

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

DoD Decision:	Food Service Worker, WG-7408-03
Initial classification:	Food Service Worker, WG-7408-03
Organization:	Air Force Base Support Group, Services Squadron Food Services Flight Vegetable Preparation Section
Date:	December 9, 1997

BACKGROUND

On October 7, 1997, this office accepted a group classification appeal from the appellants, who are currently classified as Food Service Worker, WG-7408-03, and are requesting that their job be reclassified to Food Service Worker, WG-7408-04.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- a. Group Classification Appeal (undated), received by Civilian Personnel Office
- b. Organizational Information and Classification Evaluation submitted by Civilian Personnel Office
- c. Telephone audit with appellants' representative
- d. Telephone interview with appellants' first level supervisor

JOB INFORMATION

The appellants are assigned to Job Description number , currently classified as Food Service Worker, WG-7408-03, in the Vegetable Preparation Section, Food Services Flight, 34th Support Group. The duties described in the JD have been certified as accurate by both the first level supervisor and the appellants. The appellants are requesting an upgrade to the WG-4 level.

The basis of the appeal, as stated in the appellant's letter, is a comparison of their job description to that of a standardized Core Document job description for a Food Service Worker, WG-7408-04, found in Air Force hospitals. The appellants have argued that the duties of both jobs are essentially identical, and should therefore warrant the same classification. Classification law, contained in Title 5, United States Code, dictates that covered positions must be classified in accordance with job grading standards published by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Hence, other evaluation methods, such as job-to-job comparisons, are inappropriate, and cannot be used. The appellant's job will be classified based on a careful review of all relevant factual information, and an evaluation using the appropriate job grading standards.

The appellants are assigned to the morning shift of the cadet dining hall, and are responsible for preparing a variety of cold food items that feed approximately 4,000 cadets daily. The morning shift prepares breakfast and lunch, as well as box lunches for various Academy functions. The Vegetable Preparation Section assembles trays and containers of foods that are sent to the main dining floor, such as muffins, bagels, pastries, salads, desserts (cookies, brownies, pies, Jell-O, cakes), fruits, and vegetables. All items, except for fresh fruits and vegetables, are cooked in the kitchen or bakery, then delivered to the preparation area, where the appellants prepare them for distribution to the dining tables, ensuring appropriate amounts for each table. Items are prepared in accordance with preset menus and recipes, which are determined by the Academy's dietician. Certain items, such as mixed salads, potato salad, and slaw, require assembly by the appellants. In these cases, the appellants wash, peel, slice, chop, and dice the vegetables using kitchen utensils (knives, peelers, choppers), or professional food processing equipment (slicers, choppers, dicers, wedgers). Items requiring cooking (potatoes, pasta) are prepared in the kitchen by cooks, then returned to the Vegetable Preparation Section for use in salads or other dishes. The appellants mix the items together with ingredients specified in the recipes, and prepare the food for delivery to the dining floor. The appellants also assist the cooks by chopping, slicing, and dicing vegetables for use in soups, sauces, and stews. The appellants set up and maintain buffet lines, replenishing food items, ensuring cleanliness and proper temperatures for certain items.

The appellants are also responsible for preparing box lunches (several hundred per week) for various academy functions, such as athletic events, outdoor activities, sick call, picnics, and take-out service. The appellants assemble the box lunches (sandwiches, cold cooked chicken, fruit, fresh vegetables, condiments, drinks, chips) according to preset menus and recipes attached to the daily orders. This often involves weighing and slicing meats for sandwiches, making the sandwiches, wrapping the meat items (sandwiches & cooked chicken), labeling them, and packaging the lunches for delivery to designated areas.

Occasionally, the appellants are required to prepare items for special functions, such as formal dinners (hors d'oeuvre and fruit platters requiring elaborate garnishing), pre-game meals or modified box lunches for athletes, and squadron picnics. The

appellants prepare the items based on special menus or recipes specifying ingredients, amounts, and preparation instructions.

As part of the food preparation operation, the appellants maintain food storage areas (coolers, bins, drygoods rooms), and visually inspect food items for spoilage, disposing of damaged or rotten food as necessary. They also receive deliveries, move and stack boxes (using pallet jack), and rotate stock in storage areas in accordance with set procedures.

Other duties include disassembling and cleaning industrial food processing equipment, cleaning and washing food preparation surfaces and areas, and delivering picnic orders to the loading dock.

STANDARD(S) REFERENCED

U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Grading Standard for Food Service Worker, 7408, TS-63, 2/92

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The appellants do not contest the series or title allocation of their jobs. The Job Grading Standard for Food Service Worker, 7408, covers work involved in "serving food and beverages and preparing simple food. . . assisting in food preparation by peeling potatoes, cutting vegetables, assembling and tossing salads, measuring and weighing ingredients. . ." The appellants' job clearly falls into this occupational series, and is titled Food Service Worker, in accordance with the titling instructions in the standard.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The job grading standard uses four factors in determining grade level: Skill and Knowledge, Responsibilities, Physical Effort, and Working Conditions.

Skill and Knowledge

The appellants perform a variety of food service work in a high volume dining hall setting, and are required to exercise knowledge of and skill in food preparation procedures. This includes knowledge of safe food handling techniques; skill in cutting fresh vegetables and fruit; skill in operating complex industrial food processing equipment; knowledge of food terminology to measure, weigh and portion food for different types of servings; the ability to read and understand standard and modified recipes, mix ingredients, and assemble salads or other uncooked food items; ability to adjust recipes, calculating ingredient amounts for a higher or lower yield; skill in recognizing damaged or rotting food; knowledge of vegetable and fruit characteristics, such as color, texture, taste, and appearance; and knowledge of food storage and

protection procedures. This level of skill and knowledge is typical of grade 3 food service workers, who "understand food terminology, measurements, and serving information in standardized recipes and regular and modified menus." Also at this level, workers "have knowledge and skill to apportion food items according to approved portion control practices." Also at the grade 3 level, workers assist in food preparation by "weighing, measuring, and assembling ingredients according to standardized recipes. In some work situations, they prepare uncooked food items such as sandwich spreads and salad dressings." This, too, is comparable to the work performed by the appellants (assembling tossed salads, potato salad and slaws).

The work performed by the appellants does not require the level of skill and knowledge described at the grade 4 level, at which workers typically apply a degree of skill and knowledge found only hospital settings. (The simple fact that the appellants do not work in a hospital setting, however, does not automatically exclude them from the grade 4 level. Rather, we must compare the degree of skill and knowledge required to perform food service work in their particular work setting (service academy dining hall) to that which is described at the grade 4 level. The work illustrations, while specific in nature, do not limit the work situations creditable at the grade 4 level. In fact, they provide an illustrative yardstick by which other work situations can be compared.) Typical work performed at this level includes providing "patients with basic information about modified diets, such as explaining to a patient on a sodium restricted diet that canned vegetables must be eaten in moderation because they are typically high in salt, or telling a patient on a diabetic diet that, according to exchange lists, cheese may be substituted for meat." Also at the Grade 4 level, workers "apply special sanitary techniques in preparing formulas and tube feedings, such as sterilizing equipment and sanitizing work areas." Work at this level requires knowledge of special procedures, and skill in making precise measurements for special feedings. None of the grade controlling work performed by the appellants requires a comparable degree of skill and knowledge found at the grade 4 level.

The appellants cite situations in which they are required to prepare meals and food for cadets on "special diets," such as athletes or those on weight gain/loss programs. These situations require adherence to preset menus and recipes determined by a dietician, and do not require the level of skill and knowledge described at the grade 4 level. The "special feedings" described in the standard at the grade 4 level are those in which *special preparation procedures* are utilized (such as sterilization of equipment for tube feedings, or precise measurements for diabetic feedings). There are no comparable special procedures in the work assignments performed by the appellants.

Another duty cited by the appellants in their appeal is the requirement to prepare cold platters for special or formal functions. These platters (fruit/vegetable trays, or d'oeuvres) require elaborate and artistic garnishing, requiring knowledge and training in special garnishing techniques. While these duties require a higher level of skill and ability than typically found at the WG-3 level, they are performed only on an occasional basis (less than ten percent of the duty time), and therefore are not grade

controlling.

This factor is evaluated at the grade 3 level.

Responsibility

The appellants are assigned work based on a daily assignment sheet, on which the supervisor specifies the particular task to be performed by individuals on the shift (breakfast prep, box lunches, salads). Upon receiving the daily assignment, the appellants independently set up their workstations, review the menus or recipes provided, and perform the routine assignments under little or no supervision. The supervisor spot-checks items for adherence to menu/recipe orders and quality. For special functions, or new items, the supervisor will provide specific instructions. All food preparation is performed in accordance with detailed, written instructions provided by the dietician staff. Occasionally, the appellants will deviate slightly from a recipe, for purposes of taste, or upon recognizing an obvious error in ingredient amounts. Such changes are made on the spot, and the supervisor is informed of changes made.

At the grade 3 level, food service workers "complete assignments individually or as part of a team under the general supervision of the immediate supervisor." At this level, workers work from written or oral instructions, and are expected to perform routine work assignments in accordance with established procedures; detailed instructions are provided for special or unusual assignments. Work is reviewed upon completion for adherence to established food service practices. The appellants' work responsibilities meet the grade 3 description in the standard.

While some of the responsibility exercised by the appellants appears to be somewhat characteristic of grade 4 food service workers, specifically, completing assignments under limited supervision with only spot checks by the supervisor, the work is routine in nature and does not require the degree of judgment found at the higher grade level. At that level, workers "use judgment in recognizing work objectives and in planning and organizing duties to accomplish those objectives." In contrast, the appellants' work objectives are clearly stated on a routine basis, and tasks are performed in strict accordance with set procedures and written instructions. Deviation from procedure is rare, and new or unusual work assignments are performed under closer supervision. Therefore, the level of responsibility exercised by the appellants does not meet the intent of the WG-4 level described in the standard.

Physical Effort

The work requires frequent heavy lifting of items up to 50 lbs., long periods of standing, bending, pulling, pushing and, reaching. This degree of physical effort is typical of grades 2, 3, and 4.

Working Conditions

The appellants work in an environment which subjects them to noise, heat, cold, slippery and uneven walking surfaces and solvents used in cleaning. Also, the work is performed in close proximity to machinery with moving parts. These conditions are typical of all grade levels in the standard.

DECISION

Based on the preceding evaluation of the duties and responsibilities, in which all of the factors were evaluated at the WG-3 level, the job is properly classified as **Food Service Worker, WG-7408-03.**