

Department of Defense (DoD)
Civilian Personnel Management Service (CPMS)
Field Advisory Services - *FAS*
Classification Appeal Decision

DoD Decision:	GS-0303-09 (title determined locally)
Initial classification:	Configuration Management Assistant, GS-303-09
Organization:	Naval Surface Warfare Center Theater Warfare Systems Department Maritime Defense Division Warfare Engineering Support Branch
Date:	December 29, 1998

BACKGROUND

On September 25, 1998, the Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service, Field Advisory Services Division, accepted a classification appeal from an employee who is classified as a Configuration Management Assistant, GS-303-09 in the Theater Warfare Systems Department, Maritime Defense Division, Warfare Engineering Branch, Naval Surface Warfare Center. The employee appealed the title, occupational series, and grade level of her position, requesting reclassification to Configuration Management Specialist, GS-301-11.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Information contained in the appeal file submitted by the appellant and representative
- Information contained in the administrative report submitted by the servicing personnel office
- On-site audit with the appellant

- Interview with appellant's first level supervisor

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant works for the Naval Surface Warfare Center, which provides engineering and fleet support for a number of surface warfare systems, primarily by conducting research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E). The Warfare Engineering Support Branch of the Maritime Defense Division provides life cycle support for operational surface warfare systems by conducting RDT&E. The appellant is assigned to the Product Control Group (not shown on official organizational chart), and performs a variety of duties in support of the overall configuration management of operational surface electronic warfare systems (EWS), primarily the AN/SLQ-32(V) system. The AN/SLQ-32(V) program is a shipboard threat detection system, consisting of numerous complex computer software modules, and is currently in use on over two hundred Naval surface vessels.

The appellant is responsible for various elements of the system's configuration management. Configuration Management (CM) is an integral part of the overall management of a system, involving the application of technical and administrative direction and surveillance over the lifecycle of an item in order to identify and document the functional and physical characteristics of a system or program; control changes to the baseline program (configuration item) and related documentation; record and report information needed to manage configuration items effectively (such as the status of proposed changes and implementation status of approved changes); and audit configuration items to verify conformance to specifications and requirements. In the lifecycle of a system, CM serves as a mechanism to identify and control changes to the system, document those changes, and provide assurance that system changes adhere to specifications and requirements prior to final delivery to the fleet. This ensures that all necessary (and stringent) technical reviews, testing and evaluation processes are followed. The appellant's major areas of responsibility involve the coordination and execution of change control procedures; documentation support; receiving, controlling and tracking Trouble Reports (TR's) from various sources; and managing the Division library.

The majority of the duties involve administrative and technical coordination of changes to the system software, in which the appellant ensures that proposed technical changes are identified, controlled, and tracked in accordance with established procedures, as set down by governing configuration management plans and programs. A significant component of this process involves the receipt, control and tracking of feedback reports, or Trouble Reports, which are generated by system operators (users), engineering personnel, and testers,

documenting any and all functional problems encountered. The appellant acts as the central receiving point for TR's, and is responsible for reviewing them for completeness and to identify the nature of problem, inputting TR's into the Trouble Report Data Base, distributing them to the appropriate technical personnel for review/analysis, generating status reports, and attending review panel meetings (takes minutes, answers CM-related questions, documents actions). The appellant also receives, controls, and tracks system change proposals, and coordinates all actions required by the CM plan prior to final approval, production, release and delivery of changes (and subsequent assimilation into the baseline system documentation). This requires significant interface and coordination with engineering personnel, software developers, testers, users, and others to identify and resolve problems or conflicts that arise during the change control process.

The appellant is also responsible for providing documentation support as a function of the configuration management of the AN/SLQ-32(V). This involves the receipt, control, tracking, and maintenance of all documentation related to the system throughout its lifecycle, including technical manuals, change proposals, feedback reports, system documents, program plans, etc., all of which constitute the baseline documentation of the system. The appellant ensures that documents are edited, updated and formatted in accordance with governing standards, and coordinates all reviews and proposed changes or additions to baseline documentation. Maintains status accounting on all documentation; this essentially involves updating and maintaining a consolidated status report of all proposed changes to the baseline program. In addition to these duties, the appellant is responsible for managing the division library (through two contractor personnel), which houses all of the system documentation and related resources (current and historical) for the entire Maritime Defense Division. The library duties constitute about ten percent of the appellant's duty time.

STANDARD(S) REFERENCED

- OPM Introduction to Position Classification Standards, HRCD-5, June 1998
- OPM Handbook of Occupational Groups and Families, HRCD-5, June 1998
- OPM Classifier's Handbook, HRCD-5, June 1998
- OPM Position Classification Standard for Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series, GS-301, TS-34, January 1979
- OPM Position Classification Standard for Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, GS-303, TS-34, January 1979

- OPM Position Classification Standard for Equipment Specialist, GS-1670, TS-132, November 1994
- OPM Position Classification Standard for Production Control Series, GS-1152, TS-114, May 1992

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appellant's position is currently classified in the GS-303 Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series, which covers one-grade interval positions that perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. Such work requires knowledge of the procedures and techniques involved in carrying out the work of an organization, and involves the application of procedures and practices within the framework of established guidelines. The appellant contends that the work she performs is characteristic of two-grade interval, administrative (specialist) work, rather than one-grade interval clerical/assistant work, and should be classified in the GS-301, Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series. In order to clearly resolve this element of the appeal, we will examine the work to determine whether it is one-grade or two-grade interval work, in accordance with the broadly defined categories found in Section III of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards.

The appellant argues that her position meets the definition of "Administrative Work" (two-grade interval) as defined in the Introduction to Position Classification Standards. Administrative work involves the exercise of analytical ability, judgment, discretion, and personal responsibility, and the application of a substantial body of knowledge of principles, concepts, and practices applicable to one or more fields of administration or management. Although administrative positions do not require specialized education, they generally involve skills typically gained through a college level education (analytical, research, writing, judgment). Such work is usually performed as a part of the principal mission or program of an agency or organization, or as a service function supporting the mission. Employees performing administrative work are generally engaged in analyzing, evaluating, modifying, and developing the basic programs, policies and procedures which facilitate the work of the agency and its programs. This is accomplished through application of administrative analysis, theory, and principles in adapting practice to the unique requirements of a particular program. The GS-301, Miscellaneous Administration and Program Series, covers positions that perform nonprofessional, two-grade interval administrative work for which no other series is appropriate, and requires analytical ability, judgment, discretion and knowledge of a substantial body of administrative or program principles, concepts, policies, and objectives.

In contrast, Technical (one-grade interval) work, as defined in the Introduction, is work that primarily supports a professional or administrative (two-grade interval) field. Such work involves substantial elements of the work in that field, but requires less than a full professional or administrative knowledge of the field involved. Employees performing technical work carry out tasks according to methods and procedures that are laid out either in published or oral instructions and covered by established precedents or guidelines. Such work often requires a high degree of technical skill, care, and precision. Clerical work, which also follows a one-grade interval pattern, involves structured work in support of office, business, or fiscal operations, performed in accordance with established policies, procedures, or techniques. Clerical employees typically perform general office support duties such as preparing, receiving, reviewing and verifying documents, processing transactions, maintaining office records, locating and compiling data from files, and other general support duties.

The appellant states that her position belongs in the GS-301 series (two-grade interval), primarily because her duties often involve analyzing, evaluating, developing and modifying procedures and processes related to her configuration management responsibilities. Examples given include establishing and implementing procedures for receiving, tracking, and formatting software documentation; establishing quality control procedures for data files; establishing procedures for controlling, tracking, and distributing library materials; and refining other CM processes.

In the classification process, the series is determined based on the position's primary duties and the paramount knowledge requirements. In this case, it is apparent that the primary duty of the position is to carry out a variety of procedural activities that support the configuration management function for the assigned systems. The work requires an intense, practical knowledge of the processes, procedures, and policies of configuration management (found in governing CM program plans), as applicable to the systems to which the appellant is assigned. The work also requires significant coordinative skills, in order to manage and carry out numerous tasks simultaneously, in accordance with strict procedural and technical guidelines. In addition, the appellant must have a general knowledge and understanding of electronic warfare systems and the related software components, as well as the technical and program functions of the various organizational segments involved in the management of those systems.

The appellant performs a mixture of technical and complex clerical duties, all of which is characteristic of one-grade interval work. The work primarily involves performing procedural tasks in accordance with the governing configuration management plans and procedures, such as receiving, tracking and controlling documents; reviewing documents (trouble reports, manuals, system documentation, etc.) for completeness, correct format, adherence to

established requirements; maintaining a database and developing status reports; and coordinating actions required for the execution of the configuration management process. Although the work involves complex technical and administrative processes, requiring a high degree of practical knowledge and skill performed with significant independence of action, it does not involve the kind of analytical and evaluative work typical of administrative, two-grade interval occupations. The appellant's position requires extensive practical knowledge of configuration management, in order to carry out the CM processes, rather than conceptual, theoretical knowledge and analytical skills that would be found in administrative "specialist" positions involved in configuration management. Such positions would primarily be responsible for planning, designing and developing CM programs for complete systems, overseeing the execution of CM procedures and policies, and ensuring that processes and procedures are operating effectively, with respect to the overall program. (In this case, these responsibilities are assigned to the appellant's supervisor, a Computer Specialist, GS-334-12.) The appellant cites her responsibility for exercising analytical skill and judgment in developing, modifying and establishing procedures related to the CM program as evidence of work properly classified as two-grade interval, administrative work (specifically GS-301). These projects, however, do not involve the level or degree of analytical ability, judgment, discretion, or responsibility associated with two-grade interval administrative work. Rather, those assignments cited by the appellant (developing, modifying, refining procedures and processes) are performed within the context of a somewhat strict procedural framework characteristic of one-grade interval occupations, even though they do involve some analysis and independent judgment. Such duties can be found in many one-grade interval occupations in a variety of settings, generally at higher grade levels.

The GS-303, Miscellaneous Clerk and Assistant Series covers positions the duties of which are to perform or supervise clerical, assistant, or technician work for which no other series is appropriate. Positions classified in the GS-303 series involve specialized work for which no other series has been established. Currently, there are no occupational series, one-grade or two-grade interval, established that specifically cover configuration management work. Therefore, the GS-303 is the most appropriate series for the appellant's position. In fact, the position classification standard for Equipment Specialist (GS-1670), specifically excludes configuration management support work from that series, directing the user to classify such positions in the GS-303 series. The GS-1670 standard defines this work as the performance of clerical and assistant work in support of establishing and maintaining the configuration record of items, including assembling, distributing, and controlling documents; reviewing incoming document packages for completeness, proper format, and grammar; scheduling configuration control meetings and physical and functional reviews; assuring all required items are reviewed and developing status reports. This accurately describes the basic nature of the appellant's position.

The appellant's position is properly classified in the GS-303 series. There are no specific authorized titles for the GS-303 series, therefore, one must be constructed. The title determination will be left to the discretion of the local personnel office.

GRADE DETERMINATION

According to the classification standard for the GS-303 series, nonclerical positions classified in this series should be evaluated by reference to standards of the one-grade interval type that involve analogous knowledge and skill requirements. The Classifier's Handbook advises that when selecting a standard for cross-series comparison, the standard chosen should cover work as similar as possible to the work under evaluation, with respect to the kind of work processes, function, or subject matter involved; the qualifications required; the level of difficulty and responsibility; and the combination of classification factors that have the greatest influence on the grade level.

In this case, the grade level criteria in the standard for Production Control Series, GS-1152, will be used to evaluate the appellant's position. The GS-1152 standard was selected because it covers one-grade interval work that involves processes and methods similar to that of the appellant's job. In addition, the coordinative and technical aspects of production control work is not unlike the appellant's work, in terms of the position's knowledge and skill requirements.

Note: The local servicing personnel office evaluated this position using the FES criteria in the Primary Standard (Appendix 3 of the Introduction to Position Classification Standards). Established classification principles and policies, as set down by the Office of Personnel Management, dictate that the Primary Standard may be used as supplemental guidance, but only in conjunction with other FES standards. Therefore, the human resources office's application of the Primary Standard alone was not appropriate.

The grade level criteria in the GS-1152 standard is in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, which uses nine job-related factors to determine the final grade.

Factor 1. Knowledge Required

This factor measures the nature and extent of information or facts that a worker must understand to do acceptable work, e.g., steps, procedures, practices, rules, policies, theories, principles, and concepts, and the nature and extent of the skills needed to apply this knowledge. To be used as a basis for selecting a level under this factor, a knowledge must be required and applied.

The appellant's position requires extensive practical knowledge of configuration management policies, methods, and procedures in order to identify, coordinate, and control a variety of software and hardware changes that occur throughout the lifecycle of complex electronic warfare systems. The appellant must demonstrate a thorough understanding of the technical aspects of the system (configuration item), as well as all applicable change control procedures (CM plans & programs), and possess a high level of skill in coordinating the actions necessary to integrate complex, technical changes into the configuration baseline. In addition, knowledge and skill are required to develop, modify, and refine procedures in order to resolve problems and improve CM processes. The appellant is expected to fully understand the governing configuration management plans and programs, and use that knowledge in coordinating engineering change proposals, tracking feedback reports, and performing documentation control. This is comparable to level 1-6 in the Production Control standard, at which employees use knowledge and experience in the recurring manufacture, overhaul, or repair of products using multiple process production methods and procedures to develop information necessary for the control of a complex product (having many components and characteristics requiring control). At that level, the work requires extensive knowledge, understanding, and use of product and manufacturing terminology, data, and standards and how to relate them to new projects. This is illustrative of the appellant's position, which requires extensive knowledge of configuration management procedures and the ability to adapt them to new situations.

The position does not meet level 1-7, at which employees must have comprehensive and intensive practical knowledge of all the production methods and procedures, machines and materials; and considerable skill and experience to plan for the future or immediate production of very complex products (spacecraft, combat/strategic fixed wing aircraft, warship or submarine, etc.). The appellant's assignments do not involve this degree of scope or complexity, and therefore do not require such a comprehensive level of knowledge and skill.

Level 1-6 is credited. 950 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 planning and carrying out the work, and the review of completed work.

The appellant is assigned continuing responsibility for configuration management items, and is

expected to independently plan and carry out routine assignments within established procedures and policies, as set down by the supervisor. New or special projects are assigned by the supervisor, who communicates an outline of the task and its objectives, and may suggest a particular approach. Most problems are resolved by the appellant, in accordance with established policies and procedures, but the supervisor is available for consultation and assistance in situations without clear precedents. Work is reviewed for conformance to overall program objectives and adherence to CM plans and procedures. The position meets level 2-3 in the GS-1152 standard, at which the supervisor assigns responsibility for providing contiguous control of production in a specific department, defining general objectives, priorities, and goals. At that level, the supervisor is available to assist the employee with unusual situations. Employees at level 2-3 are expected to analyze the requirements, plan for various phases of the project, coordinate all the necessary actions, and handle problems and deviations in accordance with instructions, policies and accepted practices. Work is reviewed for technical soundness, efficient use of resources, effective problem solving, and timely completion. This accurately depicts appellant's supervisory controls.

Level 2-4 is not met. At that level, employees confer with the supervisor to set the overall objectives and adjust conflicting priorities, and the employee receives minimal guidance in planning and carrying out major projects of significant complexity. Although the appellant exercises a high degree of independence in performing her work, most of the work assignments are routine or procedural in nature, and do not involve the level or degree of independent planning envisioned at level 2-4 in the GS-1152 standard, at which the controller plans and coordinates most of the timing and integrated production efforts of many different departments or shops that are responsible for work on various segments of the product. In this case, the appellant's supervisor has a greater involvement in the appellant's work, and maintains stricter control than is described at level 2-4.

Level 2-3 is credited. 275 points

Factor 3. Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of guidelines (e.g., desk manuals, established procedures and policies, traditional practices, and reference materials) and the judgment needed to apply them.

The appellant's work assignments are generally governed by published procedures, military and DoD standards, technical manuals, CM program plans, and instructions. Most of the work is covered by these guidelines, although they may lack specificity or applicability as

new requirements or projects emerge. The appellant is expected to exercise judgment and discretion in selecting, interpreting, and adapting guidelines to specific situations. Occasionally, the appellant is required to develop new procedures or modify existing ones. This is comparable to level 3-3 in the standard, at which guidelines are available for most assignments but are not always specific or are not completely applicable to some products, processes, materials, or production operations; experience and judgment are required to interpret, adapt, or extend policies, guides, procedures and regulations to new or different products or operations. At level 3-4, there is a significant lack of definitive or directly applicable guidelines and standard data; the employee is required to use a high degree of initiative in researching sources of information, which are often obscure or indirect. Assignments at this level often involve significant departures from traditional practices, methods and procedures, as well as the development of new procedures that may require proposing new policies. The appellant's position does not involve these kinds of assignments. Level 3-4 is not met.

Level 3-3 is credited. 275 points

Factor 4. Complexity

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

The appellant is responsible for a variety of configuration management support functions, which include the coordination of various procedural actions for the purpose of ensuring that proposed changes to the baseline system follow the strict change control procedures set down by applicable CM program plans. This involves extensive coordination with technical personnel from different organizational segments, system users in the field, and contractors. The appellant is required to resolve procedural and process-related problems, and develop, modify, and refine procedures to improve the CM process. The work involves complex electronic systems with a variety of software components, requiring the appellant to have an understanding of the technical aspects of the system in order to recognize potential problems in the configuration management process. The complexity of the position is comparable to level 4-3 in the GS-1152 standard, at which production controllers are responsible for the advance planning or immediate production control for manufacture, construction, overhaul or repair of a complex product having numerous components. At this level, employees are required to make decisions about a broad span of actions involved in the operations, selecting methods that are the most efficient and economical, and identifying problems and making adjustments to resolve them. At level 4-4, production controllers are assigned difficult

and complex products or projects (prototype, developmental, or major systems) that require the application of a complete range of production control principles, techniques, and methodology to plan and accomplish control over their construction, manufacture, overhaul or repair. At this level, employees regularly face difficult problems due to lack of standard data and guidelines, and must exercise considerable judgment in making decisions when routine, established practices and methods do not apply. The appellant's work does not involve this level of complexity. The electronic warfare system for which the appellant performs configuration management is a well-established system, and established practices, methods and procedures are adequate for most of the assignments. Level 4-4 is not met.

Level 4-3 is credited. 150 points

Factor 5. Scope and Effect

"Scope and Effect" 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 purpose of the appellant's work is to coordinate the necessary actions required in managing changes to the assigned system, ensuring adherence to governing change control procedures and instructions, and resolving problems related to the configuration management process. As a key player in the CM process, the appellant's work directly affects the efficiency of the change control process, and facilitates the work of others in the Branch responsible for the technical and engineering aspects of the system. This is characteristic of level 5-3 in the standard, at which controllers resolve a variety of conventional problems and situations by selection or adaptation of established work methods, procedures, and criteria. Work results at level 5-3 impact the effectiveness of operations within the activity, where the goal is to achieve desired production levels that meet or exceed specifications and terms of acceptability established by the customer, and are consistent with efficient and economic operations. This is descriptive of the scope and effect of the appellant's work.

Level 5-4 is not met. At that level, the purpose of the work is to plan, develop, and implement programs of considerable breadth and complexity, and includes establishing criteria, formulating effective production control programs, assessing the effectiveness of current programs, and investigating or analyzing a variety of unusual production problems. Work at this level impacts a wide range of organizations within the activity, and often has applicability to other agency activities performing similar work. The appellant's work is limited to the Division, and does not meet the scope or effect described in level 5-4.

Level 5-3 is credited. 150 points

Factor 6. Personal Contacts & Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts

This factor includes face-to-face contacts and telephone and radio dialogue with persons not in the supervisory chain. Levels described under this factor are based on what is required to make the initial contact, the difficulty of communicating with those contacted, and the setting in which the contacts take place (e.g., the degree to which the employee and those contacted recognize their relative roles and authorities). Purpose of Contacts measures the purpose of the personal contacts identified in Factor 6, and may range from factual exchanges of information to situations involving significant or controversial issues and differing viewpoints, goals, or objectives.

The appellant has regular and recurring contacts with Branch and Division engineering and technical personnel, as well as system operators in the fleet (sailors), and, occasionally, contractor personnel involved in software development. Contacts are made via telephone, written correspondence, and meetings. This is comparable to level 6-2 in the standard, at which contacts are with other employees engaged in varying functions in the same agency but beyond the immediate organization, and are made by telephone, through correspondence, and in meetings. The appellant's position does not meet 6-3, at which contacts are with individuals from outside the agency as well as with agency program heads, taking place in moderately unstructured settings, generally established on a nonroutine basis. The appellant's contacts are usually routine in nature, and generally occur in a somewhat structured setting. Level 6-2 is credited.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts is to coordinate actions necessary for the configuration management process, exchange information regarding configuration items, provide information on the status of change control actions, clarify new procedures, and to resolve procedural problems associated with the process. This meets level 7-B, at which contacts are for the purpose of planning, coordinating, or advising on production efforts, or to resolve production problems; persons contacted at this level are generally cooperative and have mutual interests and goals. At 7-C, the purpose is to influence, motivate, and persuade production shop and supervisory personnel or other decision makers to follow a different course of action, where those contacted are often skeptical or uncooperative. This level is not met by the appellant's position. Although the appellant may occasionally make significant recommendations regarding configuration management actions, the communication of those recommendations generally do not require a high degree of motivation and persuasion of those contacted, as described at the higher level. Level 7-B is credited.

Level 6-2 and 7-B are credited for this factor. 75 points

Factor 8. Physical Demands

The work of the appellant's position is primarily sedentary, with no special physical demands. Level 8-1 is credited. 5 points

Factor 9. Work Environment

The appellant's work is performed in an office setting, with no special risks or discomforts. Level 9-1 is credited. 5 points

Factor Evaluation Summary

Level	Points
1-6	950
2-3	275
3-3	275
4-3	150
5-3	150
6-2/7-B	75
8-1	5
9-1	5
Total:	1885

According to the Grade Conversion Chart in the standard, 1885 points falls within the GS-09 range.

DECISION

The appellant's position is properly classified as GS-303-09. The designation of the official title will be determined by the servicing personnel office.