

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

Appellant: [Appellant]

Agency classification: ISO 9000 Specialist
GS-301-13

Organization: [Name] Department
[Name] Directorate
[Name] Center
National Aeronautics and Space
Administration
[Location]

OPM decision: Quality Assurance Specialist
GS-1910-11

OPM decision number: GS-1910-11-05

s/s Kevin E. Mahoney
Kevin E. Mahoney
Acting Deputy Associate Director
Center for Merit System Accountability

September 13, 2007
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 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 (Introduction)*, 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 applicable provisions of parts 351, 432, 536, and 752 of title 5 CFR must be followed in implementing the decision. If the appellant is entitled to grade retention, the two-year retention period begins on the date this decision is implemented. The servicing human resources office must submit a compliance report containing the corrected position description (PD) 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 to the OPM office that accepted the appeal and must include a PD which meets the standards of adequacy in the *Introduction*, III, E.

Decision sent to:

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Introduction

On March 5, 2007, the Atlanta Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal from [Appellant]. The appellant occupies a position currently classified as ISO 9000 Specialist, GS-301-13, in the [Name] Department, [Name] Directorate, [Name] Office, [Name] Center (Center), National Aeronautics and Space Administration, [Location]. The appellant requests classification at the GS-14 level. We received the complete agency's administrative report on April 6, 2007. We have accepted and decided his appeal under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.).

Background

The appellant filed a grievance with his agency in January 2006 concerning assignment of work and the classification of his position. He later appealed the classification of his position to his agency; and on November 7, 2006, the agency sustained the series and grade of his position as GS-301-13, but changed the title from Quality Program Specialist to ISO 9000 Specialist. Following the agency's review, the [Name] Center reassigned the appellant to a new PD (number [#] from number [#]) to update the PD and to remove duties no longer assigned to the position.

General issues

The appellant states he performs quality engineering duties and works at the same level as professional quality engineers in his organization whose positions are classified to the GS-861, Aerospace Engineering Series, and other engineers at the Center. He believes his position should be evaluated using the same process used for quality engineer positions. He also makes various statements about his agency's understanding of some of his duties, its evaluation of his position, and its failure to recognize his expertise and personal qualifications in the staffing and classification processes.

In adjudicating this appeal, our responsibility is to make our own independent decision on the proper classification of the appellant's position. By law, we must make that decision solely by comparing his current duties and responsibilities to OPM standards and guidelines (5 U.S.C. 5106, 5107, and 5112). Therefore, we have considered the appellant's statements only insofar as they are relevant to making that comparison. Since comparison to standards is the exclusive method for classifying positions, we cannot compare the appellant's position to other positions which may or may not be classified correctly, as a basis for deciding the appeal. Since our decision sets aside any previous agency decision, any actions previously taken by the agency in its review of the appellant's position are not germane to the classification appeal process.

In his appeal letter and information, the appellant stresses his expertise and experience as rationale for a higher grade for his position. Qualifications considered in classifying positions are the qualifications required to perform current duties and responsibilities of the employee's official position. Therefore, we may consider the appellant's personal qualifications only insofar as they are required to perform his current duties and responsibilities.

The appellant discusses duties and provided samples of work performed since 1988. However,

5 U.S.C. 5112 indicates that we can consider only current duties and responsibilities in classifying positions.

Position information

The Directorate in which the appellant's position is located ensures the safety and enhances the success of all Center activities and establishes Center safety and mission assurance policy. It provides review and evaluation of program/project activities at all levels throughout the Center and associated contractors for the Center safety and mission assurance and engineering functions for compliance with NASA Program and Project Management Processes and Requirements. The appellant's department provides independent assessments on safety and mission requirements and is proficient in the requirements for system safety, reliability, quality, and risk management.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9000 series, which includes the ISO 9001:2000 standard, consists of standards and guidelines relating to management systems and related supporting standards and processes organizations use to do work. The AS 9001 Standard consists of approximately 80 additional requirements plus 18 amplifications of the ISO 9001:2000 Standard. The NASA quality program includes use of the Automotive Engineers Aerospace Standard (AS) 9100, Quality Systems – Aerospace – Model for Quality Assurance in Design, Development, Production, Installation, and Servicing. The AS 9100 supplements the ISO quality management system model and is a more prescriptive, high-level standard.

The appellant serves as a lead ISO 9000 supplier audit expert for his directorate. He provides policy guidance and advisory assistance and supports quality engineers and quality assurance specialists in all activities for quality planning processes, including application of ISO 9001:2000 and AS-9100 standards requirements for programs and projects. For approximately 50 percent of his time he leads supplier audits of companies which supply, or seek to supply, flight hardware, components, and products to ensure the companies have documented quality processes and procedures for manufacturing the products they supply, and to ensure the documented processes and procedures are followed. He maintains the supplier database and quality records. His audit lead responsibilities include planning, coordinating, and performing audits of suppliers both internal and external to the Center, and including, when requested, some suppliers to prime contractors. He compiles technical reports prepared by engineers and quality assurance specialist team members; provides overviews of findings to management and corrective actions and coordinates reporting and resolution of findings.

For the remaining 50 percent of his time, the appellant provides quality assurance support. He serves as the quality assurance representative for an engineering directorate technical support small business contract for in-house fabrication and assembly, providing research and development hardware products (e.g., space station environmental control flight support system hardware, flight ground support equipment, test fixtures, prototype hardware) and manufacturing processes for Center in-house designs. This contractor is known locally as the "prime contractor." The contract was awarded in September 2002 with a total of approximately \$30-\$40 million expended to date. Support for the contract and the contracting officers technical representative typically includes oversight and coordination of quality assurance activities and issues, e.g., lack of identification of quality requirements for particular hardware requiring the appellant to work with the contractor's quality personnel and to utilize Center engineers in their respective fields to provide technical oversight of processes and compliance. The appellant is

designated as the representative for the new successor technical support contract which is not yet awarded. The new contract includes technical engineering support for testing, electronic hardware processing, and machining/welding product processing for any of the programs or projects, at all levels of criticality, done at the Center. Thus far, the appellant has provided technical support to the Source Evaluation Board and the responsible quality engineer in identifying the quality systems to follow for the contract and the quality planning standards and data requirement documents in the contract.

The appellant also supports quality engineering personnel and their support contractors, managers, and other Center staff, as requested, in the documentation and integration of ISO 9000, including AS-9100, standards into contracts, operating procedures and policies, and other documents and activities of the Center. He provides support in coordinating quality planning activities and identifying quality processes and standards requirements. He recommends strategies for applying quality management to core business practices and assists quality engineering personnel in the coordination of quality planning activities in the areas of design reviews, procurement, contractual nonconformance processing, receiving inspection, inspection and test monitoring, hardware nonconformance processing, final acceptance processing, acceptance data package requirements, acceptance reviews, and shipping. The appellant is responsible for administering and maintaining Center issuances relating to prime contractor and supplier evaluation processes and maintaining several other of the Center's policy and procedural issuances, including inspection and testing. Maintenance requires an annual review involving coordination for staff comments and incorporating any necessary changes. The appellant serves as a technical advisor to the Center's Prime Contractor Supplier Council, particularly for small business initiatives. He also serves as a peer reviewer and provides comments on various NASA and other Centers' quality document issuances and currently serves as a team member assisting in the preparation of a "one NASA" quality policy and procedural document for fasteners manufacture and controls.

The appellant's official PD, number [#], and other material of record furnish much more information about his duties and responsibilities and how they are performed. The supervisor certified the accuracy of the PD, but the appellant did not. He believes his work includes quality engineering and quality assurance responsibilities and the PD does not adequately identify his expertise in quality engineering planning requirements and for quality assurance receiving and processing activities in the area of critical fasteners. The appellant indicates he is the author of the quality engineering planning and inspection and testing Center level documents that direct both quality engineers and quality assurance personnel in their duties. He indicates the title and content of his PD reflect lower level ISO 9000 qualification standard rather than the AS-9100 standards for certification which the Center and he use for much of the work. The appellant states his PD should be titled "AS-9100 Aerospace Program Expert."

A PD 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 represents the duties and responsibilities which 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 and not simply the PD. We find that the PD of record contains the major duties assigned to and performed by the appellant, and we incorporate it by reference into this decision.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including the PD of record. We conducted telephone and on-site interviews with the appellant. We also interviewed his current supervisor (since the beginning of 2007), his former supervisor, and the NASA Quality Assurance Manager.

Series, title, and standards determination

The agency classified the appellant's position in the Miscellaneous Administrative and Program Series, GS-301, with the title ISO 9000 Specialist. The appellant concurs with the series determination. However, he believes his position should be titled either Quality Program Expert or AS-9100 Aerospace Program Expert.

The GS-301 series includes positions which perform, supervise, or manage nonprofessional, two-grade interval work for which no other series is appropriate. The Quality Assurance Series, GS-1910, includes all positions the duties of which are to perform, administer, or advise on work concerned with assuring the quality of products acquired and used by the Federal Government. The work includes developing plans and programs for achieving and maintaining product quality, monitoring operations to prevent the production of defects and to verify adherence to quality plans and requirements; and analysis and investigation of adverse quality trends or conditions and initiation of corrective action. Quality assurance work encompasses a planned and systematic pattern of *all actions* necessary to provide confidence that adequate technical requirements are established; products and services conform to established technical requirements; and satisfactory performance is achieved. This series covers positions involved in a variety of technical and administrative procedures and functions in a systematic effort to assure that quality requirements are achieved and products perform as intended. Inspection is but one of the techniques used by quality assurance specialists to achieve these goals. The work requires analytical ability, knowledge and application of assurance principles and techniques, and knowledge of pertinent product characteristics and associated manufacturing processes and techniques.

The primary purpose of the appellant's position involves audits of suppliers, or potential suppliers, to determine use of a quality system, process controls, infrastructure to assure products meet specified contractual requirements, and advice and support to others in quality planning and quality assurance activities. The work primarily requires knowledge and application of assurance principles and techniques, knowledge of pertinent standards and documentation, and an understanding of contract requirements, and ability to interface with others particularly in evaluating and relaying information. This primary work of the appellant's position is concerned with assuring the quality of products and is fully and directly covered by the GS-1910 series coverage. Therefore, assignment to the GS-301 series is precluded.

The appellant's work does not involve engineering functions as required for coverage in the Aerospace Engineer Series, GS-861, or any other engineering series. The GS-861 series includes professional aerospace engineering positions involved in planning, research, development, design, test and evaluation, analysis, production, fabrication, operation, type certification, and/or maintenance of aerospace vehicles or integrally associated equipment. Work in professional engineering series requires application of scientific and engineering principles in the involved scientific area. Work in the GS-861 requires application of scientific and engineering principles

in the field of aeronautics and astronautics. Aerospace engineers may be involved with aircraft certification to ensure products comply with applicable Federal airworthiness rules and standards and are safe designs, e.g., determine the Federal regulations that aerospace vehicles must meet for certification, evaluate test proposals to determine if methods and techniques suggested by the manufacturer will provide sufficient data to demonstrate compliance with regulations. In performing these duties, they incorporate a comprehensive knowledge of engineering principles in determining the scope and impact of problems encountered, development of approaches and guides, determination of the effectiveness and validity of proposals, and resolution and decisions on problems.

In contrast, the appellant's work requires a comprehensive knowledge of quality assurance program standards, knowledge of quality assurance/control methods, principles, and practices, knowledge of pertinent product characteristics, knowledge of the relationship of quality assurance to other activities such as contract administration and engineering, skill in interpreting and applying product specifications, technical data, regulations, policy statements and other guidelines materials, and other quality assurance skills and knowledge. It does not require application of a comprehensive knowledge of engineering principles to perform the full scope of engineering functions as indicated above.

The basic title for positions in the GS-1910 series is Quality Assurance Specialist. The agency may choose to add one of the authorized optional parenthetical specializations to the basic title.

The agency used the GS-1910 position classification standard (PCS) to evaluate the appellant's position. Because all of the major duties of the appellant's position are covered by the GS-1910 series and no other series is applicable, the GS-1910 PCS must be used to evaluate his position.

Grade determination

The GS-1910 PCS 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.

At Level 1-7, the work requires comprehensive and thorough knowledge of the full range of principles, concepts, and methodology related to one or more quality assurance functional programs and considerable skill in applying this knowledge to the planning and accomplishment of a variety of difficult and complex work assignments. At this level, specialists have broad knowledge of a range of complex products and of the practices, policies, and procedures of

related activities such as contract administration, engineering, production, and procurement and skill in coordinating quality assurance plans and programs with these activities. Some specialists have comprehensive knowledge of a broad product area (e.g., electronic and electrical equipment, or aerospace equipment, components, and systems) including product specifications and standards and production methods and processes, including specialized processes and test equipment, required to assure product quality. They apply this knowledge to the evaluation and resolution of complex quality problems in the role of a technical specialist/consultant to operating activities.

Illustrations for Level 1-7 quality assurance work include specialists who might design, plan, and implement an effective and economical quality assurance program; have knowledge of methods, processes, and materials associated with manufacturing an avionics system or subsystem; and use a wide range of methods, principles, and practices to evaluate the contractor's conformance to quality requirements and to assure that procedures adequately control the quality of the product. The specialist may also use various methods of statistical analysis, control, sampling and evaluation to determine compliance with the many associated aspects of quality control. Specialists in a staff role apply knowledge and skills in the development, coordination, and implementation of quality systems supporting the activity's program for overhaul, refurbishment, procurement, and proofing of undersea weapons systems, underwater range equipment, and testing apparatus. They may use a thorough knowledge of the agency's policy guidelines along with knowledge of the operational methods and procedures of external organizations (such as engineering activities, project offices, or contractors) to review and interpret program directives and technical documentation in developing necessary changes to existing activity programs, preparing activity procedural guides and instructions, and coordinating implementation efforts.

As at Level 1-7, the appellant's position requires applying a thorough knowledge of governing programs' policies, practices, and procedures for quality management in performing audits and providing assistance and advice to Center and contractor personnel. For example, he uses a comprehensive knowledge of ISO 9000 series standards in supporting the Center's Small Business Assistance Office, when requested, serving as the quality assurance representative on the technical engineering support contract, working with small and large businesses in their qualification to manufacture flight, flight-associated hardware, and fracture critical hardware; maintaining Center-level ISO 9000 requirement documents. He uses it in reviewing detailed manufacturing, servicing, manufacturing capability, and industrial safety assessment processes as part of an overall quality management system audit. Like Level 1-7, the appellant's assigned duties covering flight, flight-associated hardware, and fracture critical hardware, electronic equipment, and testing activities reflect application of the broad knowledge of manufacturing methods and techniques, special processes, and measurement and test processes for a range of complex products and associated quality processes.

Level 1-8 is not met. Level 1-8 entails mastery of quality assurance concepts, operating principles, and methodology applicable to a major agency program or mission area (e.g., the quality assurance program providing support to agency maintenance activities). This includes expert knowledge of organizational missions, objectives, and procedures; the relationship with other program areas (e.g., acquisition or logistics); and the regulatory framework in which the program operates. Work entails the exercise of a very high degree of skill in applying this knowledge to the analysis and resolution of very complex or sensitive problems related to quality assurance, and in applying new developments and methodologies to assigned program areas.

The work utilizes technical expertise and broad experience in assigned program area in dealing with extremely broad and complex quality problems with are further complicated by such factors as the wide dispersion of organizations and activities involved, and the multiplicity of authorities, policies, and controls. The results of problem research/study are incorporated into program directives covering new and innovative conceptual approaches, technologies, and methods for enhancing the assessment of quality performance, and identifying areas for improvement.

The PCS work illustrations at Level 1-8 help clarify the intent of the factor-level description. Typical of this level is an employee at the agency headquarters level who develops agency plans, policies, and procedures to be used by others in the field; who is responsible for studying unprecedented quality assurance problems and developing new techniques and procedures and changing agency policy; or who evaluates field performance, provides technical advice to headquarters staff, and serves on interagency committees.

The appellant's technical expertise alone is not sufficient to meet the intent of Level 1-8. There must also be significant program or policy responsibility inherent in the position requiring application of the requisite knowledge and skill in order to study and resolve unprecedented problems by developing new techniques and procedures and changing agency policy. The appellant's position, located at one of the agency's Centers or components, does not function within this context. Instead, the appellant's work directly relates to Center-level operations and procedures and contractors and suppliers providing services to the Center. His assignment does not involve extremely broad and complex quality problems comparable to Level 1-8 and does not routinely present the opportunity to or require the development of new and innovative conceptual approaches, technologies, and methods to deal with those broad and complex quality problems. His participation in some agency-level projects fails to include the direct program or project responsibilities found at Level 1-8 and such work occupies too limited a portion of the appellant's time to potentially control the classification of his position.

Level 1-7 is credited for 1250 points.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility for carrying out assignments, and how completed work is reviewed. The agency credited Level 2-4.

At Level 2-4, the specialist plans and carries out assignments independently, determines the scope and level of quality assurance activities, establishes priorities, interprets and applies agency policies and procedures, and coordinates and consults with other activities as required. The specialist has considerable expertise and is responsible on his own for resolving problems involving deviations from established procedures, unfamiliar situations, or unusual requirements. The supervisor is kept informed of potentially controversial issues.

At Level 2-5, the supervisor provides only administrative guidance giving the employee wide latitude for identifying specific problems for investigation, projects to be initiated, and goals to be met. The specialist independently monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the agency's

programs and develops new procedures or recommendations for policy change. Results of the work are normally accepted without significant change.

Level 2-4 is met. The appellant is considered a technical expert in ISO 9000 requirements and independently provides advice and assistance in support of quality engineering, procurement, and other activities as requested or assigned. As at Level 2-4, he plans audits, assists with contract requirements, etc., determining the needed scope of the quality activities based on the requirements, including risk management. He performs technical evaluations, reviews regulations, identifies key processes, documents, records and performance characteristics requiring Government assurance actions and recommends the appropriate level and type of contract quality assurance actions to apply. In reviewing potential suppliers for the Center, he determines if quality processes and systems meet the intent of applicable quality system standards. He issues guidance to others, both contractors and agency personnel, either directly or through established supervisory channels.

The supervisory controls over the appellant's position do not meet Level 2-5. This level not only reflects administrative supervision only, with full technical authority delegated to the employee, but also is typically accompanied by responsibility for a significant program or function. As discussed previously, the appellant's work fails to meet this requirement.

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. The agency credited Level 3-4, the highest level described in the PCS.

At Level 3-4, the principal guidelines regularly used in the work include agency quality assurance statements and program directives, Government procurement regulations, and general administrative instructions. Guidelines are presented in general terms and frequently outline the major areas of program planning along with suggested approaches. The guides may delineate major areas of concern (such as, quality assurance surveys and audits, control of quality costs, technical reviews) and assign broadly stated responsibilities for these activities during the development of quality assurance program plans. The specialist uses initiative, extensive experience, and a broad knowledge of quality assurance principles and practices to develop new methods and recommend policy changes.

Like Level 3-4, the appellant uses NASA guidelines which are very general and provide requirements without specifications for application. Applicable NASA guides and the ISO 9000 and AS-9100 quality standards are high-level and require considerable judgment and interpretation in application. As at Level 3-4, the appellant uses extensive experience and a broad knowledge of quality assurance principles and practices in advising and supporting quality engineers and program managers in developing and tailoring quality plans, approaches, and requirements based on the risk management plan and other Center needs. The appellant, who authored several procedural documents for the Center, currently has responsibility for issuances relating to prime contractor and supplier evaluations and is participating in development of a NASA policy and procedural document for fastener control. Like Level 3-4, he provides policy guidance and advisory assistance in the development of strategies for applying quality management core business processes and quality-planning reviews, contractual statements of work, and data requirement documents.

Level 3-4 is credited for 450 points.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, variety, and intricacy of the tasks, steps, processes, or methods involved in assuring the acceptability of the products involved; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done to complete assignments (i.e., the facts or conditions that must be considered); and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the overall work of the position. The agency credited Level 4-5.

At Level 4-4, the quality assurance specialist performs varied duties involving the complete range of quality assurance principles, techniques, and methodology to plan and accomplish projects for complex products. The specialist develops the overall plans and approaches based on technical requirements; monitors the application and effectiveness of controls and methods; and adjusts quality assurance activities as indicated by quality data trends or conditions. Decisions at this level require ensuring that critical quality requirements are identified and provided for in terms of appropriate specifications, procedures, or methods of quality verification; tailoring the approach to the product/project requirements; making major modifications in approach as a result of changing technical requirements or manufacturing techniques; and coordinating the resolution of nonconformance findings.

Illustrations for Level 4-4 work include both operational and staff specialist assignments. Operational work includes a specialist responsible for planning, developing, and implementing integrated quality assurance programs supporting the acquisition of highly sophisticated and complex avionics systems and equipment. The work involves determining quality assurance requirements for assigned acquisition programs, and ensuring compliance with such requirements by advising on, reviewing, and evaluating work performed by other Government and contractor activities. In this situation, the specialist determines what needs to be done involving developing unique quality requirements for inclusion in solicitation and contractual documents to ensure that contractor quality systems are consistent with program and product requirements. The work requires reviewing and analyzing numerous systems specifications and technical criteria to determine specific quality requirements, providing technical advice to design engineers, quality engineers, and other program officials in planning and conducting technical reviews and product audits, and planning and conducting onsite quality assurance assessments.

Staff specialists working at Level 4-4 are concerned with the entire range of quality policies, methods, and regulations applicable to the activity's mission for overhaul, refurbishment, procurement, and proofing of undersea weapons systems, underwater range equipment, and testing apparatus. Assignments vary from those involving management-level policy considerations to significant problems or trends relative to production or inspection and test functions. Level 4-4 staff specialists lead special projects or studies to resolve problems relative to inadequate or conflicting data, and to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of existing or new quality assurance policies and method on activity programs.

At Level 4-5, assignments typically include a broad range of duties involving substantial breadth and depth of analysis; consideration of numerous interrelationships and variables to develop new approaches; or to resolve persistent, widespread, or critical quality problems. At this level,

specialists frequently serve in a program/project leader capacity to accomplish particularly complex, sensitive, or long-term special studies concerning major agency quality assurance programs, e.g., major studies concerning maintenance quality programs being carried out at diverse locations of the country. Decisions concerning what needs to be done are complicated because of such factors as: the wide dispersion of organizations and activities involved; difficulties in determining scope of the problem in these activities; multiple authorities, policies, and regulations governing the activities; relationship to and interdependence of activities, e.g., maintenance/supply/logistics function; and impact of quality costs on programmed resources. The work involves developing innovative solutions along with implementing instructions for effecting changes involving new methodology, policies, or procedures.

Level 4-4 is met. As at this level, the appellant performs varied quality assurance duties involving supplier audits, administration and maintenance of assigned Center procedures, and support to engineers, small business office staff, and others for technical engineering support contracts. Like Level 4-4, he makes recommendations to ensure critical quality requirements are identified, tailors the approach for consistency to the project's level of risk management, and modifies approaches as a result of changing technical requirements or manufacturing techniques. He determines the adequacy of potential suppliers' quality processes. Like Level 4-4, the appellant is responsible for modifying assigned quality assurance procedures as needed and reviewing work issuances to ensure that aerospace criteria, including AS-9100 quality requirements, controls, and processes are incorporated and met. He provides advice to design, quality, and other engineers, the small business office, and suppliers on requirements and nonconformance issues. Comparable to Level 4-4 staff specialists, he leads supplier audits and advises on, reviews, and evaluates contractor or potential contractor quality systems.

Level 4-5 is not met. Though the appellant's work crosses Center directorate lines and requires consideration of numerous interrelationships and variables, it does not have the depth and breadth anticipated at Level 4-5. Unlike Level 4-5, the appellant does not perform comparable studies of major agency quality assurance programs or perform work of such depth and breadth that it requires consideration of activities being carried out at diverse locations of the country. The appellant leads supplier audits, as requested, of individual contracting companies which may be linked as subcontractors under the same prime contractor but not to each other and not as part of a broad study. The appellant works under an ISO 9001 Audit Manager (Lead Aerospace Engineer, GS-861-14) and does not have program responsibility. He does not have responsibility for audit findings of team members and does not resolve comparable Level 4-5 persistent, widespread problems. Problems of this nature are resolved by Center engineering staff. The appellant coordinates the resolution of quality engineering problems or nonconformance for some audits. However, for prime contractor supplier audits, he refers problems through the Audit Manager in his directorate to the contract office and to the program/project management group for resolution. The contract support provided by the appellant is for Center-wide activities and does not exceed Level 4-4.

Level 4-4 is credited for 225 points.

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the 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. The agency credited Level 5-4.

At Level 5-3, work involves performing a variety of assignments directed toward ensuring acceptability of products, or acceptable levels of quality in the operations involved. Most problems encountered in the assignments can be dealt with by the selection and/or adaptation of formal work methods and procedures; i.e., established criteria and general operating procedures have been developed covering the nature and scope of quality assurance activities to be accomplished. The results of the work affect the acceptability of the products involved in terms of conformance to technical requirements, meeting user's needs in a timely fashion, and performing as intended. For some positions the results of the work impact effectiveness of operations in achieving and maintaining desired quality levels consistent with economy and efficiency. In other work situations, decisions on acceptability of products may impact the financial posture of manufacturers.

At Level 5-4, the purpose of the work is to plan, develop, and implement quality assurance projects of considerable breadth and complexity. Some assignments may involve responsibility for planning and implementing program plans for ensuring that quality requirements for major products are achieved throughout the item's life cycle, serving as a technical specialist in a broad product or commodity area, (e.g., Level 5-4 illustrations indicate tracked/wheeled vehicle systems, major weapon systems, or technical authority in the electronic and electrical commodity areas) or being concerned with quality implications of highly specialized products, manufacturing processes, and techniques for a range of agency activities. The results of the work affect a range of agency activities being carried out at a number of locations. It is not unusual for the specialist to deal with broad issues that have application to other agency programs and activities. The purpose of work for some positions at this level is to serve as the regional technical authority in a specialized technical area. The specialist furnishes expert advice and guidance to field activities for assigned commodities, and develops technical quality assurance procedures, plans, and programs.

Level 5-4 is not met. The appellant works at a Center providing guidance and assistance within his technical specialty areas, ISO 9000 standards requirements and supplier audits. The primary thrust of his position is to provide technical support in dealing with Center quality control processes and issues and to assure that quality program requirements leading to supplier certification or other authorizations are accomplished. Though the appellant serves as a technical specialist, the scope of his responsibilities does not extend beyond the Center and its flight hardware contract suppliers and does not encompass a broad product or commodity area or impact a range of agency activities comparable to Level 5-4. The position does not have continuing responsibility for systematic analysis and improvement of program practices, methods, and techniques of agency activities being carried out at a number of locations, e.g., a technical program position at the agency-level responsible for guiding and overseeing operating-level field operations. The directorate audit manager and quality engineers and other positions within the agency are responsible for these functions.

Level 5-3 is credited for 150 points.

Factor 6, Personal Contacts

This factor measures face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The agency credited Level 6-3.

At Level 6-3, in addition to contacts with personnel in production and engineering and higher level quality assurance and program officials, the specialist has regular contacts with employees and officials of other Federal agencies and/or private industry. Personnel contacts with quality assurance and program officials across agency lines frequently require that the specialist identify and locate, the appropriate person to establish working relationships. Like Level 6-3, the appellant's personal contacts include personnel throughout the Center, other agency centers, or at the agency headquarters. He also has contacts with private industry or company presidents and owners and program managers.

Level 6-4 is not met. At this level, specialists have regular personal contacts with high-level program and quality assurance officials in other Federal agencies, top executives of large private industrial firms, or representatives of foreign governments. As illustrated in the PCS, this level of contacts may involve the specialist as the principal Government representative for quality matters in the conduct of conferences with high-level military and civilian representatives of a foreign government or in representing the quality organization at command level meetings. Unlike this level, the appellant's contacts typically are with action officers and program managers both within Federal Government and in private industry. His work does not require the regular and recurring significant contacts typical of Level 6-4.

Level 6-3 is credited for 60 points.

Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

The purpose of personal contacts ranges from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives. The agency credited Level 7-3.

At Level 7-3, contacts require considerable skill to influence individuals to correct deficiencies which would otherwise result in unacceptable products. The specialist must exercise a high degree of technical skill and judgment in explaining the requirements. He must also use considerable tact and persuasion to motivate reluctant individuals. Like Level 7-3, the appellant exercises a high degree of technical skill in providing advice on quality processes and alternatives and use of standards and he routinely uses skill and judgment to persuade individuals to correct deficiencies or change procedures, etc. The appellant uses similar Level 7-3 skills and judgment in explaining requirements to contractors and suppliers and identifying quality standard requirements for incorporation in project design and plans, contracts requirements, fabrication processes, etc.

Level 7-4 is not met. At this level, the purpose of the contacts is to negotiate or settle significant issues or problems which require escalation because established channels and procedures have failed to resolve the problem. The issues or problems at this level may concern significant quality deficiencies impacting major equipment acquisition programs or may concern problems of a similar scope which require negotiation with management representatives of other agencies,

or representatives of foreign governments or international organizations. The specialist at this level assumes the lead in effecting a compromise on significant issues or problems. In contrast, the appellant is not required to negotiate or settle comparable issues. He identifies supplier nonconformance issues and coordinates resolution of issues by appropriate program staff. The appellant refers significant quality issues, such as those involving prime contractors' suppliers, through the Audit Manager to other Center staff for resolution. He also does deal in a negotiator role with top-level management representatives of other agencies, representatives of foreign governments, or international organizations.

Level 7-3 is credited for 120 points.

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work assignment. The agency credited Level 8-1.

At Level 8-1, the work is primarily sedentary. Employees may occasionally visit manufacturing or other areas where they may do considerable walking, standing, or bending. At Level 8-2, in addition to work performed at a desk the duties regularly require extended periods of walking, standing, or bending while observing manufacturing operations, witnessing tests or examining material and processes.

Level 8-1 is met. Although the appellant does visit manufacturing areas to plan and conduct audits, the amount of time spent in walking, standing, and bending while performing planning and audit functions is not frequent as indicated at Level 8-2. The appellant's work is primarily sedentary and the physical demands are consistent with Level 8-1.

Level 9-1 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. The agency credited Level 9-1.

At Level 9-1, the work is performed in a typical office setting with adequate heating, lighting, and ventilation. The specialist may occasionally visit manufacturing facilities, but such visits do not occur frequently enough to preclude the use of this level. At Level 9-2, in addition to the work that may be performed in an office setting, the duties involve regular and recurring visits to manufacturing, storage, or test areas. Such visits may require use of appropriate protective clothing or gear such as safety glasses and shoes, ear protection, and hard hat, and observance of appropriate safety precautions.

Level 9-1 is met. As a lead auditor, the appellant visits industrial areas to plan for audit activities and may wear a hard hat and safety glasses and shoes and walk around machinery and be exposed to machinery noise. However, these activities are not performed for a sufficient amount of the appellant's work time to affect the evaluation of this factor. Therefore, we find the appellant's normal work environment is in an office setting with occasional work in a manufacturing environment.

Level 9-1 is credited for 5 points.

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-7	1250
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-4	450
4. Complexity	4-4	225
5. Scope and effect	5-3	150
6. Personal contacts	6-3	60
7. Purpose of contacts	7-3	120
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
Total		2715

The total of 2715 points falls within the GS-11 range (2355-2750) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Quality Assurance Specialist, GS-1910-11.