. Frenzel

Judith L. Frenzel
Classification Appeals Officer

November 12, 2003

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 lowers the grade of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the sixth pay period after the date of this decision, as permitted by 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.

The personnel office must also determine if the appellant is entitled to grade or pay retention, or both, under 5 U.S.C. 5362 and 5363 and 5 CFR 536. If the appellant is entitled to grade retention, the two-year retention period begins on the date this decision is implemented.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name and address]

Human Resources Officer
[state] State Conservationist's Office
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
[address]

Director
Human Resources Management Division
[name] Regional Office
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
[address]

Director
Office of Human Resources Management
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Room 6210-S
Washington, DC 20250

Acting Director of Human Resources Management
USDA-OHRM-PPPD
U.S. Department of Agriculture
J.L. Whitten Building, Room 302-W

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Introduction

The Dallas Field Services Group, of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [appellant] on July 31, 2003. We received the agency's administrative report on August 22, 2003. The agency has classified the position as Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-7, however, the appellant believes the position should be classified as a Visual Information Specialist, GS-1084-7. The position is assigned to the Manuscript Section of the Soil Survey Staff; Major Land Resources Area (MLRA), Region [#]; [state] State Conservationist's Office; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); U.S. Department of Agriculture, in [city and state]. We have accepted and decided this appeal under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code.

Background information

The appellant believes that the duties and responsibilities she performs should be classified to the GS-1084 Visual Information Specialist series. The appellant's position was previously classified as Office Automation Clerk, GS-326-6. After conducting an audit of the position, the [name] Region Human Resources Management Division determined that changes in the duties and responsibilities warranted a higher grade. The revised duties primarily related to placing completed and "out of print" soil surveys into a CD-ROM format. On July 13, 2003, the appellant was assigned to the current position description (PD) and promoted to Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-7.

The appellant disagrees with the decision made by the [name] Human Resources Management Division to reclassify the position as an Office Automation Assistant. The agency's evaluation considered the classification standards for the GS-1087 Editorial Assistance, GS-303 Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant, and GS-326 Office Automation Clerical and Assistance series in making their classification determination.

The written record was supplemented by a telephone audit with the appellant on September 10, 2003, and a telephone interview with the appellant's former supervisor on September 29, who was recently transferred to a position at the NCRS Headquarters Office. We conducted an on-site audit of the appellant's position on October 9, 2003. In deciding this appeal, we have carefully considered all audit and interview findings as well as the information of record provided by the appellant and her agency, including the official PD number [number].

The supervisor has certified that the current PD is complete and accurate. The appellant stated that "The duties and functions I perform are not office automation." She further provided revisions to the duties listed in her PD such as: *distributing* official soil surveys; included *diagrams and graphs* in a list of materials prepared; added *Responsible for maintaining inventory and all requests for distributed soil surveys*, and stated that the "Variety of office automation software used" is "Not office automation software." She stated that the major portion of her work, publishing soil surveys, occupies approximately 60 percent of her time. A position description is the official record of the major duties and responsibilities assigned to a position by a responsible management official; i.e., a person with authority to assign work to a position. A position is the duties and responsibilities that make up the work performed by an

employee. Classification appeal regulations permit OPM to investigate or audit a position and decide an appeal on the basis of the duties assigned by management and performed by the employee. We classify a real operating position, not simply the PD. We found the PD of record contains the major duties of the position and meets the standards of adequacy for classification of the position.

Position information

The MLRA, Region [#], has responsibility for final preparation and distribution of soil survey manuscripts. They publish and distribute technical soil survey publications to both Federal agencies and private citizens. The Region's Digitizing and Certification Unit is lead by a Supervisory Soil Scientist, GS-470-14. The Editorial/Publications staff includes five positions: two Editors, GS-1082-9/11/12 (designated "English editors" - 1 vacant); two Soil Scientists, GS-470-11/12 (technical editors); and the appellant. The publication staff has responsibility for the final preparation of the soil survey manuscript. There are no additional technical edits made to the manuscript by the authors after it is released to the publication staff. The publication staff is responsible for incorporating edited pre-written material in the survey; performing automated edit of survey narrative text to ensure correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar; ensuring logical arrangement of sections and consistency in the format of the survey; preparing and inserting photos in the text; revising tables, if needed; and preparing camera-ready copies of the manuscript to send to the NCRS [city] office for printing.

The appellant's primary duties are to provide clerical and administrative support to the publication staff. She prepares and typesets the soil survey manuscripts for printed and electronic publications, inputs edits received from other editorial staff members, and distributes soil survey publications to the public. The appellant may make suggestions as to changes in format or placement, based on her experience. She uses a variety of software types such as Microsoft (MS) Word, Blueberry, MS PageMaker, MS PhotoShop, and Adobe Acrobat to process and publish the soil surveys. Occasionally, she may integrate the manuscript with pre-established graphs, tables, and photos from drafts received from the technical editors that are scanned and enhanced for clarity. The staff completes about six to eight soil survey publications a year. Older, out of print surveys are being made available on CD-ROM. This process begins by electronic scanning of the printed documents. In addition, the appellant uses MS Publisher, Power Point, CorelDraw, and Excel to provide assistance to the Public Affairs staff in developing brochures, newsletters, pamphlets, spreadsheets, and presentations.

The appellant responds to telephone calls and e-mails requesting copies of soil surveys. She inventories all surveys in print and CD-ROM format, and ensures that all soil surveys are kept in stock. She maintains and keeps a current status of the soil survey listing for Texas and coordinates with the warehouse to order replenishments. The appellant lifts and unloads boxes of soil surveys when restocking shelves in the warehouse. She receives and retains copies of all survey fee checks routed to the finance section. She monitors the purchases associated with the reference material and ensures that appropriate procurement procedures are followed.

Series, title, and standard determination

The Visual Information Specialist Series, GS-1084, which the appellant believes is the appropriate series for the classification of her position, is a two-grade interval series. GS-1084 work involves communicating information through visual means, including the design and display of various visual materials. Visual Information Specialists select the necessary visual materials, design the placement and appearance of the materials and plan type styles, color schemes and textures. The work in this series requires a broad knowledge of the principles and techniques of visual design. Excluded from coverage by this series is work involving the use of computer graphics software packages to produce illustrations, charts, or graphs, or to lay out printed material, where established formats and ready made images in the software offer little opportunity for the exercise of artistic judgment or skill beyond deciding the proportions and placement. Such positions are to be classified in the GS-326 Office Automation Series.

We also considered the GS-1087 Editorial Assistance Series. Positions in this series involve editorial support in preparing manuscripts for publication and verifying factual information. Such support work includes editing manuscripts for basic grammar and clarity of expression as well as marking copy for format. Editorial clerks and assistants edit for punctuation, syllabification, spelling, capitalization, accepted English usage, and grammatical structure. They also determine publication format and may place tables, charts, and other graphics in text.

The appellant's work does not require the high degree of analytical ability and knowledge of visual design to select photographs and other visual elements, produce illustrations and other graphics, draft written passages, determine the style and format of the product, and otherwise plan the overall layout and appearance of the soil surveys as described in the GS-1084 standard. Most of the work she does must be formatted according to nation-wide guidelines and she does not produce original artwork, as described in the GS-1084 standard. The appellant works directly with a staff of editors, including subject matter specialists and GS-1082 Writer-Editors, who bear the primary responsibility for editing the manuscript. While she may correct obvious spelling or grammatical errors, that is not the primary function of her position. The primary knowledge and skill requirements to perform the duties of the position are the keyboard skills and knowledge of office automation (OA) systems, including desktop publishing. These requirements are included in the GS-326 Office Automation and Clerical Assistance Series and are properly evaluated by use of the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide (OAGEG).

The appellant's other assignments include responding to telephone and e-mail inquiries; maintaining a list of current surveys; maintaining an inventory of published surveys, retrieving printed and electronic versions of soil surveys for distribution, and mailing surveys to clients; are basically clerical in nature and evaluated by comparison to the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work.

The appellant's position is properly classified in the Office Automation Clerical and Assistance Series, GS-326. Titles in this series are linked to the grade of the position. Office Automation Assistant is the title for positions at GS-5 and above.

Grade determination

Evaluation using the Office Automation Grade Evaluation Guide

The OAGEG is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Positions graded under the FES format are compared to nine factors. Levels are assigned for each factor, and the points associated with the assigned levels are totaled and converted to a grade level by application of the Grade Conversion Table. Under the FES, a factor level description in a standard describes the minimum characteristics need to receive credit for the described level. Therefore, if a position fails to meet the criteria in a factor level description in any significant aspect, it must be credited at a lower level. Conversely, the position may exceed those criteria in some aspects and still not be credited at a higher level.

Factor 1, Knowledge required by the position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts the individual must understand to do acceptable work and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply that knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, knowledge must be required and applied.

At Level 1-3, employees are required to apply knowledge of the variety and advanced functions of one software type, varied functions of more than one software type, or other equivalent knowledge of automated systems. The employee uses this knowledge to produce a wide range of documents that often require complex formats, such as graphics or tables within text, to edit and reformat electronic drafts, and to update or revise existing databases or spreadsheets.

At Level 1-4, the highest level described in the standard, work requires the knowledge of the capabilities, operating characteristics, and advanced functions of a variety of types of office automation software, for example, database, spreadsheet, and word processing; and knowledge of the similarities, differences, and integration of the different software types. The employee applies the appropriate level of knowledge to select the most appropriate software type for a specific office need, to integrate different software types into a single document, for example, to retrieve data, convert it into graphic form, and incorporate it into the text of a report; to devise new methods of automated office support, such as a spreadsheet to keep track of office operating expenses or time and leave records; to resolve problems with current automated office support methods; or to complete other nonstandard assignments using varied office automation technologies.

The appellant applies knowledge comparable to Level 1-4. The appellant's duties involve using two or more software types to publish the soil surveys. The manuscript work comes from the technical editor in MS Word format. Consistent with this level, the appellant corrects, reformats, splits the manuscript into 17 files, and uses MS PageMaker software to convert the text and transpose the editor codes within the manuscript. She uses Blueberry software to identify and translate the specific coding into printer commands that prepare the document for printing. The appellant uses the advanced functions of Adobe Acrobat to export the manuscript onto a CD-ROM. For example, in order to reproduce the map symbols clearly before exporting, she adjusts the resolution high enough so that the text and maps are legible. She is able to perform a

substantial range of operations, such as importing graphics, generating tables of content, and establishing precise alignment of multiple columns to produce complex formats. She is knowledgeable of the similarities and differences of the different software types, and the procedures pertinent to their integration, such as integrating maps, graphs, and charts into a soil survey. She is knowledgeable of the incompatibilities typically encountered when integrating the Word documents she receives into Blueberry; she can set the parameters correctly without extensive trial and error. The final copy is forwarded to another NCRS office for publishing. The ability to reproduce electronic copies of older reports is fully covered at this level. The employee may also respond to specific needs of other offices by using appropriate software types such as MS Publisher, MS Power Point, and MS Corel Draw to prepare a variety newsletters, brochures, charts, and presentations.

Level 1-4 is credited for 550 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct and indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work. Controls are exercised by the supervisor in the way assignments are made, instructions are given to the employee, priorities and deadlines are set, and objectives and boundaries are defined. Responsibility of the employee depends upon the extent to which the employee is expected to develop the sequence and timing of various aspects of the work, to modify or recommend modification of instructions, and to participate in establishing priorities and defining objectives.

At Level 2-3, assignments are given with information on general administrative changes, deadlines, and priorities. The employee works independently to plan and carry out steps for completing assignments in accordance with established office instructions and practices for office automation. When current practices or deviations in an assignment cause problems, the incumbent uses own initiative to resolve them and coordinates efforts with other employees involved in or affected by the nonstandard procedures. Completed work is evaluated for technical soundness, usefulness, and conformance with office operating requirements and needs.

The appellant's position meets Level 2-3, the highest level described in the standard. The appellant works under the general supervision of the State Soil Scientist; however, her work assignments come from the technical editor. The appellant works independently and accomplishes assignments in accordance with established practices and instructions. She takes the initiative to resolve her own problems involved in the processing of soil survey publications and coordinates efforts to alert other employees who are affected by the outcome. The appellant's work methods used to prepare soil survey publications are not normally reviewed.

Level 2-3 is credited for 275 points.

Factor 3, Guidelines

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

At Level 3-2, guidelines include both detailed step-by-step instructions for specific office automation tasks and general procedural guidelines in the form of manufacturer's manuals and tutorials for users, agency correspondence procedures, style manuals, technical dictionaries, and sample work products. Employees must select and apply detailed instructions for each office automation task or function, when available. For tasks not covered by specific guidelines, they must search more general guidelines to determine the specific steps to apply. Judgment is required because of the number and similarity of guidelines or the availability of alternative procedures for accomplishing a function such as choosing which editing procedure to use, depending on the nature and extent of the changes required.

At Level 3-3, general procedural guidelines are available; however the guides normally include user's manuals and tutorials for several software packages of different types. Much of the work requires adaptation of available guides, such as user's manuals, to meet requirements for new tasks or to solve processing problems either encountered in the employee's own work or referred by others. Judgment is required to search manuals for methods that can be applied and to adapt those methods to specific requirements. Employees also exercise initiative and judgment in deviating from existing instructions or practices to resolve operating problems or to develop more efficient processing procedures.

Similar to work at Level 3-2, the guidelines used by the appellant are either detailed instructions or general procedures. The appellant uses soil survey manuals, manufacturer's tutorials, regulations, procedures, dictionaries, and other publications. Comparable to positions at this level, her judgment is required to select and apply guidelines for determining what steps to apply. The appellant's judgment is also required to separate the differences and similarities among numerous guidelines. Occasionally, she may consult with the technical editor about a particular format or document structure. She reports unusual problems or situations to the technical editor or computer specialist. The appellant's work does not meet Level 3-3, where the employee is regularly required to adapt guidelines to new tasks or solve processing problems related to the soil survey publication. The appellant does not have the authority to deviate from or to develop guidance or methods to resolve problems that she may encounter.

Level 3-2 is credited for 125.

Factor 4, Complexity

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

At Level 4-2, the documents, formats, and specific processing functions involved require a varying number and sequence of steps and use of different functions from one assignment to another. Some assignments at this level involve using one type of software to create or edit a variety of standard documents requiring differing procedures and functions, or to process lengthy documents with a variety of format changes within each document. Other assignments at this level involve using two or more types of software, for example, word processing and database management, to process different types of documents, paragraphs, tables, and reports that can be

combined in a number of ways and that require extensive entry of data from drafts. In deciding how to proceed, the employee must recognize differences in existing procedures and applications and make choices from among established alternatives. Such choices regard, for example, the specific software package to use, the specific format for different types of documents or for different sections within the same document, or the best printer type. Processing steps and procedures required to complete assignments are varied and numerous. These steps and procedures differ in terms of the type of software used, the type of document or specific report to be produced or edited, the specific formatting required for a document, the existence of prerecorded formats, and other differences of a factual nature. In addition, employees at this level are expected to recognize discrepancies and correct or question originators in such matters as improper formatting; errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation; missing information; or discrepancies between the nature of the material and the processing instructions cited.

Work at Level 4-3 requires using several software packages for different office needs. In deciding how to proceed, the employee considers many factors that are varied and that are not always clearly established. In performing the work, the employee applies judgment in considering and selecting from among many different software types in light of the range and peculiarities of the unit's information processing capabilities and requirements. The employee regularly develops methods and procedures for office automation tasks, and identifies and solves problems in existing methods or procedures.

The appellant's position meets Level 4-2. At this level, the appellant's duties involve using many steps and functions with one to two software types to create the soil survey publication and use other software types to modify the tables and maps. The appellant uses the agency standard software programs to prepare the soil survey publication. She uses MS Photoshop to enhance, create symbols, and add color to the maps. The processing steps and procedures used by the appellant will vary according to the software and the type of document or other information being generated. For example, she edits and transposes codes within the manuscript using PageMaker and Blueberry software types.

Level 4-3 is not fully met. While the appellant selects from among a variety of standard agency software types, she does not perform assignments that require her to develop methods and procedures for office automation tasks nor does she identify and solve problems in existing methods or procedures. The appellant does not regularly perform duties of comparable complexity to those illustrated at Level 4-3. For instance, she does not identify automation requirements, select the software types, and develop the procedures and functions needed to meet desktop publishing requirements, identify office automation duties that can be done faster by using macros, and create macros that execute a sequence of functions automatically.

Level 4-2 is credited for 75 points.

Factor 5, Scope and effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of work, i.e., the purpose, breadth, and depth of the assignment, and the effect of work products or services both within and outside the organization.

At Level 5-1, the purpose of the work is to perform specific, recurring tasks required to maintain electronic records, for example, calendars, directories, spreadsheets, and databases, and/or to produce various items, for example, correspondence, memos, publications, manuscripts, reports, or forms, in drafts or final form according to most recent data. Production usually includes steps such as: selecting and adhering to the proper format; determining the spacing and arrangement of material; making entries to and retrieving data from electronic records; and checking references, distribution requirements, grammar, punctuation, and spelling. The services performed facilitate the work of the originators of the documents or the users of the data maintained.

Similar to Level 5-1, the purpose of the appellant's work is to assist editors by producing camera-ready copy for the publication of current soil surveys. The work is done in accordance with established rules, regulations, procedures, and office automation practices. Such work facilitates the work of the authors and the mission of the unit, e.g., publication of soil surveys.

At Level 5-2, the purpose of the work is to collect, select, organize, and provide information in oral and or written form. The work is performed in accordance with established rules, regulations, procedures, and office automation practices. The work affects the way in which other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information, and increases the availability and usefulness of the information involved.

Level 5-2 is not fully met. While the work products affect the quality of the publications produced by the organization, the appellant's work does not affect the way other employees document, store, receive, or transmit information. This level is appropriate for positions that are primarily concerned with developing methods and procedures for office automation tasks and solving problems in existing methods and procedures.

Level 5-1 is credited for 25 points.

Factors 6 and 7, Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts

Personal contacts include face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contact takes place.

Personal contacts

At Level 1, contacts are with employees within the immediate work unit or related support units such as points-of-contact and document originators. At Level 2, contacts are with employees at various levels throughout the agency who are involved in or affected by integrating or changing automated office procedures.

Level 1 is met. The appellant's primary contacts are made with employees in the immediate office and in related support offices. While she may also have some contacts with NCRS

editorial staff counterparts in other offices, she does not have the regular and recurring contacts with employees under the settings described in Level 2.

Purpose of contacts

At Level A, the purpose of contacts is to exchange information about the assignment or methods to be used to complete the assignment. At Level B, the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, and integrate work processes or work methods for office automation between and among related work units.

The appellant meets Level A, where the contacts are for such purposes as to exchange information about the work. Examples may include contacting an editor in another state to seek clarification on specific codes use for the soil survey manuscript. The appellant does not engage in contacts that require the level of planning and coordination specified in Level B.

These factors are credited at 1A for a credit of 30 points.

Factor 8, Physical demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. This includes physical characteristics and abilities and the physical exertion involved in the work.

At Level 8-1, the highest level described, the work is primarily sedentary, although there is some walking, bending, and standing. The appellant's work required her to carry light items such as books, publications, and CDs. The work may require prolonged periods of sitting at and using a computer.

Level 8-1 is credited for 5 points.

Factor 9, Work environment

This factor considers the risk and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required. Although the use of safety precautions can practically eliminate a certain danger or discomfort, such situations typically place additional demands upon the employee in carrying out safety regulations and techniques. The appellant's work is typically performed in an adequately lighted and climate controlled office and requires no special safety precautions. Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-4	550
2. Supervisory controls	2-3	275
3. Guidelines	3-2	125
4. Complexity	4-2	75
5. Scope and effect	5-1	25
6. & 7. Personal contacts and Purpose of contacts	1a	30
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	5
<i>Total</i>		<i>1090</i>

A total of 1090 points fall within the GS-5 point range of 855 to 1100 in the OAGEG for the appellant's office automation work.

Evaluation using the Grade Level Guide for Clerical and Assistance Work

The Guide provides general criteria for use in determining the grade level of non-supervisory clerical and assistance work. The Guide describes the general characteristics of each grade level from GS-1 to GS-7 and uses two criteria for grading purposes: Nature of assignment, which includes knowledge required and complexity of the work, and Level of responsibility, which includes supervisory controls, guidelines, and contacts.

Nature of assignment

At the GS-4 level, the work consists of performing a full range of standard clerical assignments and resolving recurring problems. The work consists of related steps, processes, or methods, which require the employee to identify and recognize differences among a variety of recurring situations. The actions taken or responses made differ in nature and sequence because of differences in the particular characteristics of each case or transaction. The work requires some subject-matter knowledge of an organization's programs and operations; or of a type of business practice such as maintaining inventory records and replenishing supplies; or of a body of standardized rules, processes, or operations.

The GS-4 level is met. The appellant's work involves performing standard clerical duties such as retrieving, tracking, filing, and inventorying soil survey publications and documents. She receives and responds to telephone and e-mail requests for the soil survey publications. The work requires that she be knowledgeable about policy and specific rules that are applicable to the soil survey program. The appellant files the printed and electronic surveys and maintains an inventory of all surveys to ensure a sufficient number are in stock. She keeps copies of all survey fee checks and routes them to the finance section. The appellant maintains files for loaner copies (soil surveys out of print) and keeps a suspense file for loaned copies for 30 days at a time. These duties are related to those characteristics of the GS-4 level. The work requires that the appellant be knowledgeable of her organization's programs and operations as well as the

specific rules and processes applicable to her areas of responsibility to provide information and answer questions.

The appellant's clerical assignments meet but do not exceed the GS-4 level. Her work includes standard, recurring tasks, rather than the wider variety of assignments including non-standard assignments requiring resolution of non-recurring problems, as typical of the GS-5.

Level of responsibility

At the GS-4, the supervisor provides little assistance with recurring assignments. The employee uses initiative to complete work in accordance with accepted practices. Unusual situations may require the assistance of the supervisor or a higher-level employee, and the completed work may be reviewed more closely. The procedures for doing the work have been established and a number of specific guidelines are available. The number and similarity of guidelines and work situations require the employee to use judgment in locating and selecting the most appropriate guidelines, references, and procedures. The employee makes minor deviations to adapt the guidelines in specific cases.

The level of responsibility meets but does not exceed the GS-4 level. The appellant independently carries out assignments that are recurring and continuing in nature with minimum assistance from the supervisor. The appellant refers any nonroutine situations or problems to the supervisor. There are available guidelines such as standard office policies, manuals, and agency instructions that explain the specific procedures on the administrative functions of the job. Contacts are made with customers nationwide and other field offices within the Region to fill requests for printed or electronic soil survey publications. She ensures appropriate procurement procedures are followed with regard to purchases of soil publications.

The GS-5 level is not met because the nature of the clerical and administrative support provided does not meet the complexity typical of the GS-5 level and do not require the increased level of supervisory guidance or exercising of judgment to complete the assigned tasks. She uses step-by-step instructions that are general, easy to follow, and relate specifically to the assignments within her area as contracted to the requirement for interpretation and adaptation of established guides described at the GS-5 level. Contacts are normally with employees within the office and with customers to fill requests for the soil survey in contrast to the greater variety and problem solving contacts typical at the GS-5 level.

Both factors were evaluated at GS-4 level.

Summary

The appellant spends 60 percent of her time on GS-326 duties that equate to the GS-5 grade level. Her general clerical duties occupy 40 percent of her time and do not exceed the GS-4 level. The GS-326 work is grade controlling.

Decision:

The appellant's position is properly classified as Office Automation Assistant, GS-326-5.