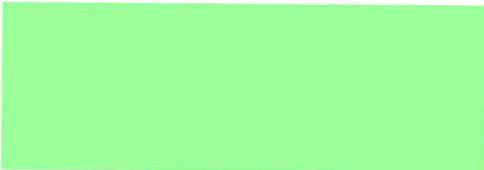
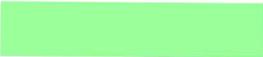




U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

(b)(6)

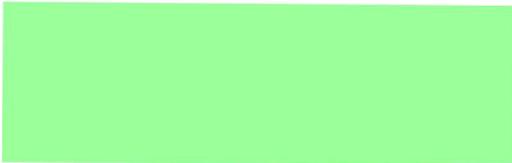


DATE: **MAY 29 2014** OFFICE: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER FILE: 

IN RE: Petitioner: 
Beneficiary:

PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

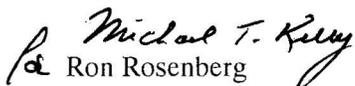


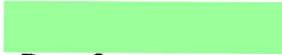
INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the AAO inappropriately applied the law in reaching its decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen in accordance with the instructions on Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. The specific requirements for filing such a motion can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. **Do not file any motion directly with the AAO.** Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires any motion to be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,


Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office



DISCUSSION: The service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition, and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

On the Form I-129 visa petition, the petitioner describes itself as a firm that is engaged in the distribution and sales of metal. In order to employ the beneficiary in what it designates as a management analyst position,¹ the petitioner seeks to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition on the basis of her determination that the petitioner had failed to demonstrate that the proffered position qualifies for classification as a specialty occupation.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains the following: (1) the Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence (RFE); (3) the petitioner's response to the RFE; (4) the director's letter denying the petition; and (5) the Form I-290B and supporting documentation.

For the reasons that will be discussed below, the AAO agrees with the director that the petitioner has not established eligibility for the benefit sought. Accordingly, the director's decision will not be disturbed. The appeal will be dismissed, and the petition will be denied.

I. Evidentiary Standard Applied on Appeal

As a preliminary matter, the AAO affirms that, in the exercise of its appellate review in this matter, as in all matters that come within its purview, the AAO follows the preponderance of the evidence standard as specified in the controlling precedent decision, *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 375-376 (AAO 2010). In pertinent part, that decision states the following:

Except where a different standard is specified by law, a petitioner or applicant in administrative immigration proceedings must prove by a preponderance of evidence that he or she is eligible for the benefit sought.

* * *

The "preponderance of the evidence" of "truth" is made based on the factual circumstances of each individual case.

* * *

¹ The Labor Condition Application (LCA) submitted by the petitioner in support of the petition was certified for the SOC (O*NET/OES) Code 13-1111, the associated Occupational Classification of "Management Analysts," and a Level I (entry-level) prevailing wage rate.

Thus, in adjudicating the application pursuant to the preponderance of the evidence standard, the director must examine each piece of evidence for relevance, probative value, and credibility, both individually and within the context of the totality of the evidence, to determine whether the fact to be proven is probably true.

Even if the director has some doubt as to the truth, if the petitioner submits relevant, probative, and credible evidence that leads the director to believe that the claim is "more likely than not" or "probably" true, the applicant or petitioner has satisfied the standard of proof. *See INS v. Cardoza-Foncesca*, 480 U.S. 421, 431 (1987) (discussing "more likely than not" as a greater than 50% chance of an occurrence taking place). If the director can articulate a material doubt, it is appropriate for the director to either request additional evidence or, if that doubt leads the director to believe that the claim is probably not true, deny the application or petition.

Id.

The AAO conducts appellate review on a *de novo* basis. *See Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004). In doing so, the AAO applies the preponderance of the evidence standard as outlined in *Matter of Chawathe*. Upon its review of the present matter pursuant to that standard, however, the AAO finds that the evidence in the record of proceeding does not support counsel's contentions that the evidence of record requires that the petition at issue be approved. Applying the preponderance of the evidence standard as stated in *Matter of Chawathe*, the AAO finds that the director's determinations in this matter were correct. Upon its review of the entire record of proceeding, and with close attention and due regard to all of the evidence, separately and in the aggregate, submitted in support of this petition, the AAO finds that the petitioner has not established that its claims are "more likely than not" or "probably" true. As the evidentiary analysis of this decision will reflect, the petitioner has not submitted relevant, probative, and credible evidence that leads the AAO to believe that the petitioner's claims are "more likely than not" or "probably" true.

II. Factual and Procedural Background

In the petition signed on March 26, 2013, the petitioner indicates that it is seeking the beneficiary's services as a management analyst on a full-time basis at the rate of pay of \$1,011.60 per week. In the March 22, 2013 letter of support, the petitioner states that it is a manufacturer of high quality lasers and metals. It further claimed that over the past couple years, it has experienced significant growth, and thus has decided to hire a management analyst "to make the company more efficient, lower costs, and increase profits."

Regarding the proffered position, the petitioner stated:

The duties of the management analyst position involve analyzing, evaluating, and making recommendations to improve [the petitioner's] operations. The management analyst will ensure that the company's laser manufacturing processes are set up to minimize costs while improving the overall flow of operations.

In addition, the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary will be responsible for the following duties:

1. Identify company problems and inefficiencies in company's domestic and international business operations. (15%)
2. Collect and analyze financial information from the company's three branches (Korea, United States, and Japan), conduct on-site observations, and analyze employment data to determine strategies, methods, equipment, and personnel that are needed to achieve goals of the company. (25%)
3. Using mathematical and statistical models, evaluate company operations and make recommendations on ways to improve the efficiency of the laser manufacturing services conducted at the company. (25%)
4. Develop and recommend solutions and plans to improve the company's structure, efficiency, and profits internationally.
5. Present findings and recommendations to company management officials through presentations or reports. (10%)

The AAO observes that the petitioner also stated that the qualified candidate for the position must have at least a bachelor's degree. The petitioner, however, did not state that the degree must be in a specific specialty. The petitioner noted that the beneficiary "is more than qualified for the Management Analyst position" by virtue of her bachelor's degree in International Relations from

In addition, the petitioner submitted a Labor Condition Application (LCA) in support of the instant H-1B petition. The AAO notes that the LCA designation for the job prospect corresponds to the occupational classification of "Management Analysts" - SOC (ONET/OES Code) 13-1111, at a Level I (entry level) wage. The petitioner also submitted (1) a copy of its 2012 Form 1120, U.S. Corporation Income Tax Return; (2) screenshots from the petitioner's website; (3) Copies of its quarterly wage reports filed with the State of Illinois; (4) a copy of its balance sheet for 2012; (5) copies of the beneficiary's transcripts from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]; and (6) a copy of the petitioner's brochure.

The director found the evidence insufficient to establish eligibility for the benefit sought, and issued an RFE on April 22, 2013. The petitioner was asked to submit probative evidence to establish that a specialty occupation position exists for the beneficiary. Specifically, the director requested evidence establishing eligibility under the provisions of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). In addition, additional information was requested with regard to the nature of the proffered position and the nature of the petitioner's business.

On June 14, 2013, counsel for the petitioner responded to the RFE. Counsel restated the previous list of duties provided in the petitioner's initial letter of support, and stated for the first time that the proffered position required at least a bachelor's degree in International Relations or a related field. Specifically, counsel stated:

The work described above requires understanding business operations in the United States, Japan, and Korea. In order to determine how Petitioner's business operations in three different countries can be made more efficient to increase profit, a strong grasp of sophisticated business and international relations concepts are necessary for this position. This knowledge is traditionally not taught prior to entering a bachelor's degree program in international relations.

Counsel continued by stating that allowing a high school graduate to take the proffered position would "result in incomplete analyses and inefficiencies due to a lack of understanding on how the company's domestic and foreign operations can be integrated for efficiency, which could be economically catastrophic."

Counsel also submitted (1) a copy of the petitioner's line and block organizational chart; (2) copies of job postings for positions the petitioner claims are parallel to the proffered position in similar organizations; and (3) a letter from [REDACTED] Ph.D., for consideration as an expert opinion in support of the contention that the proffered position is a specialty occupation.

The director reviewed the information provided by the petitioner to determine whether the petitioner had established eligibility for the benefit sought. Although the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary would serve in a specialty occupation, the director determined that the petitioner failed to establish how the beneficiary's immediate duties would necessitate services at a level requiring the theoretical and practical application of at least a bachelor's degree level of a body of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty. The director denied the petition on July 29, 2013. On appeal, counsel submitted a brief and additional evidence, and contends that the director's findings were erroneous.

III. Law

To meet its burden of proof in this regard, the petitioner must establish that the employment it is offering to the beneficiary meets the following statutory and regulatory requirements.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1) defines the term "specialty occupation" as one that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

The term "specialty occupation" is further defined at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) as:

An occupation which requires [(1)] theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge in fields of human endeavor including, but not limited

to, architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, education, business specialties, accounting, law, theology, and the arts, and which requires [(2)] the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must also meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
- (2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
- (3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
- (4) The nature of the specific duties [is] so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

As a threshold issue, it is noted that 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must logically be read together with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). In other words, this regulatory language must be construed in harmony with the thrust of the related provisions and with the statute as a whole. *See K Mart Corp. v. Cartier Inc.*, 486 U.S. 281, 291 (1988) (holding that construction of language which takes into account the design of the statute as a whole is preferred); *see also COIT Independence Joint Venture v. Federal Sav. and Loan Ins. Corp.*, 489 U.S. 561 (1989); *Matter of W-F-*, 21 I&N Dec. 503 (BIA 1996). As such, the criteria stated in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) should logically be read as being necessary but not necessarily sufficient to meet the statutory and regulatory definition of specialty occupation. To otherwise interpret this section as stating the necessary *and* sufficient conditions for meeting the definition of specialty occupation would result in particular positions meeting a condition under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) but not the statutory or regulatory definition. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384, 387 (5th Cir. 2000). To avoid this illogical and absurd result, 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must therefore be read as stating additional requirements that a position must meet, supplementing the statutory and regulatory definitions of specialty occupation.

Consonant with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) consistently interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position. *See Royal Siam Corp. v. Chertoff*, 484 F.3d 139, 147 (1st Cir. 2007) (describing "a degree requirement in a specific

specialty" as "one that relates directly to the duties and responsibilities of a particular position"). Applying this standard, USCIS regularly approves H-1B petitions for qualified aliens who are to be employed as engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, college professors, and other such occupations. These professions, for which petitioners have regularly been able to establish a minimum entry requirement in the United States of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position, fairly represent the types of specialty occupations that Congress contemplated when it created the H-1B visa category.

IV. Analysis

To determine whether a particular job qualifies as a specialty occupation, USCIS does not rely simply upon a proffered position's title. The specific duties of the position, combined with the nature of the petitioning entity's business operations, are factors to be considered. USCIS must examine the ultimate employment of the beneficiary, and determine whether the position qualifies as a specialty occupation. *See generally Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d at 384. The critical element is not the title of the position nor an employer's self-imposed standards, but whether the position actually requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty as the minimum for entry into the occupation, as required by the Act.

At Part 5 of the Form I-129, the petitioner specified "Distribution and Sales of Metal" as its type of business, and stated it was established in 2003, currently employed 114 persons, and had a gross annual income of \$3,024,482.

The duties of the proffered position, as claimed by the petitioner and counsel in the initial support letter and the response to the RFE assert numerous and varied endeavors that would engage the beneficiary (such as, for instance: "[c]ollect[ing] and analyz[ing] financial information from the company's three branches;" analyz[ing] employment data to determine strategies, methods, equipment, and personnel needed to achieve goals of the company;" and "[d]eveloping and recommend[ing] solutions and plans to improve the company's structure, efficiency, and profits internationally). However, the descriptions of the proposed duties provided in both the initial letter and the RFE response are limited to general, generic functional categories. Such descriptions only broadly paint the proposed duties and so fail to communicate both (a) the substantive nature of the work in which the beneficiary would actually engage in performing the job, and (b) the educational level of any body of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty that the beneficiary would have to apply to perform such work in the context of the petitioner's business operations.

Further, the AAO finds that, even when read in the aggregate, neither the above duty descriptions, nor any other in this record of proceeding, distinguish the proposed duties, or the position that they comprise, as so complex, specialized, and/or unique as to require the practical and theoretical application of at least a bachelor's degree level of a body of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty, as required to establish a specialty occupation in accordance with the definitions at section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Rather, the AAO finds,

the proffered position and its constituent duties are described in terms of generalized functions which no evidence of record establishes as categorically requiring the practical and theoretical application of any particular level of educational attainment of knowledge in a specific specialty.

The AAO will now discuss the application of each supplemental, alternative criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to the evidence in this record of proceeding.

The AAO will first discuss the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1), which is satisfied by establishing that a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position that is the subject of the petition.

The AAO recognizes the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)* as an authoritative source on the duties and educational requirements of the wide variety of occupations it addresses.² The AAO agrees with the petitioner that the generally described duties of the proffered position align with those of management analysts as outlined in the *Handbook*.

The *Handbook* states the following with regard to the duties of management analysts:

Management analysts, often called management consultants, propose ways to improve an organization's efficiency. They advise managers on how to make organizations more profitable through reduced costs and increased revenues.

Duties

Management analysts typically do the following:

- Gather and organize information about the problem to be solved or the procedure to be improved
- Interview personnel and conduct on-site observations to determine the methods, equipment, and personnel that will be needed
- Analyze financial and other data, including revenue, expenditure, and employment reports
- Develop solutions or alternative practices
- Recommend new systems, procedures, or organizational changes

² The *Handbook*, which is available in printed form, may also be accessed online at <http://www.stats.bls.gov/oco/>. The AAO's references to the *Handbook* are from the 2014-15 edition available online.

- Make recommendations to management through presentations or written reports
- Confer with managers to ensure that the changes are working

U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2014-15 ed., "Management Analysts," <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/management-analysts.htm#tab-2> (accessed April 17, 2014).

The *Handbook* states the following with regard to the educational requirements necessary for entrance into the field:

A bachelor's degree is the typical entry-level requirement for management analysts. However, some employers prefer to hire candidates who have a master's degree in business administration (MBA).

Few colleges and universities offer formal programs in management consulting. However, many fields of study provide a suitable education because of the range of areas that management analysts address. Common fields of study include business, management, accounting, economics, political science and government, accounting, finance, marketing, psychology, computer and information science, and statistics.

Id. at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/management-analysts.htm#tab-4>.

The statements made by DOL in the *Handbook* regarding entrance into this occupational category do not support a finding that a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty is normally required. Consequently, the proffered position's inclusion in the Management Analysts occupational group is not sufficient to establish that the position is one which normally requires for entry at least a bachelor's degree or the equivalent in a specific specialty.

Although the *Handbook* indicates that a master's degree in business administration may be required for some positions, it also indicates that management analyst positions are also commonly – but not exclusively or universally - held by persons with a bachelor's degree from the fields of business, management, accounting, economics, political science and government, accounting, finance, marketing, psychology, computer and information science, and statistics. However, the disparate fields of business, management, accounting, economics, political science and government, accounting, finance, marketing, psychology, computer and information science, and statistics do not constitute a specific specialty; such a wide range of acceptable majors or academic concentrations is not indicative of a position requiring the theoretical and practical application of a distinct body of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty, as required by section 214(i)(1) of the Act and its implementing regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h).

In general, provided the specialties are closely related, e.g., chemistry and biochemistry, a minimum of a bachelor's or higher degree in more than one specialty is recognized as satisfying the "degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent)" requirement of section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act. In such a

case, the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" would essentially be the same. Since there must be a close correlation between the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" and the position, however, a minimum entry requirement of a degree in two disparate fields, such as philosophy and engineering, would not meet the statutory requirement that the degree be "in *the* specific specialty (or its equivalent)," unless the petitioner establishes how each field is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position such that the required body of highly specialized knowledge is essentially an amalgamation of these different specialties.³ Section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act (emphasis added).

Here, although the *Handbook* indicates that a bachelor's or higher degree is required, it also indicates that baccalaureate degrees in various fields are acceptable for entry into the occupation. In addition to recognizing degrees in disparate fields, i.e., social science and computer science as acceptable for entry into this field, the *Handbook* also states that "others have a background in business administration." As noted above, although a general-purpose bachelor's degree, such as a degree in business administration, may be a legitimate prerequisite for a particular position, requiring such a degree, without more, will not justify a finding that a particular position qualifies for classification as a specialty occupation. See *Royal Siam Corp. v. Chertoff*, 484 F.3d at 147. Therefore, the *Handbook's* recognition that a general, non-specialty "background" in business administration is sufficient for entry into the occupation strongly suggests that a bachelor's degree *in a specific specialty* is not a standard, minimum entry requirement for this occupation. Accordingly, as the *Handbook* indicates that working as a management analyst does not normally require at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent for entry into the occupation, it does not support the proffered position as being a specialty occupation.

The petitioner submitted a letter dated June 19, 2013 from [REDACTED] Ph.D., for consideration as an expert opinion in support of this criterion of the regulations. Dr. [REDACTED] states that he is the Director of Graduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in the School of Business at [REDACTED]. Regarding the proffered position, Dr. [REDACTED] states: "Having reviewed the position in detail, it is my opinion that these duties are specialized and require the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge." Dr. [REDACTED] concludes that the position requires the attainment of at least a bachelor's degree.

Dr. [REDACTED]'s opinion is not based upon sufficient information about the management analyst position proposed here. USCIS may, in its discretion, use as advisory opinions statements submitted as expert testimony. However, where an opinion is not in accord with other information or is in any way questionable, USCIS is not required to accept or may give less weight to that evidence. *Matter of Caron International*, 19 I&N Dec. 791 (Comm'r 1988).

³ Whether read with the statutory "the" or the regulatory "a," both readings denote a singular "specialty." Section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Still, the AAO does not so narrowly interpret these provisions to exclude positions from qualifying as specialty occupations if they permit, as a minimum entry requirement, degrees in more than one closely related specialty. As just stated, this also includes even seemingly disparate specialties provided the evidence of record establishes how each acceptable, specific field of study is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position.

Specifically, the content of Dr. [REDACTED]'s letter does not demonstrate that his opinion is based upon sufficient information about the particular position at issue. First, the letter reveals that his knowledge of the position is limited to the duties as described by the petitioner to USCIS. As we have noted above, the generalized and relatively abstract nature of these descriptions does not convey sufficient information to establish the substantive nature of those duties as they would actually be performed within the context of this petitioner's business operations. Second, Dr. [REDACTED] does not relate any personal observations of those operations or of the work that the beneficiary would perform, nor does he state that he has reviewed any projects or work products related to the proffered position. Third, Dr. [REDACTED]'s opinion does not relate his conclusions to specific, concrete aspects of this petitioner's business operations to demonstrate a sound factual basis for his conclusions about the educational requirements for the particular position here at issue.

Further, we find that if Dr. [REDACTED]'s submission merited any weight, it would constitute evidence against the petitioner's specialty occupation claim, as it suggests that attainment of any bachelor's degree, without limitation as to any specific specialty or group of closely related specialties, would be sufficient for the proffered position. The conclusion that a general bachelor's degree, without specifying a specific discipline, does not support a finding that the proffered position requires a specialized course of study. Therefore, the AAO accords no probative weight to this document towards satisfying any criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

Finally, the AAO notes that the petitioner designated the proffered position as a Level I position on the LCA. That wage-level designation is appropriate for a comparatively low, entry-level position relative to others within its occupation, and it signifies that the petitioner is attesting that the beneficiary is only expected to possess a basic understanding of the occupation.⁴

⁴ The *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance* issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) states the following with regard to Level I wage rates:

Level 1 (entry) wage rates are assigned to job offers for beginning level employees who have only a basic understanding of the occupation. These employees perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of judgment. The tasks provide experience and familiarization with the employer's methods, practices, and programs. The employees may perform higher level work for training and developmental purposes. These employees work under close supervision and receive specific instructions on required tasks and results expected. Their work is closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy. Statements that the job offer is for a research fellow, a worker in training, or an internship are indicators that a Level I wage should be considered [emphasis in original].

http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf (accessed January 9, 2014).

The proposed duties' level of complexity, uniqueness, and specialization, as well as the level of independent judgment and occupational understanding required to perform them, are questionable, as the petitioner submitted

Nor does the record of proceeding contain any persuasive documentary evidence from any other relevant authoritative source establishing that the proffered position's inclusion in the Management Analysts occupational category would be sufficient in and of itself to establish the proffered position as, in the words of this criterion, a "particular position" for which "[a] baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry."

As the evidence in the record of proceeding does not establish that a baccalaureate degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position that is the subject of this petition, the petitioner has not satisfied the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1).

Next, the AAO finds that the petitioner has not satisfied the first of the two alternative prongs of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2). This prong alternatively calls for a petitioner to establish that a requirement of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is common to the petitioner's industry in positions that are both: (1) parallel to the proffered position; and (2) located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner.

In determining whether there is such a common degree requirement, factors often considered by USCIS include: whether the *Handbook* reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." See *Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d at 1165 (D.Minn. 1999) (quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Sava*, 712 F. Supp. 1095, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1989)).

Here and as already discussed, the petitioner has not established that its proffered position is one for which the *Handbook* reports an industry-wide requirement for at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent. Also, there are no submissions from professional associations, individuals, or similar firms in the petitioner's industry attesting that individuals employed in positions parallel to the proffered position are routinely required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent for entry into those positions.

For the reasons already discussed, the AAO is not persuaded by counsel's argument on appeal that Dr. [REDACTED]'s submission has satisfied this criterion.

an LCA certified for a Level I, entry-level position. By submitting an LCA in support of the petition that has been certified only for use with a Level I wage-level job opportunity, the petitioner conveys that it evaluates the position as actually a low-level, entry position relative to others within the occupation. In accordance with the relevant DOL explanatory information on wage levels, this wage rate is to be used when the beneficiary would only be required to possess a basic understanding of the occupation; would be expected to perform routine tasks requiring limited, if any, exercise of judgment; would be closely supervised and would have his or her work closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy; and would receive specific instructions on required tasks and expected results.

The petitioner provided copies of five advertisements for various job openings in support of the contention that a degree requirement exists in parallel positions within organizations that are similar to the petitioner. All five of the submitted postings list business administration as one of, or the primary, course of study required for entry into these positions. As discussed above, since there must be a close correlation between the required specialized studies and the position, the requirement of a degree with a generalized title, such as business administration, without further specification, does not establish the position as a specialty occupation. *Cf. Matter of Michael Hertz Associates*, 19 I&N Dec. 558 (Comm'r 1988). Therefore, the submitted advertisements do not satisfy the requirements of this criterion.

As clearly indicated in the language of this criterion, to merit consideration under this criterion evidence must relate to the specific industry to which the petitioner belongs. None of the submitted advertisements meet this threshold.

Further, the petitioner has not submitted any evidence to demonstrate that the positions being advertised in these vacancy announcements are "parallel" to the position proffered here. Also, the petitioner has not submitted any evidence to demonstrate that any of these advertisements is from a company "similar" to the petitioner. Three of the five postings are for positions with healthcare services companies. The other two postings are by a biotechnology/pharmaceuticals company and a retail food chain. Given that the petitioner is a distributor and retailer of metal products, it is unclear how these postings would accurately reflect a common hiring standard under this criterion. The petitioner has submitted no evidence to establish that any of these advertisers are similar to the petitioner in size, scope, scale of operations, business efforts, expenditures, or other fundamental dimensions, nor does the petitioner submit any evidence regarding how representative these advertisements are of the industry's usual recruiting and hiring practices of the petitioner's industry with regard to the position advertised. Again, simply going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. at 165.⁵

Therefore, the petitioner has not satisfied the first of the two alternative prongs described at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2), as the evidence of record does not establish a requirement for at

⁵ USCIS "must examine each piece of evidence for relevance, probative value, and credibility, both individually and within the context of the totality of the evidence, to determine whether the fact to be proven is probably true." *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. at 376. As just discussed, the petitioner has failed to establish the relevance of the job advertisements submitted to the position proffered in this case. Even if their relevance had been established, the petitioner still fails to demonstrate what inferences, if any, can be drawn from these few job postings with regard to determining the common educational requirements for entry into parallel positions in similar organizations in the same industry. *See generally* Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* 186-228 (1995).

least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty as common to the petitioner's industry in positions that are both (1) parallel to the proffered position and (2) located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner.

Next, the AAO finds that the petitioner did not satisfy the second alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2), which provides that "an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree."

In this particular case, the petitioner has failed to credibly demonstrate that the duties the beneficiary would perform on a day-to-day basis constitute a position so complex or unique that it can only be performed by a person with at least a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty. The duties proposed for the beneficiary are similar to those outlined in the *Handbook* as normally performed by management analysts, and the petitioner's description of the duties which collectively constitute the proffered position lacks the detail and specificity required to establish that the proffered position surpasses or exceeds the typical management analyst positions in terms of complexity or uniqueness. As noted above, the *Handbook* indicates that the performance of management analyst positions do not normally require a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty.

We also incorporate by reference this decision's earlier comments and findings regarding the generalized level of the descriptions of the proposed duties and the position that they are said to comprise. The AAO finds further that, even outside the context of the *Handbook*, the petitioner has simply not established relative complexity or uniqueness as attributes of the proffered position, let alone as attributes with such an elevated degree as to require the services of a person with at least a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty.

Also, the AAO incorporates here by reference and reiterates its earlier discussion regarding the LCA and its indication that the proffered position is a low-level, entry position relative to others within the occupation. Based upon the Level I wage rate specified in the LCA, the beneficiary is only required to have a basic understanding of the occupation. Moreover, that wage rate is indicative of a position where the beneficiary would perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of independent judgment; would be closely supervised and monitored; would receive specific instructions on required tasks and expected results; and would have her work reviewed for accuracy.

The petitioner therefore failed to establish how the beneficiary's responsibilities and day-to-day duties constitute a position so complex or unique it can be performed only by an individual with at least a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty.

Consequently, as it did not show that the particular position for which it filed this petition is so complex or unique that it can only be performed by a person with at least a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty, the petitioner has not satisfied the second alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2).

The AAO turns next to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3), which entails an employer demonstrating that it normally requires a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty for the position.

The AAO's review of the record of proceeding under this criterion necessarily includes whatever evidence the petitioner has submitted with regard to its past recruiting and hiring practices and with regard to employees who previously held the position in question.

To satisfy this criterion, the record must contain documentary evidence demonstrating that the petitioner has a history of requiring the degree or degree equivalency, in a specific specialty, in its prior recruiting and hiring for the position. The record must establish that a petitioner's imposition of a degree requirement is not merely a matter of preference for high-caliber candidates but is necessitated by the performance requirements of the proffered position.⁶ In the instant case, the record does not establish a prior history of recruiting and hiring for the proffered position only persons with at least a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty.

While a petitioner may believe and assert that a proffered position requires a degree, that opinion alone without corroborating evidence cannot establish the position as a specialty occupation. Were USCIS limited solely to reviewing a petitioner's claimed self-imposed requirements, then any individual with a bachelor's degree could be brought to the United States to perform any occupation as long as the employer artificially created a token degree requirement, whereby all individuals employed in a particular position possessed a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty or its equivalent. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d at 387. In other words, if a petitioner's assertion of a particular degree requirement is not necessitated by the actual performance requirements of the proffered position, the position would not meet the statutory or regulatory definition of a specialty occupation. *See* section 214(i)(1) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) (defining the term "specialty occupation").

To satisfy this criterion, the evidence of record must show that the specific performance requirements of the position generated the recruiting and hiring history. A petitioner's perfunctory declaration of a particular educational requirement will not mask the fact that the position is not a specialty occupation. USCIS must examine the actual employment requirements, and, on the basis of that examination, determine whether the actual performance requirements of the position necessitate a petitioner's history of requiring a particular degree in its recruiting and hiring for the position. *See generally Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d at 387. In this pursuit, the critical element is not the title of the position, or the fact that an employer has routinely insisted on certain educational standards, but whether performance of the position actually requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty as the minimum for entry into the occupation as required by the Act. To interpret the regulations any other way would lead to absurd

⁶ Any such assertion would be undermined in this particular case by the fact that the petitioner indicated in the LCA that its proffered position is a comparatively low, entry-level position relative to others within the occupation.

results: if USCIS were constrained to recognize a specialty occupation merely because the petitioner has an established practice of demanding certain educational requirements for the proposed position - and without consideration of how a beneficiary is to be specifically employed - then any alien with a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty could be brought into the United States to perform non-specialty occupations, so long as the employer required all such employees to have baccalaureate or higher degrees. *See id.* at 388.

In any event, the record indicates that the petitioner has never employed a management analyst. Although the fact that a proffered position is a newly-created one is not in itself generally a basis for precluding a position from recognition as a specialty occupation, an employer that has never recruited and hired for the position cannot satisfy the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3), which requires a demonstration that it normally requires a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty for the position.

As the evidence of record has not demonstrated a history of recruiting and hiring for the proffered position only persons with a bachelor's degree, or the equivalent, in a specific specialty, the petitioner has not satisfied the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(3).

Next, the AAO finds that the petitioner has not satisfied the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4), which requires the petitioner to establish that the nature of the proffered position's duties is so specialized and complex that the knowledge required to perform them is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty.

The AAO here incorporates by reference into this discussion its earlier comments and findings regarding the generalized and generic level at which the proffered position and its duties are described, which reflect that the evidence of record does not develop the nature of the proposed duties with sufficient detail to establish the level of complexity and specialization required to satisfy this criterion.

Additionally, we observe that both on its own terms and also in comparison with the three higher wage-levels that can be designated in an LCA, the petitioner's designation of an LCA wage-level I is indicative of duties of relatively low complexity.

As earlier noted, the *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance* issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) states the following with regard to Level I wage rates:

Level I (entry) wage rates are assigned to job offers for beginning level employees who have only a basic understanding of the occupation. These employees perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of judgment. The tasks provide experience and familiarization with the employer's methods, practices, and programs. The employees may perform higher level work for training and developmental purposes. These employees work under close supervision and receive specific instructions on required tasks and results expected. Their work is closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy. Statements that the job offer is for a research fellow, a worker in training, or an internship

are indicators that a Level I wage should be considered [emphasis in original].

The pertinent guidance from the Department of Labor, at page 7 of its *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance* describes the next higher wage-level as follows:

Level II (qualified) wage rates are assigned to job offers for qualified employees who have attained, either through education or experience, a good understanding of the occupation. They perform moderately complex tasks that require limited judgment. An indicator that the job request warrants a wage determination at Level II would be a requirement for years of education and/or experience that are generally required as described in the O*NET Job Zones.

The above descriptive summary indicates that even this higher-than-designated wage level is appropriate for only "moderately complex tasks that require limited judgment." The fact that this higher-than-here-assigned, Level II wage rate itself indicates performance of only "moderately complex tasks that require limited judgment," is very telling with regard to the relatively low level of complexity imputed to the proffered position by virtue of its Level I wage-rate designation.

Further, the AAO notes the relatively low level of complexity that even this Level II wage-level reflects when compared with the two still-higher LCA wage levels, neither of which was designated on the LCA submitted to support this petition.

The aforementioned *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance* describes the Level III wage designation as follows:

Level III (experienced) wage rates are assigned to job offers for experienced employees who have a sound understanding of the occupation and have attained, either through education or experience, special skills or knowledge. They perform tasks that require exercising judgment and may coordinate the activities of other staff. They may have supervisory authority over those staff. A requirement for years of experience or educational degrees that are at the higher ranges indicated in the O*NET Job Zones would be indicators that a Level III wage should be considered.

Frequently, key words in the job title can be used as indicators that an employer's job offer is for an experienced worker. . . .

The *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance* describes the Level IV wage designation as follows:

Level IV (fully competent) wage rates are assigned to job offers for competent employees who have sufficient experience in the occupation to plan and conduct work requiring judgment and the independent evaluation, selection, modification, and application of standard procedures and techniques. Such employees use advanced skills and diversified knowledge to solve unusual and complex problems.

These employees receive only technical guidance and their work is reviewed only for application of sound judgment and effectiveness in meeting the establishment's procedures and expectations. They generally have management and/or supervisory responsibilities.

Here the AAO again incorporates its earlier discussion and analysis regarding the implications of the petitioner's submission of an LCA certified for the lowest assignable wage-level. By virtue of this submission the petitioner effectively attested that the proffered position is a low-level, entry position relative to others within the occupation, and that, as clear by comparison with DOL's instructive comments about the next higher level (Level II), the proffered position did not even involve "moderately complex tasks that require limited judgment" (the level of complexity noted for the next higher wage-level, Level II). The AAO also finds that, separate and apart from the petitioner's submission of an LCA with a wage-level I designation, the petitioner has also failed to provide sufficiently detailed documentary evidence to establish that the nature of the specific duties that would be performed if this petition were approved is so specialized and complex that the knowledge required to perform them is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty.

For all of these reasons, the evidence in the record of proceeding fails to establish that the nature of the proposed duties meets the specialization and complexity threshold at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

V. Conclusion

As the petitioner has not satisfied at least one of the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), it cannot be found that the proffered position is a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed and the petition will be denied on this basis.

In visa petition proceedings, it is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of Otiende*, 26 I&N Dec. 127, 128 (BIA 2013). Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.