

**OPM decision number:** C-0334-11-02, 4/24/97

PH:OD:97-4

PERSONAL  
Computer Specialist

Dear:

This is our decision on the position classification appeal filed with our office, which we accepted under the authority contained in section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code.

This appellate decision constitutes a classification certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. It is the final administrative decision on the classification of this position, and it is not subject to further appeal. It is subject to review only under the limited conditions and time limits specified in title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 511.603 and 511.613, and the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, Appendix 4. It must be implemented in accordance with the provisions contained in 5 CFR 511.612.

**POSITION INFORMATION**

Appellant:

Current Classification: Computer Specialist, GS-334-11

Position Number: L153234

Requested Classification: Computer Specialist, GS-334-12

OPM Decision: Computer Specialist, GS-334-11

Organizational Information: Department of the Navy  
Naval Inventory Control Point (NAVICP)  
Deputy Commander for International Programs  
FMS Policy and Program Support Directorate  
Systems Support Department  
[installation city and state]

## **ANALYSIS AND DECISION**

In considering your appeal, we carefully reviewed all of the information sub-mitted by you or on your behalf; information obtained from an audit with you on April 4, 1997; an interview with your supervisor, Head, Systems Support Department, on April 4, 1997, and an interview with your team leader on April 14, 1997; and other pertinent classification information provided by your activity at our request.

It is our decision that your position is classified properly as Computer Specialist, GS-334-11. Accordingly, your appeal is denied.

Your appeal letter of December 11, 1996, submitted through the Department of the [installation], indicates that you believe your position warrants evaluation at Factor Levels 3-4, 6-3 and 7-c, which would result in evaluation of your position at the GS-12 grade level. You also stated that your position is comparable in duties and responsibilities to another NAVICP position located in code 0452. That position is classified as a Computer Specialist, GS-334-12.

This raises procedural issues that warrant clarification. All positions subject to the Classification Law contained in title 5, U.S. Code, must be classified in con-formance with published position classification standards (PCS's) of the Office of Personnel Management or, if there are no directly applicable PCS's, con-sistently with PCS's for related kinds of work. Therefore, other methods or factors of evaluation, such as comparison to other positions that may or may not be classified correctly, are not authorized for use in determining the classification of a position.

In addition, many positions in the Government perform a variety of functions. Not all of these functions, however, will be classifiable at the same grade level. For example, many technician positions perform clerical functions classifiable at grade levels below the technician work that controls the grade level worth of the position. Thus, if other positions perform duties that are similar to some major functions of your position, those duties may not be the grade controlling duties of those other positions.

Furthermore, in the General Schedule classification system each grade repre-sents a band of difficulty. Some positions entail performing work of difficulty and complexity that minimally meets the grade level requirements. Other positions perform work at the top of the grade band, but do not meet the minimum requirements for elevation to the next grade level. For example, all budget analyst positions performing work at the GS-11 grade level would be assigned to the same class; i.e., Budget Analyst, GS-560-11. This does not mean that all budget analyst positions at the GS-11 grade level perform identical work. Rather, the allocation of positions to that class is predicated on each position performing work of GS-11 grade level difficulty within a budget program requiring GS-11 budget system skills and knowledges.

The application of OPM PCS's must be accomplished within the confines of the position classification theories, principles, and practices established by OPM. The Introduction to the Position Classification Standards (Introduction) states that:

Some positions involve performing different kinds and levels of work which, when separately evaluated in terms of duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required, are at different grade levels. . . .

In most instances, the highest level of work assigned to and performed by the employee for the majority of time [emphasis added] is grade-determining. When the highest level of work is a smaller portion of the job, it may be grade controlling only if:

- The work is officially assigned to the position on a regular and recurring basis;
- It is a significant and substantial part of the overall position (i.e., occupying at least 25 percent of the employee's time); and
- The higher level of knowledge and skills needed to perform the work would be required in recruiting for the position if it became vacant.

The classification appeal process is a de novo review that includes a determination as to the duties and responsibilities assigned to your position and performed by you, and constitutes the proper application of PCS's to those duties and responsibilities. Our analysis of your position is based in large part on the information you provided during the audit, and our independent review and analysis of the entire appeal record. Our audit with you and our interview with your supervisor confirmed that your position description (PD) of record, which both you and your supervisor certified as current and accurate, contains the major duties and responsibilities that you perform.

Your position has two primary functions: data base administrator (DBA) for the Integrated Data Management System (IDMS) data base management system (DBMS) Management Information System for International Logistics (MISIL), and back up DBA for the Tier II, client/server environment (ORACLE) DBMS, which is being implemented. In addition, you also perform various programming and special project assignments. Your administrator duties typically dictate your day-to-day assignments and special assignments are given by the team leader, who is also the lead DBA for the client/server ORACLE DBMS. You perform your

assignments independently and your work is considered technically accurate without further review.

The MISIL is a fully integrated DBMS and is Navy's primary system for processing, controlling, tracking and reporting on foreign military sales (FMS). It provides related technical, logistics and financial transaction data. The system serves more than 2,500 users, including various governmental agencies and foreign customers. The system contains more than 50 million records and runs more than 1,000 applications. The system is well established, but periodically requires routine system changes and occasionally major system upgrades such as the recent upgrade from Version 10.2 to Version 12.0. System modifications are made by the Central Design Agency (CDA), Mechanicsburg, PA and the system is run on a mainframe computer at the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) Megacenter in Oklahoma City, OK.

As MISIL DBA you are responsible for development and implementation of the IDMS physical database design from the logical design. You are responsible for developing and maintaining test databases; reviewing and certifying system changes for use in the production environment; monitoring data base performance, size and configuration and making necessary adjustments to ensure continued efficient operations; designing and developing local programs or applications; and insuring recovery of system failures and correction of DBMS related problems. You design and maintain associated data base tables and dictionaries. You provide guidance to users and programmers on system changes, procedures, and security and provide technical instructions to data center personnel on procedural and system requirements incident to system changes and upgrades. You work with the CDA and DISA to resolve technical problems related to system design and production processing, respectively.

You serve as back up DBA on the Information Warehouse client/server ORACLE DBMS that is currently being implemented at NAVICP and undergoing BETA testing. In this capacity you perform various technical functions, in conjunction with or in collaboration with the lead DBA. These include trouble shooting and analyzing problems, evaluating changes, and designing data base requirements. You also monitor system performance and develop data on processing time and other performance measures. Although the Team Leader is the primary point of contact, you may get involved in contacting vendors or technical support personnel to consult on or to resolve problems.

Examples of local applications and special projects include developing work performance tracking (Metrics) applications for the department; designing and implementing worksheets, forms and reports; and devising methods for downloading mainframe data to a personal computer (PC) format.

We will not address in detail the other functions or aspects of your position contained in your PD of record which we hereby incorporate by reference into this decision.

### Series and Title Determination

Your agency has determined that your position is classified properly to the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334 and is titled Computer Specialist in accordance with the titling practices contained in the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334 PCS. You have not disagreed with these determinations, with which we concur. Accordingly, your position is allocated properly as Computer Specialist, GS-334.

### Grade Level Determination

The published Computer Specialist, GS-334 PCS is written in 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 contained in the PCS. Under the FES, factor level descriptions mark the lower end, i.e., the floor of the ranges for the indicated factor level. If a position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular level in the standard, the next lower level and its lower point value must be assigned unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level. We have referred to the FES Primary Standard when necessary to clarify the factor level descriptions in the GS-334 PCS.

The appeal record indicates that there are three factors for which your position is credited at a lower factor level than you believe is appropriate; i.e., Factor 3 - Guidelines, Factor 6 - Personal Contacts, and Factor 7 - Purpose of Contacts. We have reviewed carefully the levels assigned to the other factors by your agency and the accompanying rationale with which you have not taken issue. We have found these determinations to be appropriate and have so credited your position. Accordingly, our appeal analysis focuses on the evaluation of Factors 3, 6, and 7.

### Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines and the judgment needed to apply them. Guides used include, for example: established procedures and policies, traditional practices, and reference material such as manuals and handbooks. Guidelines should not be confused with knowledges described under Factor 1 - Knowledge Required by the Position. Guidelines either provide reference data or impose certain constraints on the use of knowledges.

At Level 3-3 (275 Points) reference material such as handbooks, manuals, models, and plans are available but are not completely applicable to work assignments or gaps exist in significant areas. This requires the incumbent to adapt guides and precedents to assigned projects or gather considerable information to supplement lack of specific information for a particular problem. Judgment is required in relating precedent approaches to specific situations.

Established guidelines often must be interpreted to advise others on the application of policy or regulation.

In contrast, guidelines at Level 3-4 (450 Points) are typically policies and precedents that provide guidance that is general in nature with little specificity regarding the approach to be followed in accomplishing work. As stated in the FES Primary Standard, guidelines for performing the work at Level 3-4 are scarce and of limited use. Performance of assigned work usually requires deviating from traditional methods or researching trends and patterns to develop improved methods or formulate criteria. The employee uses state-of-the-art techniques and technologies to develop new and improved methods to deal with particular projects. The employee exercises considerable judgment in relating technical developments or requirements to particular projects. At this level, the employee demonstrates initiative and resourcefulness in projects that encompass: unprecedented design efforts; integrating the work of others as a team or project leader; or predicting future environments or the impact on future processing.

Our fact-finding revealed that various guidelines are available for performing your primary duties. These include IDMS systems and operating instructions, various technical manuals, and computer language guides and references. In addition, formal training is often provided and vendor and other technical support is available to assist in dealing with new or unique problems or situations. Available guides are not often specific to particular problems or applications. You are required to research uncommon approaches and often modify or extrapolate prescribed methods to accomplish local/unique applications. This fully meets Level 3-3.

In your appeal you note several assignments that you believe involve situations indicative of Level 3-4. These included designing a series of programs to download data from a mainframe for upload to a PC environment, project lead for implementation of MISIL IDMS test databases, development of Repair of repairables (ROR) comparison programs, development of Case Reconciliation Review (CRR) reports, and design and development of Document Status File (DSF) reconciliation programs. Although these represent new applications in your environment, they are not unique or unprecedented in the realm of data processing. Although you may be required to research or consult with others regarding alternative approaches, these are not analogous to the situations described at Level 3-4. Developing reports or forms and the associated programs do not constitute unprecedented design efforts or require application of state-of-the-art techniques or technologies as envisioned at Level 3-4. These assignments reflect improvement in client use of an established data base system typical of Level 3-3.

### Factor 6. Personal Contacts

This factor includes face-to-face contacts and telephone dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. The levels for this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty in communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contacts take place, e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities.

At Level 2, contacts include those with employees in the agency but outside the immediate organization, such as user representatives or field personnel engaged in different; i.e., non-ADP work. The FES Primary Standard also discusses contacts outside the agency at Level 2. These contacts are with members of the general public in a moderately structured setting, e.g., the contacts generally are established routinely; are usually at the employee's work place; the exact purpose of the contact may be unclear at first to one or more of the parties; and one or more of the parties may be uninformed concerning the role or authority of other participants, e.g., persons seeking airline reservations.

Level 3 contacts, in addition to those within the agency, are with vendor representatives, computer personnel of other agencies, representatives of professional associations, and the like. This level may also include contacts with the head of the employing agency or program officials several managerial levels above the employee when such contacts occur on an ad hoc or other irregular basis. As indicated in the FES Primary Standard, Level 3 contacts are in a moderately unstructured setting, e.g., contacts are not established on a routine basis. The role and authority of each party are identified and developed during the contacts, e.g., contacts with persons in their capacity as attorneys, contractors, or representatives of professional organizations, the news media, or public action groups.

As discussed previously in this decision, the work that controls the classification of a position must be regular and recurring. The contacts considered in the grade level analysis of a position, therefore, must contribute to the performance of those grade controlling duties. Your PD of record indicates that you have contacts with: NAVICP managers and co-workers; customers and country program managers, both inside and outside the immediate organization; computer personnel from other agencies; and vendors and technical support personnel. You are also a member of professional associations.

Our fact-finding revealed that your contacts with CDA, the Megacenter and vendor/technical support personnel are regular and recurring. These external contacts, however, occur in a structured setting. That is, your contacts are accomplished within a relatively structured context in which each person is aware of each other's role and authority. For example, your direct contacts with DISA on hardware and configuration problems are long established. The role of the CDA as a technical resource is clearly established, and your role as the MISIL DBA is well established. Contacts such as those to implement Version 12.0, although designed to

clarify roles and responsibilities, were nonetheless accomplished within the context of well established, ongoing organizational relationships. Thus, while your external contacts are typical of those at Level 3, they are not accomplished with substantial frequency within the moderately unstructured setting envisioned at Level 3, e.g., contacts with contractors in which the role and authority of each party must be established such as during compliance reviews or contract negotiations. Therefore, because the nature of your contacts does not fully meet Level 3, this factor is evaluated properly at Level 2.

#### Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

The purpose of contacts that serve as a basis for this factor must be the same as the contacts that are the basis for the level awarded for Factor 6.

At Level b, the purpose of contacts is to coordinate work efforts, solve problems, or to provide advice to managers on noncontroversial organization or program related issues and concerns. As discussed in the FES primary standard, problems are resolved by influencing or motivating individuals or groups who are working toward mutual goals and have basically cooperative attitudes.

At Level c, the purpose of contact is to (a) influence others to utilize particular technical methods and procedures, or (b) to persuade others to cooperate in meeting objectives when (in either case) there are problems in securing cooperation. As amplified in the FES Primary Standard, the people contacted may be fearful, skeptical, uncooperative, or dangerous, e.g., gaining compliance with established policies and regulations by persuasion or negotiation.

Your PD states that your contacts are to obtain or exchange factual information, coordinate work efforts, solve problems and provide advice to managers on non-controversial organization or program related issues or concerns; to persuade others in meeting objectives when there are problems securing cooperation; and influence others to accept particular standards, methods or persuade them to cooperate in meeting objectives. Explanatory information provided by you and your activity revealed that you may have to persuade CDA or DISA staff members to take the action contrary to their opinion or preferences. Such technical negotiations at the working level facilitate efficient administration of the DBMS.

The appeal record indicates that the purpose of your most demanding contacts is to influence or persuade others to use particular technical methods and procedures typical of Level c. However, your contacts do not regularly entail the difficulties in securing cooperation found at Level c, e.g., securing support from contractors who are uncooperative because of the significant resource demands entailed in the request. The CDA and the DISA staff and others with whom you deal are cooperative and share a common goal; i.e., effective use of the MISIL DBMS. Thus, while aspects of your contacts approach Level c, that level is not met fully. In addition, your team leader and supervisor deal with organizational, administrative or



operational conflicts that may adversely affect administration of the system. They are responsible for negotiating and resolving resource and scheduling conflicts with the Megacenters or dealing with contractors on significant and far-reaching problems. For example, the lead ORACLE DBA dealt with the vendor on major issues related to the crash of the system early in its implementation.

Accordingly, this factor must be evaluated at Level b which, in combination with Level 2, results in the crediting of your position at Level 2-b (75 points).

### Summary

In summary, we have evaluated your position as follows:

Factor 1 - Level 1-7	=	1250 points
Factor 2 - Level 2-4	=	450 points
Factor 3 - Level 3-3	=	275 points
Factor 4 - Level 4-4	=	225 points
Factor 5 - Level 5-4	=	225 points
Factor 6 and		
Factor 7 - Level 2-b	=	75 points
Factor 8 - Level 8-1	=	5 points
Factor 9 - Level 9-1	=	5 points
Total		<hr/> 2510 points

A total of 2510 points falls within the GS-11 grade level point range of 2355-2750 points on the Grade Conversion Table in the GS-334 PCS.

Therefore, based on the preceding analysis, we find that your position is evaluated properly as Computer Specialist, GS-334-11.

Integral to your appeal rationale is your belief that your position is classified inconsistently with those occupied by other DBA's within NAVICP. We have reviewed the PD of the position cited, Computer Specialist, GS-334-12, NAVICP Code 0452. Based on our review, we find substantial differences between the duties and responsibilities contained in that PD and the functions you perform that form the basis of this appeal decision. Specifically, the position has team leader responsibilities, including providing technical guidance to lower graded employees and providing input on employee performance. The position also serves as lead DBA for the ORACLE DBMS. As such, we find this position to be more analogous to your team leader's position than to yours. While your agency has the primary responsibility for intra-agency consistency, including consistency with OPM decisions, your agency may not change the classification certified in an OPM decision; nor may your agency classify a position based on

position-to-position comparison. Your agency may be able to explain the differences between your position and the other positions or, if the positions are essentially the same, take action to correct the classification of the other positions to achieve internal consistency.

Please be assured that this decision is not intended to reflect on your ability, qualifications, or the quality of your performance. Rather, it reflects our evaluation of the duties and responsibilities assigned to your position in terms of comparison with the appropriate PCS.

Sincerely,

*/s/ 4/24/97*

Robert D. Hendler  
Classification Appeals Officer