

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

Atlanta Field Services Group
75 Spring Street, SW., Suite 1018
Atlanta, GA 30303-3109

**Classification Appeal Decision
Under Public Law 103-337**

Appellant: [appellant's name]

Agency classification: Office Administrative Assistant (OA)
DK-303-II

Organization: [name] Branch
[name] Division
[name] Laboratory
[name] Center
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Department of the Army
[location]

OPM decision: Office Administrative Assistant
DK-303-II

OPM decision number: C-0303-II-01

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

January 26, 2006
Date

As provided in Federal Register, volume 63, number 57, March 25, 1998, and chapter 2, CR 690-1-1, December 15, 2003, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the Government. There is no right of further appeal.

Since this decision changes the classification of the appealed position, it is to be effective no later than the beginning of the fourth pay period after the date of this decision (5 CFR 511.702). The servicing human resources 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.

Decision sent to:

[appellant's name]
[appellant's address]
[address]
[location]

Director
[name] Laboratory
[name] Center
[address]
[location]

Director
Department of the Army, Southwest CPOC
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Director
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Chief, Position Management and Classification Branch
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Introduction

The Atlanta Field Services Group of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a classification appeal on October 5, 2005, from [appellant's name] who occupies a position currently classified as Administrative Support Assistant (OA), DK-303-II. The position is located in the [name] Branch, [name] Division, [name] Laboratory, [name] Center (acronym), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army at [location]. The appellant requests that her position be reclassified as DK-III. We accepted and decided this appeal under Public Law 103-337 and its implementing regulations. We received a complete administrative report for the appeal on November 7, 2005.

Background

The appellant's position is included within the [acronym] Laboratory Personnel Management Demonstration Project (the project). The [acronym] classification system combines former GS pay/classification levels to encompass one or more former grades in broader pay bands. Four to six pay bands are identified within four possible occupational families. Project guidelines specify the series included in each occupational family. The classification system features an abbreviated benchmark job description approach. The project's classification system involves the assignment of positions to benchmark job descriptions, or level descriptors. Series and titles for the project's positions are determined by comparison to existing OPM classification guidance.

As required by the project's regulations, the appellant first filed an appeal with the Department of Defense. The DOD Civilian Personnel Management Service on July 12, 2005, sustained the position's current classification.

General issues

The appellant is assigned to position description (PD) number [#]. She did not concur with the accuracy of her PD. She prepared a current list of her assigned duties that she believes constitute the majority of her work and are identified by the DK-III level descriptor. The supervisor certified the accuracy of the list prepared by the appellant. The list of duties provides position requirements and is not an official document or a part of the official PD. We note that Federal Register, volume 63, number 57, March 25, 1998, and chapter 2, CR 690-1-1, December 15, 2003, do not permit appealing the accuracy of a PD. As provided by those regulations, we will consider the list of duties in the grade level analysis of her work.

The record shows that the agency developed task listings at the time it implemented the project and these were used as classification tools by managers in identifying specific duties, consistent with level descriptors DK-II and III difficulty, in a variety of general office support positions. The appellant indicates that she serves as the property agent for her branch, with authority to act for her supervisor, and is involved in troubleshooting of fact-finding tasks as described on the Level III task list.

In reaching our classification decision, we have carefully reviewed all information furnished by the appellant and the agency, including the PD of record which we incorporate by reference into this decision. We also conducted a telephone audit with the appellant and an interview with her supervisor.

Position information

The appellant's position is assigned to a branch office that conducts field and laboratory research. For approximately 30 percent of her time, the appellant serves as the branch point of contact for Purchase Requests and Commitments (PR&C). She reviews charges and enters data to initiate PR&Cs in the Corps of Engineers Financial Management System (CEFMS) for payments for reimbursable work done for the branch by the Information Technology Laboratory Visual Production Center and for shipping and gasoline charges billed to the branch. She reviews these charges for consistency with automated records and project fund availability, contacts vendors to obtain missing information, refers problems to branch engineers or the supervisor, and prepares any necessary amendments to the records. She submits the PR&Cs to the supervisor for approval and transmits and maintains documentation of the transactions.

The appellant also serves, for approximately 45 percent of her time, as the branch property agent. She conducts annual property inventories of laboratory equipment, computers, etc., using a property inventory listing provided by the logistics office for items in five buildings and a test site, and reconciles overages and shortages. The appellant reviews order documentation and signs for any material delivered to the branch. She processes property control documents to transfer items from one hand receipt holder to another or to send them for repair, replacement, or disposal. Reconciliation and other property transactions involve identifying items using barcodes, serial numbers, original cost, and other item nomenclature and determining source or current location of items. In performing her work, the appellant coordinates with branch staff and the property, supply, maintenance, and security officers or their representatives. For shorter amounts of time, 10 percent or less, she serves as the point of contact for maintenance requests for the branch facilities and for the motor pool, prepares shipping forms using information provided by branch staff, and checks all security containers and locked doors on a daily basis.

Series, title, and occupational family code determination

The agency classified the position in the Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, DK-303, in the Office Support occupational family. They titled it Office Administrative Assistant (OA). The appellant does not disagree. We concur with the agency's series determination. Since there are no titles prescribed for the GS-303 series, the agency may designate an appropriate title by following the guidance in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*.

The agency indicated a specialty code, used to facilitate titling, for the position which resulted in the addition of the parenthetical title, *Office Automation* or *OA*, to the basic title. This title is appropriate when positions require (1) knowledge of general office automation software, practices, and procedures; (2) competitive level proficiency in typing; and (3) ability to apply these knowledges and skills in the performance of general office support work. The appellant's position does not require competitive level proficiency in typing, i.e., ability to type 40 words per

minute. The appellant's work primarily requires knowledge of office automation software, sufficient typing skills to prepare e-mail messages and enter data, and the ability to apply these skills in the performance of office support work. Therefore, the addition of an *OA* parenthetical title to the basic title determined by the agency is not warranted.

Since the DK-303 series is included in the Office Support occupational family, the pay band level descriptors for this family must be used to determine the appropriate pay band of the appellant's position.

Grade determination

These descriptors represent threshold criteria for identifying a pay band within an occupation. Actual duties and responsibilities may exceed the stated criteria but not warrant classification at a higher level. To be credited at a higher pay band, a position must meet the minimum criteria established for the higher pay band. The level descriptors are designed to cover a wide variety of work, ranging from secretarial and clerical support to guard duties.

Level II includes employees who perform as security guards protecting property, materials, equipment, and personnel, as principal assistants to first level supervisors of small groups of limited structural complexity, or as specialized clerical employees performing business functions. The specialized clerical employees must have a broad working knowledge of special subject matter, be fully operational in a business setting, and be able to exercise independent judgment in accordance with established guidelines, policies, and procedures.

This is the full performance level for clerical assistants assigned to positions performing routine work in specialized areas, such as resource management, procurement, personnel, and other similar areas, or combinations thereof. Judgment must be used in determining work priorities and in selecting and applying proper guidelines. Additional instructions are provided for new and unusual assignments when first encountered. Work is reviewed in terms of completed assignments.

Level III includes security guards serving as shift leaders and principal assistants to second level or higher supervisors/managers of organizations having subordinate groups. It includes senior or intermediate assistants performing non-routine work in specialized areas. The assistants have a broad knowledge of specialized complex subject matter, guidelines, policies, and procedures, and exercise considerable independent judgment. Level III assistants may direct the efforts of other employees. Some require senior clerical assistants performing routine work in specialized areas who are recognized as experts in their area of work and are consulted regularly by others. They often perform troubleshooting and fact-finding tasks and may be used as resources in training new personnel. Assistants at this level determine relative importance, set priorities, and carry out work assignments within established guidelines, policies, and procedures with minimal supervision. They bring controversial matters to the attention of the supervisor.

Level II is met. Like this level, the appellant's position is responsible for providing specialized routine clerical services involving property control and initiating payments for services and gasoline and purchase orders for shipping. Her work requires her to determine the type of

transactions and entries to make when conducting record reconciliations and property transactions, such as transfers and disposals. Like Level II, the appellant uses judgment in applying established logistics, property control, or other guidelines. She uses these guidelines in reviewing transaction information (funding, work item, or project numbers, identified costs, etc.) provided by branch staff or readily available in files and in initiating and amending automated PR&Cs for payments or shipping purchase orders. She also uses judgment and guidelines to reconcile property records, handle shortages, overages, transfers, turn-ins, and disposals, and resolve recurring associated problems. The work requires sufficient knowledge of the CEFMS system to enter transaction information, complete forms, retrieve information, and generate standard reports. Comparable to this level, the supervisor reviews or certifies transactions prior to submission to other offices and handles controversial problems and property or other issues which escalate to the division level or higher.

Level III is not met. Unlike this level, the appellant's work is of a routine procedural nature and transactions are of limited complexity. Problem solving typically involves coordinating with branch staff or laboratory business office (logistics, shipping, receiving, etc.) staff and reviewing hand receipt or PR&C records, and then following appropriate procedures to maintain branch property control records or enter PR&C data into CEFMS. The appellant's position is located in a first line organization and is not in an organizational environment that would require her to function as an intermediate or senior assistant or as an expert providing advice to others performing similar work, or to set priorities as is intended at Level III. She responds to queries about property and PR&Cs from laboratory business offices, but these typically pertain to transactions limited to her own branch level work and not to a larger organization having more administrative complexity and the potential for non-routine problems. Unlike Level III, the appellant is not required to exercise considerable independent judgment because of the routine and procedural nature of the work. Her supervisor handles coordination at the division level and any non-routine actions and reviews all transactions.

The duties meet the Level II position descriptor.

Decision

The position is properly classified as DK-303-II, with the title at the discretion of the agency. No OA parenthetical title is warranted.