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

Atlanta Oversight Division
75 Spring Street, SW., Room 972
Atlanta, GA 30303

Classification Appeal Decision

Appellant:	[Appellant]
Agency classification:	Computer Assistant GS-335-09
Organization:	[Element] [Flight] [Squadron] [Group] [Wing] Department of the Air Force [Location]
OPM decision:	Computer Assistant GS-335-09
OPM decision number:	C-0335-09-02

/s/

_____
Timothy P. Heath
Classification Appeals Officer

7/17/01

_____
Date

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

Decision sent to:

[Appellant]

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Introduction

On January 30, 2001, the Atlanta Oversight Division of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted an appeal for the position of Computer Assistant, GS-335-09, [Element], [Flight], [Squadron], [Group], [Wing], Department of the Air Force, [Location]. The appellant is requesting that his position be classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334-09.

The appeal has been accepted and processed under section 5112(b) of title 5, United States Code. This is the final administrative decision on the classification of the position subject to discretionary review only under the limited conditions and time outlined in part 511, subpart F, of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations.

General Issues

The position occupied by the appellant is one of two in his organization that were previously classified as Computer Specialist, GS-334. In response to an A-76 study on the feasibility of contracting out some of [Installation] automation work, all positions associated with Local Area Network (LAN) operations were reviewed during FY 1999. As a result of this review, the appellant's position was reclassified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-09, in December 2000. There were no changes in the appellant's duties and responsibilities, or in the position description itself. The appellant believes that the agency's change in the classification of his position was solely to avoid paying him the special salary rate for Information Technology positions, which became effective January 1, 2001.

On June 5, 2001, the new Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200, standard was made available on OPM's website. This standard abolishes the Computer Specialist, GS-334, standard and instructs agencies to classify work previously covered by that series to the Information Technology Management Series, GS-2210, when knowledge of information technology (as defined in the standard) is the paramount requirement necessary to perform the primary duties of the position. Since the appellant believes his position is properly classified as a Computer Specialist, GS-334, the new standard was applied to this position by both the agency and OPM.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including information obtained from telephone interviews with the appellant and his immediate supervisor.

Position information

The appellant is assigned to position description number [Number]. The appellant, his supervisor, and the agency have certified the accuracy of the position description.

This position is located in the [Element] which has responsibility for the information technology needs of the [Squadron]. The primary purpose of the position is to manage, control, and oversee the

[Squadron] LAN. The incumbent oversees the LAN environment and status, including overall LAN configuration, implementation, operation and maintenance. The squadron LAN is part of the base local and wide area networks (WAN), and provides access to several DoD-wide information systems. The appellant monitors the operation of the network systems to ensure hardware and software are functioning properly. He uses established techniques to identify and resolve network-related problems. The appellant plans and implements security plans, procedures, and training to comply with [Wing], Air Force, and DoD standards.

The appellant reports to the Supervisory Computer Assistant who provides direction and guidance on objectives, priorities, and deadlines. The appellant identifies the source and nature of problems and the work to be completed. He independently plans and carries out the required work, and submits completed products to users without supervisory review. The supervisor is kept informed of the progress of work projects and potential controversial matters or problems.

Standard Determination

Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-335, February 1980.
Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, GS-2200, June 2001.

Series and title determination

The GS-2210, Information Technology Management Series, includes positions which were previously classified in the GS-334, Computer Specialist Series. This new standard covers two-grade interval administrative positions that manage, supervise, lead, administer, develop, deliver, and support information technology systems and services. This series covers only those positions for which the paramount requirement is knowledge of information technology principles, concepts, and methods to perform functions such as planning, designing, analyzing, developing and implementing systems for the organization.

Information technology refers to systems and services used in the automated acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control display, switching, interchange, transmission, assurance, or reception of information. Information technology includes computers, network components, peripheral equipment, software, firmware, services, and related resources.

The GS-335, Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, covers positions involving performance or supervision of data processing support and services functions for users of digital computer systems. This work requires knowledge of external data processing sequences, controls, procedures, or user and programming languages, rather than in-depth knowledge of computer requirements or techniques associated with development and design of data processing systems.

The GS-335 standard states that employees in this occupation support or assist other employees who design, operate, or use automatic data processing systems applications and products by performing work in one or a mix of functional areas. One of the functional areas identified by the standard is the

providing of direct support to computer specialists. In this capacity, some computer assistants at full performance levels perform duties similar to those assigned to entry and trainee level computer specialist positions. Such support work typically requires knowledge of the scope, contents, and purposes of program documentation. The duties may also require a working knowledge of programming languages. Some work may require knowledge of system hardware such as the number and kind of devices, operating speeds, and the amount of core and other equipment characteristics. This knowledge may also be supplemented by knowledge of internal software routines. We find this work situation similar to the appellant's.

The appellant functions as the primary administrator of the organization's LAN. The LAN is comprised of approximately 120 workstations, 20 printers, 4 network servers, 47 handheld wireless terminals, and a large number of ports and switches for connection to the installation WAN. His responsibilities involve analyzing and monitoring the environment, status and operation of the hardware and software comprising the LAN to ensure that the system functions properly and efficiently. He ensures that the LAN properly connects to and communicates with the installation WAN and the remotely located mainframe systems of other installations, agencies, or organizations. The appellant troubleshoots, identifies, and resolves network-related hardware and software problems within the organization; determines corrective actions necessary to resolve individual job and system failures; adapts or develops new work procedures and instructions for all system users; and resolves processing malfunctions resulting from changes in hardware or software operating configurations. He provides in-house technical support for users of the organization's stand-alone and networked information systems equipment (e.g., computers, printers, scanners, file servers, modems, and terminals). The appellant performs research on equipment compatibility, specifications, cost, and effectiveness, and makes recommendations (through his supervisor) on system changes and upgrades to higher level officials. He plans and implements system hardware/software changes and upgrades; evaluates over-the-counter software prior to purchase to determine if it meets requirements; provides or arranges formal/informal training for system users; assists in developing operator manuals; and installs new system hardware and software. The appellant also has responsibility for planning and implementing security techniques and procedures to ensure security requirements are met. This includes activities such as installing antivirus software, and monitoring and tracking system logs and switches to detect attempted access by unauthorized personnel.

The primary focus of the appellant's work is on supporting and assisting users of the local organization's data processing equipment. This is accomplished through such actions as ensuring that the system functions properly and in a manner that meets the requirements of the users and the organization; identifying and resolving operating problems; and training users on applications and procedures. When systems or customer needs change, the appellant researches and develops recommendations on over-the-counter hardware and software available through vendors that meet requirements and are compatible with the systems of organizations with whom information is exchanged. He develops recommendations which are then forwarded through his supervisor to the Communications Squadron for approval.

Although his work does involve administering the operation of a data system, the appellant is not involved in the planning, design, or development of systems typical of GS-2210, Information Technology Specialists. The [Squadron's] LAN is small and does not have the same level of complexities addressed in the GS-2210 series, which are typically found at the base level or higher. According to the 2200 standard, monitoring the operation of small network systems is work specifically excluded from the GS-2210 series. In addition, the appellant's position is limited in scope by the fact that the Air Force has responsibility for establishing service-wide systems, hardware and software requirements and making decisions on the need for system upgrades and/or software migrations. The type of work performed by the appellant is characteristic of that described in the GS-335, Computer Clerk and Assistant Series, and is properly classified using that standard. The appropriate title for non-supervisory positions in grade GS-5 and above is Computer Assistant.

Grade Determination

The appellant does not contest the agency determination of the grade of the position. We agree with the agency determination that the appellant's position is properly graded at the GS-09 level.

Decision

The position is properly classified as Computer Assistant, GS-335-09.