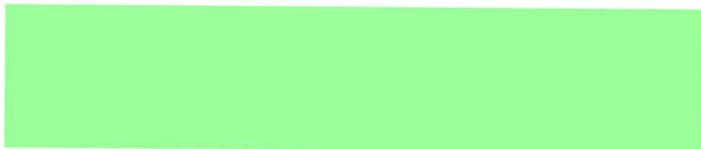




U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

(b)(6)



DATE: **SEP 08 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 (AAO) in your case.

This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions. If you believe the AAO incorrectly applied current law or policy to your case or if you seek to present new facts for consideration, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen, respectively. Any motion must be filed on a Notice of Appeal or Motion (Form I-290B) within 33 days of the date of this decision. **Please review the Form I-290B instructions at <http://www.uscis.gov/forms> for the latest information on fee, filing location, and other requirements. See also 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. Do not file a motion directly with the AAO.**

Thank you,

Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The service center director denied the nonimmigrant visa petition. Counsel for the petitioner submitted a motion to reconsider of this decision. The service center director reviewed the record of proceeding and dismissed the motion. The matter is now on appeal before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

On the Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker (Form I-129), the petitioner describes itself as a telecommunications developer established in 2002. In order to employ the beneficiary in what it designates as a computer systems analyst position, the petitioner seeks to classify him 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, finding that the petitioner failed to establish that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation in accordance with the applicable statutory and regulatory provisions. Thereafter, counsel for the petitioner submitted a motion to reconsider of the decision. The director reviewed the evidence and determined again that the record of proceeding contained insufficient evidence to establish that the petitioner would employ the beneficiary in a specialty occupation position. Accordingly, the director dismissed the motion. On January 27, 2014, counsel filed an appeal. On appeal, counsel asserts that the director's basis for denial of the petition was erroneous and contends that the petitioner satisfied all evidentiary requirements.

The record of proceeding before us contains: (1) the Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for evidence (RFE); (3) counsel's response to the RFE; (4) the notice of decision dated July 26, 2012; (5) the motion to reconsider; (6) the notice of decision dated December 26, 2013; and (7) the appeal and supporting materials. We reviewed the record in its entirety before issuing our decision.¹

For the reasons that will be discussed below, we agree 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. PROCEDURAL AND FACTUAL BACKGROUND

On the Form I-129, the petitioner indicated that it wishes to employ the beneficiary as a computer systems analyst on a full-time basis. In a legal memorandum submitted in support of the petition, dated September 14, 2011, counsel claimed:

As a Systems Analyst, [the beneficiary] will analyze information regarding the processing or computation needs of a customer and plan and design software/hardware systems to meet these needs, revising either software and/or hardware specifications to meet a customer's requirements.²

¹ We conduct appellate review on a *de novo* basis. See *Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004).

² It must be noted that the job duties provided by counsel are not probative evidence. The duties were submitted by counsel, not the petitioner, and counsel's memorandum was not endorsed by the petitioner. The

With the initial petition, the petitioner and its counsel submitted a copy of the beneficiary's foreign academic credentials, as well as a credential evaluation from International Credentials Evaluation and Translation Services. The credential evaluation indicates that the beneficiary's combined academic achievements amount to the equivalent "of a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Engineering from an accredited institution of tertiary education in the United States."

In addition, the petitioner and counsel submitted a Labor Condition Application (LCA) in support of the instant H-1B petition. We note that the LCA designation for the proffered position corresponds to the occupational classification of "Computer Systems Analysts" - SOC (ONET/OES Code) 15-1121, at a Level I (entry) wage.

In support of the petition, the petitioner and counsel also submitted, in part: (1) documentation regarding the petitioner's business operations and services, including printouts from its website, its Mobile-Based Systems Training Program, and documents entitled "[REDACTED]" and "[REDACTED]"; (2) an excerpt entitled "Summary Report for: 15-1051.00 – Computer Systems Analysts" from the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) OnLine;³ and (3) a job description for "030.167-014 SYSTEMS ANALYST (profess. & kin.)" from the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT).

The director found the initial evidence insufficient to establish eligibility for the benefit sought, and issued an RFE. The director outlined the specific evidence to be submitted.

The petitioner and counsel responded to the request and provided additional supporting evidence, including the following documentation: (1) the petitioner's income tax return for 2010; (2) an organizational chart;⁴ (3) documents regarding the petitioner's software applications entitled "[REDACTED]" and "[REDACTED]"; (4) photos of the petitioner's offices; (5) [REDACTED] resume and credential evaluation; (6) [REDACTED] resume; and (7) job vacancy announcements.

In addition, the petitioner provided its job description for "System Analyst/Software Development Positions," which indicates the following:⁵

record of proceeding does not indicate the source of the duties and responsibilities that counsel attributes to the proffered position. Without documentary evidence to support the claim, the assertions of counsel will not satisfy the petitioner's burden of proof. The unsupported assertions of counsel do not constitute evidence. *Matter of Obaigbena*, 19 I&N Dec. 533, 534 (BIA 1988); *Matter of Laureano*, 19 I&N Dec. 1 (BIA 1983); *Matter of Ramirez-Sanchez*, 17 I&N Dec. 503, 506 (BIA 1980).

³ We note that the document was printed on April 21, 2005.

⁴ It must be noted for the record that on the Form I-129, the petitioner did not provide its number of employees. In addition, the petitioner's income tax return for 2010 indicates that the petitioner did not pay any salaries or wages (line 8). However, the organizational chart indicates that the petitioner has eleven employees. No explanation for this inconsistency was provided by the petitioner.

⁵ When the duties of the proffered position involve more than one occupational category, DOL provides clear

The software developer's role is to design, code, test, and analyze software programs and applications. This includes researching, designing, documenting, and modifying software specifications throughout the production lifecycle. The software developer will also analyze and amend software errors in a timely and accurate fashion and provide status reports where required.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

Strategy & Planning

Assist other developers, analysts, and designers in conceptualizing and developing new software programs and applications.

- Plan phases of the software development for a variety of projects.
- Assist in the preparation and documentation of software requirements and specifications.

guidance for selecting the most relevant O*NET occupational code classification. The "Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance" states the following:

In determining the *nature of the job offer*, the first order is to review the requirements of the employer's job offer and determine the appropriate occupational classification. The O*NET description that corresponds to the employer's job offer shall be used to identify the appropriate occupational classification If the employer's job opportunity has worker requirements described in a combination of O*NET occupations, the SWA should default directly to the relevant O*NET-SOC occupational code for the highest paying occupation. For example, if the employer's job offer is for an engineer-pilot, the SWA shall use the education, skill and experience levels for the higher paying occupation when making the wage level determination.

See U.S. Dep't of Labor, Emp't & Training Admin., *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance, Nonagric. Immigration Programs* (rev. Nov. 2009), available at http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf.

Thus, if the petitioner believed its position was described as a combination of O*NET occupations, then according to DOL guidance the petitioner should have chosen the relevant occupational code for the highest paying occupation.

Notably, the occupational categories "Software Developers, Applications" - SOC (ONET/OES) code 15-1132 and "Software Developers, Systems Software" - SOC (ONET/OES) code 15-1133 have a higher prevailing wage than the prevailing wage provided by the petitioner for the occupational category "Computer Systems Analysts" - SOC (ONET/OES) code 15-1121 in the LCA. Accordingly, if the petitioner believed the nature of the proffered position encompassed occupational categories including "Software Developers, Applications," "Software Developers, Systems Software," and "Computer Systems Analysts," the petitioner should have designated the LCA with the higher paying occupation, in this case "Software Developers, Systems Software."

- Research and document requirements of software client solutions.

Acquisition & Deployment

- Conduct research on emerging application development software products, languages, and standards in support of procurement and development efforts.
- Recommend, schedule, and perform software improvements and upgrades.

Operational Management

- Consistently write, translate, and code software programs and applications according to specifications.
- Run and monitor software performance tests on new and existing programs for the purposes of correcting errors, isolating area improvement, and general debugging.
- Administer critical analysis of test results and deliver solutions to problem areas.
- Generate statistics and prepare and write reports for management and/or team members on the status of the programming process.
- Assist in the development and maintenance of user manual and guidelines.
- Write programming scripts to enhance functionality and/or appearance of company Web site and/or related Web applications as necessary.
- Remove code script from company Web site and/or related Web applications as necessary.
- Liaise with network administrators, system analysts, and software engineers to assist in resolving problems with software products or company software systems.
- Manage and/or provide guidance to junior software developers and research assistants.

Minimum Requirements

- Minimum of a Bachelors Degree in Computer Science and Engineering
- 3+ years Experience
- Window and window mobile development using C#, ASP. Net, SQL server
- C# windows
- Sequel Server
- Pocket PC solutions development, iPhone, iPad
- Ability to work as a team
- Team Management experience a plus

The director reviewed the response, and found the evidence insufficient to establish eligibility for the benefit sought. The director denied the petition. Counsel submitted a motion to reconsider of the denial of the H-1B petition and the director dismissed the motion. Thereafter, counsel submitted

an appeal of the decision.

II. MATERIAL FINDINGS

The primary issue is whether the petitioner has provided sufficient evidence to establish that it will employ the beneficiary in a specialty occupation position. Based upon a complete review of the record of proceeding, we will make some preliminary findings that are material to the determination of the merits of this appeal.

A. Description of the Duties of the Proffered Position

To ascertain the intent of a petitioner, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must look to the Form I-129 and the documents filed in support of the petition. It is only in this manner that the agency can determine the exact position offered, the location of employment, the proffered wage, et cetera. Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(9)(i), the director has the responsibility to consider all of the evidence submitted by a petitioner and such other evidence that he or she may independently require to assist his or her adjudication. Further, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iv) provides that "[a]n H-1B petition involving a specialty occupation shall be accompanied by [d]ocumentation . . . or any other required evidence sufficient to establish . . . that the services the beneficiary is to perform are in a specialty occupation."

Thus, a crucial aspect of this matter is whether the petitioner has adequately described the duties of the proffered position, such that USCIS may discern the nature of the position and whether the position indeed requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge attained through attainment of at least a baccalaureate degree in a specific discipline. The petitioner has not done so here.

In the instant case, the petitioner submitted a job description in response to the director's RFE. We observe that the petitioner did not provide any information with regard to the order of importance and/or frequency of occurrence with which the beneficiary will perform the functions and tasks it outlined in the description. Thus, the petitioner failed to specify which tasks were major functions of the proffered position and it did not establish the frequency with which each of the duties would be performed (e.g., regularly, periodically or at irregular intervals). As a result, the petitioner did not establish the primary and essential functions of the proffered position.

We also observe that the duties of the proffered position, as described by the petitioner, have been stated in generic terms that fail to convey the actual tasks the beneficiary will perform on a day-to-day basis. That is, we note that the wording of the above duties provided by the petitioner for the proffered position are taken almost verbatim from various job postings found on the Internet. This type of generalized description may be appropriate when defining the range of duties that may be performed within an occupational category, but they fail to adequately convey the substantive work that the beneficiary will perform within the petitioner's business operations and, thus, generally cannot be relied upon by a petitioner when discussing the duties attached to specific employment. In establishing a position as a specialty occupation, a petitioner must describe the specific duties and responsibilities to be performed by a beneficiary in the context of the petitioner's

business operations, as well as demonstrate a legitimate need for an employee exists, and substantiate that it has H-1B caliber work for the beneficiary for the period of employment requested in the petition.

We note that the petitioner's job description for the proffered position is generalized and fails to convey either the substantive nature of the work that the beneficiary would actually perform, or any particular body of highly specialized knowledge that would have to be theoretically and practically applied to perform the proffered position.

The petitioner failed to provide sufficient details regarding the nature and scope of the beneficiary's employment or any substantive evidence regarding the actual work that the beneficiary would perform. Without a meaningful job description, the record lacks evidence sufficiently concrete and informative evidence to demonstrate that the proffered position requires a specialty occupation's level of knowledge in a specific specialty. The tasks as described fail to communicate (1) the actual work that the beneficiary would perform, (2) the complexity, uniqueness and/or specialization of the tasks, and/or (3) the correlation between that work and a need for a particular level education of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty. The petitioner's assertion with regard to the educational requirement is conclusory and unpersuasive, as it is not supported by the job description or other substantive evidence.

B. Inconsistent Information regarding the Job Title of the Proffered Position

Upon review of the record of proceeding, we also observe that the petitioner has provided inconsistent information regarding the job title of the proffered position. For example, in the Form I-129 petition and LCA the petitioner refers to the proffered position as "Computer Systems Analyst." However, in the job description, submitted in response to the director's RFE, it repeatedly refers to the proffered position as "Software Developer." No explanation for this inconsistency was provided. As these are two separate occupations with different duties attached to each, it is necessary for the petitioner to fully describe the primary and essential functions of the position proffered here so that those duties may be analyzed to ascertain whether they comprise the duties of a specialty occupation, and if so which one, and then whether the requisite LCA corresponds to the position described in the petition. As set out above, the petitioner has failed to provide this required information.

C. Requirements for the Proffered Position

The academic requirement identified by the petitioner as the minimum education necessary to perform services in the proffered position does not qualify the position as a specialty occupation. Specifically, the petitioner stated that the duties of the proffered position require an individual with a bachelor's degree in computer science and engineering. 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, for example, 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. Section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act (emphasis added).

In other words, while the statutory "the" and the regulatory "a" both denote a singular "specialty," we do 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. See section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). This also includes even seemingly disparate specialties providing, again, the evidence of record establishes how each acceptable, specific field of study is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position.

Again, the petitioner states that its minimum educational requirement for the proffered position is a bachelor's degree in computer science and engineering. The issue here is that the field of engineering is a broad category that covers numerous and various specialties, some of which are only related through the basic principles of science and mathematics, e.g., nuclear engineering and aerospace engineering. Therefore, besides a degree in electrical engineering, it is not readily apparent that a general degree in engineering or one of its other sub-specialties, such as chemical engineering or nuclear engineering, is closely related to computer science or that engineering or any and all engineering specialties are directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position proffered in this matter.

The petitioner, who bears the burden of proof in this proceeding, fails to provide sufficient evidence to establish that (1) computer science and engineering (including any and all engineering specialties) are closely related fields, or (2) a degree in engineering (including any and all engineering specialties) is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the proffered position. Absent this evidence, it cannot be found that the particular position proffered in this matter has a normal minimum entry requirement of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, under the petitioner's own standards. Accordingly, as the evidence of record fails to establish a standard, minimum requirement of at least a bachelor's degree *in a specific specialty*, or its equivalent, for entry into the particular position, it does not support the proffered position as being a specialty occupation and, in fact, supports the opposite conclusion.

Therefore, absent evidence of a direct relationship between the claimed degrees required and the duties and responsibilities of the position, it cannot be found that the proffered position requires anything more than a general bachelor's degree. USCIS interprets the degree requirement at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to require a degree in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proposed position. USCIS has consistently stated that, although a general-purpose bachelor's degree 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 139, 147 (1st Cir. 2007).

Accordingly, as the evidence of record fails to establish a standard, minimum requirement of at least a bachelor's degree *in a specific specialty*, or its equivalent, for entry into the particular position, it does not support the proffered position as being a specialty occupation and, in fact, supports the opposite conclusion.

III. SPECIALTY OCCUPATION

We will now address the director's determination that the petitioner failed to establish that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation in accordance with the applicable statutory and regulatory provisions.

For an H-1B petition to be granted, the petitioner must provide sufficient evidence to establish that it will employ the beneficiary in a specialty occupation position. To meet its burden of proof in this regard, the petitioner must establish that the employment it is offering to the beneficiary meets the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation 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 regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) states, in pertinent part, the following:

Specialty occupation means an occupation which [(1)] requires 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 [(2)] requires 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, a proposed 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 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 387. To avoid this result, 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must therefore be read as providing supplemental criteria that must be met in accordance with, and not as alternatives to, the statutory and regulatory definitions of specialty occupation.

As such and consonant with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii), the 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.

To determine whether a particular job qualifies as a specialty occupation, USCIS does not simply rely on a position's title. The specific duties of the proffered 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 alien, and determine whether the position qualifies as a specialty occupation. *See generally Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d 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.

We now turn to the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A). As explained earlier in this decision, the petitioner has not established the nature of the proffered position and in what capacity the beneficiary will actually be employed within the petitioner's business operations. The petitioner's failure to establish the substantive nature of the work to be performed by the beneficiary precludes a finding that the proffered position satisfies any criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), because it is the substantive nature of that work that determines (1) the normal minimum educational requirement for the particular position, which is the focus of criterion 1; (2) industry positions which are parallel to the proffered position and thus appropriate for review for a common degree requirement, under the first alternate prong of criterion 2; (3) the level of complexity or uniqueness of the proffered position, which is the focus of the second alternate prong of criterion 2; (4) the factual justification for a petitioner normally requiring a degree or its equivalent, when that is an issue under criterion 3; and (5) the degree of specialization and complexity of the specific duties, which is the focus of criterion 4.

The material deficiencies in the record as set out above preclude the approval of the petition. Nevertheless, assuming for the sake of argument, that the petitioner had adequately and accurately described the duties of the proffered position, we will now discuss the proffered position in relation to the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(I), which requires that a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position.

USCIS recognizes DOL's *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (hereinafter the *Handbook*) as an authoritative source on the duties and educational requirements of the wide variety of occupations that it addresses.⁶ As previously discussed, the petitioner asserts in the LCA that the proffered position falls under the occupational category "Computer Systems Analysts." We reviewed the section of the *Handbook* regarding the occupational category "Computer Systems Analysts," including the section entitled "How to Become a Computer Systems Analyst," which describes the following preparation for the occupation:

A bachelor's degree in a computer or information science field is common, although not always a requirement. Some firms hire analysts with business or liberal arts degrees who have skills in information technology or computer programming.

Education

Most computer systems analysts have a bachelor's degree in a computer-related field. Because these analysts also are heavily involved in the business side of a company, it may be helpful to take business courses or major in management information systems.

Some employers prefer applicants who have a master of business administration

⁶ All of the references are to the 2014-2015 edition of the *Handbook*, which may be accessed at the Internet site <http://www.bls.gov/OCO/>. The excerpts of the *Handbook* regarding the duties and requirements of the referenced occupational categories are hereby incorporated into the record of proceeding.

(MBA) with a concentration in information systems. For more technically complex jobs, a master's degree in computer science may be more appropriate.

Although many computer systems analysts have technical degrees, such a degree is not always a requirement. Many analysts have liberal arts degrees and have gained programming or technical expertise elsewhere.

Many systems analysts continue to take classes throughout their careers so that they can learn about new and innovative technologies and keep their skills competitive. Technological advances come so rapidly in the computer field that continual study is necessary to remain competitive.

Systems analysts must understand the business field they are working in. For example, a hospital may want an analyst with a background or coursework in health management, and an analyst working for a bank may need to understand finance.

U.S. Dep't of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2014-15 ed., Computer Systems Analysts, available on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/computer-and-information-technology/computer-systems-analysts.htm#tab-4> (last visited August 25, 2014).

When reviewing the *Handbook*, we must note that the petitioner designated the proffered position as a Level I (entry level) position on the LCA. This designation is indicative of a comparatively low, entry-level position relative to others within the occupation.⁷ That is, in accordance with the relevant DOL explanatory information on wage levels, this wage rate indicates that the beneficiary is only required to have a basic understanding of the occupation and carries expectations that the beneficiary perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of judgment; that he would be closely supervised; that his work would be closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy; and that he would receive specific instructions on required tasks and expected results. DOL guidance indicates that a Level I designation should be considered for positions in which the employee will

⁷ The wage levels are defined in DOL's "Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance." A Level I wage rate is describes as follows:

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.

U.S. Dep't of Labor, Emp't & Training Admin., *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance*, Nonagric. Immigration Programs (rev. Nov. 2009), available at http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf.

serve as a research fellow, worker in training, or an intern.

The *Handbook* does not support the assertion that at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for these positions. While the *Handbook* indicates that a bachelor's degree in a computer or information science field is common, the *Handbook* does not report that such a degree is normally a minimum requirement for entry. The *Handbook* continues by stating that some firms hire analysts with business or liberal arts degrees who have skills in information technology or computer programming. According to the *Handbook*, many systems analysts have liberal arts degrees and have gained programming or technical expertise elsewhere. The *Handbook* reports that many analysts have technical degrees. Notably, we observe that the *Handbook* does not specify a degree level (e.g., associate's degree, baccalaureate) for these technical degrees. Moreover, the *Handbook* specifically states that such a degree is not always a requirement.

The text of the *Handbook* suggests that a baccalaureate degree or higher may be a preference among employers of computer systems analyst in some environments, but that some employers hire employees with less than a bachelor's degree, including candidates that possess a bachelor's degree in an unrelated specialty. Thus, the *Handbook* does not support the claim that the proffered position falls under an occupational group for which normally the minimum requirement for entry is a baccalaureate degree (or higher) in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

In the legal memorandum dated September 14, 2011, submitted in support of the petition, counsel references the O*NET OnLine Summary Report for the occupational category "Computer Systems Analysts" to support the assertion that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation. We reviewed the Summary Report in its entirety. However, upon review of the Summary Report, we find that it is insufficient to establish that the position qualifies as a specialty occupation normally requiring at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent. The Summary Report for computer systems analysts has a designation of Job Zone 4. This indicates that a position requires considerable preparation. It does not, however, demonstrate that a bachelor's degree in any *specific specialty* is required, and does not, therefore, demonstrate that a position so designated is in a specialty occupation as defined in section 214(i)(1) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). The O*NET OnLine Help Center provides a discussion of the Job Zone 4 designation and explains that this zone signifies only that most, but not all of the occupations within it, require a bachelor's degree. See O*NET OnLine Help Center at <http://www.onetonline.org/help/online/zones>. Further, the Help Center discussion confirms that a designation of Job Zone 4 does not indicate any requirements for particular majors or academic concentrations. Therefore, despite counsel's assertion to the contrary, the O*NET Summary Report is not probative evidence that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation.

In addition, counsel references the DOT. More specifically, counsel submitted a printout of the DOT's "030.167-014 SYSTEMS ANALYST (profess. & kin.)" job description, which indicates the occupational title of "Systems Analyst" has a Specialized Vocational Preparation of 7. It is important to note, however, that DOT was last updated in 1991 (approximately 20 years prior to the

submission of the H-1B petition) and has been superseded by the O*NET.⁶ Further, we find that the assignment of SVP 7 is not indicative of a specialty occupation. This is obvious upon reading Section II of the DOT's Appendix C, Components of the Definition Trailer, which addresses the SVP rating system. The section reads:

II. SPECIFIC VOCATIONAL PREPARATION (SVP)

Specific Vocational Preparation is defined as the amount of lapsed time required by a typical worker to learn the techniques, acquire the information, and develop the facility needed for average performance in a specific job-worker situation.

This training may be acquired in a school, work, military, institutional, or vocational environment. It does not include the orientation time required of a fully qualified worker to become accustomed to the special conditions of any new job. Specific vocational training includes: vocational education, apprenticeship training, in-plant training, on-the-job training, and essential experience in other jobs.

Specific vocational training includes training given in any of the following circumstances:

- a. Vocational education (high school; commercial or shop training; technical school; art school; and that part of college training which is organized around a specific vocational objective);
- b. Apprenticeship training (for apprenticeable jobs only);
- c. In-plant training (organized classroom study provided by an employer);
- d. On-the-job training (serving as learner or trainee on the job under the instruction of a qualified worker);
- e. Essential experience in other jobs (serving in less responsible jobs which lead to the higher grade job or serving in other jobs which qualify).

⁶ See U.S. Dep't of Labor, Off. of Admin. L. Judges, *Dictionary of Occupational Titles Fourth Edition*, (rev. 1991), available at <http://www.oalj.dol.gov/libdot.htm> (last visited August 25, 2014):

The Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) was created by the Employment and Training Administration, and was last updated in 1991. It is included on the Office of Administrative Law Judges (OALJ) web site because it was a standard reference in several types of cases adjudicated by the OALJ, especially in older labor-related immigration cases. **The DOT, however, has been replaced by the O*NET.**

(Emphasis in the original).

The following is an explanation of the various levels of specific vocational preparation:

Level	Time
1	Short demonstration only
2	Anything beyond short demonstration up to and including 1 month
3	Over 1 month up to and including 3 months
4	Over 3 months up to and including 6 months
5	Over 6 months up to and including 1 year
6	Over 1 year up to and including 2 years
7	Over 2 years up to and including 4 years
8	Over 4 years up to and including 10 years
9	Over 10 years

Note: The levels of this scale are mutually exclusive and do not overlap.

An SVP rating of 7 indicates "[o]ver 2 years up to and including 4 years." This does not indicate that at least a four-year bachelor's degree is required for an occupational category that has been assigned such a rating or, more importantly, that such a degree must be in a specific specialty directly related to the occupation. Rather, the SVP rating simply indicates that the occupation requires over 2 years up to and including 4 years of training of the wide variety of forms of preparation described above, including experiential training. Accordingly, DOT does not indicate that at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty (or its equivalent) is normally the minimum requirement for entry into these positions. Although counsel references DOT, he fails to establish its relevancy to establish the current educational requirements for entry into the occupation. Therefore, the DOT is not probative evidence to establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation.

In the instant case, the petitioner has not established that the proffered position falls under an occupational category for which the *Handbook* (or other objective, authoritative source) indicates that at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the occupation. Furthermore, the duties and requirements of the proffered position as described in the record of proceeding do not indicate that the position is one for which a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for entry. Thus, the petitioner has not satisfied the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1).

Next, we will review the record regarding 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.

As stated earlier, 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 1151, 1165 (D. Minn. 1999) (quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Sava*, 712 F. Supp. at 1102).

Here and as already discussed, the petitioner has not established that its proffered position is one for which the *Handbook* (or other objective, authoritative source), reports a standard, industry-wide requirement of at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent. Thus, we incorporate by reference the previous discussion on the matter. The petitioner did not submit any documentation from its industry's professional association stating that it has made a degree a minimum entry requirement. The petitioner also did not submit any letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry in support of this criterion of the regulations.

In response to the director's RFE, counsel submitted copies of job advertisements in support of the assertion that the degree requirement is common to the petitioner's industry in parallel positions among similar organizations. However, upon review of the documents, we find that counsel's reliance on the job announcements is misplaced.

In the Form I-129, the petitioner stated that it is a telecommunications developer established in 2002. As previously noted, the petitioner did not indicate its number of employees. The petitioner stated that its gross annual income is \$500,000, and that its net annual income is \$270,000. The petitioner designated its business operations under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 541618.⁸ This NAICS code is designated for "Other Management Consulting Services." The U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau website describes this NAICS code by stating the following:

This U.S. industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing management consulting services (except administrative and general management consulting; human resources consulting; marketing consulting; or process, physical distribution, and logistics consulting). Establishments providing telecommunications or utilities management consulting services are included in this industry.

U.S. Dep't of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 NAICS Definition, 541618 – Other Management Consulting Services, on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/sssd/naics/naicsrch> (last visited August 25, 2014).

For the petitioner to establish that an organization is similar, it must demonstrate that the petitioner and the organization share the same general characteristics. Without such evidence, documentation submitted by a petitioner is generally outside the scope of consideration for this criterion, which

⁸ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is used to classify business establishments according to type of economic activity and each establishment is classified to an industry according to the primary business activity taking place there. See <http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/> (last visited August 25, 2014).

encompasses only organizations that are similar to the petitioner. When determining whether the petitioner and the organization share the same general characteristics, such factors may include information regarding the nature or type of organization, and, when pertinent, the particular scope of operations, as well as the level of revenue and staffing (to list just a few elements that may be considered). Notably, it is not sufficient for the petitioner and counsel to claim that an organization is similar and in the same industry without providing a legitimate basis for such an assertion.

For instance, the advertisements include solicitations for positions with [REDACTED] (a company that produces vehicles); The [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] (a company in the information technology industry); [REDACTED] (a company that "provides ware washing and sanitation services to restaurants and foodservice operations throughout the United States"); and [REDACTED] (a company in the financial services industry). Without further information, the advertisements appear to be for organizations that are not similar to the petitioner and the petitioner has not provided any probative evidence to suggest otherwise. Furthermore, counsel submitted a job posting placed by a staffing firm [REDACTED] for which little or no information regarding the employer is provided. Consequently, the record is devoid of sufficient information regarding the employer to conduct a legitimate comparison of the organization to the petitioner. The petitioner and counsel failed to supplement the record of proceeding to establish that the advertising employers are similar to it. That is, the petitioner has not provided any information regarding which aspects or traits (if any) it shares with the organizations.

Moreover, some of the advertisements do not appear to be for parallel positions. More specifically, the job posting by [REDACTED] requires a degree and "5+ years [of] business experience." Similarly, the job posting by [REDACTED] requires the candidates to possess a "MS or equivalent in S/W Eng, Engineering or related." Likewise, a job posting by [REDACTED] requires a degree and "six (6) years [of] experience with a wide variety of computer platforms and relational data base management systems." As previously discussed, the petitioner designated its proffered position as a wage level I (entry level) on the LCA. The advertised positions appear to be for more senior positions than the proffered position. More importantly, the petitioner has not sufficiently established that the primary duties and responsibilities of the advertised positions are parallel to the proffered position.

Furthermore, contrary to the purpose for which the advertisements were submitted, the postings do not establish that at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is required for the positions. For instance, five of the postings (specifically, [REDACTED], The [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]) state that a range of disparate fields are acceptable. Since there must be a close correlation between the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" and the position, a minimum entry requirement of a degree in disparate fields would not meet the statutory requirement that the degree be "in *the* specific specialty," 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. Section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act (emphasis added). Thus, without further information, the advertisements do not indicate that a bachelor's degree in a *specific specialty* that is directly related to the duties of the position is required.

On motion and appeal, counsel claims that "a position qualifies as a specialty occupation only if it requires one specific field of study under the OOH [*Handbook*] has been consistently rejected by the courts." Counsel cites to *Residential Fin. Corp. v. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services*, 839 F. Supp. 2d 997 (S.D. Ohio 2012), for the proposition that "[t]here is no apparent requirement that the specialized study needed to be in a single academic discipline." We observe that in the *Residential Fin. Corp.* matter, the U.S. district court found that "[t]he knowledge and not the title of the degree is what is important. Diplomas rarely come bearing occupation-specific majors. What is required is an occupation that requires highly specialized knowledge and a prospective employee who has attained the credentialing indicating possession of that knowledge."

We agree with the aforementioned proposition that "[t]he knowledge and not the title of the degree is what is important." Again, 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. Because 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 film and nonprofit management for example, 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. Here, as discussed above, the petitioner has not submitted the necessary evidence to establish the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" for the proffered position.

In this matter, we further find that counsel has furnished no evidence to establish that the facts of the instant petition are analogous to those in *Residential Fin. Corp. v. U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services*.⁹ We also note that, in contrast to the broad precedential authority of the case law of a United States circuit court, we are not bound to follow the published decision of a United States district court in matters arising even within the same district. See *Matter of K-S-*, 20 I&N Dec. 715 (BIA 1993). Although the reasoning underlying a district judge's decision will be given due consideration when it is properly before us, the analysis does not have to be followed as a matter of law. *Id.* at 719.

As the documentation does not establish that the petitioner has met this prong of the regulations, further analysis regarding the specific information contained in each of the job postings is not necessary. That is, not every deficit of every job posting has been addressed. The evidence does not establish that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation under this criterion of the

⁹ It is noted that the district judge's decision in that case appears to have been based largely on the many factual errors made by the service center in its decision denying the petition. We further note that the service center director's decision was not appealed to us. Based on the district court's findings and description of the record, if that matter had first been appealed through the available administrative process, we may very well have remanded the matter to the service center for a new decision for many of the same reasons articulated by the district court if these errors could not have been remedied by us in our *de novo* review of the matter.

regulations.¹⁰

Thus, based upon a complete review of the record, the petitioner has not established that a requirement of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is common (1) to the petitioner's industry; and (2) for positions within that industry that are both: (a) parallel to the proffered position, and (b) located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner. For the reasons discussed above, the petitioner has not satisfied the first alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2).

We will next consider the second alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2), which is satisfied if the petitioner shows that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

In support of its assertion that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation, the petitioner submitted various documents, including evidence regarding its business operations and services. For example, the petitioner submitted printouts from its website, a copy of its Mobile-Based Systems Training Program, and its income tax return for 2010. The petitioner also submitted documents regarding its software applications.

We reviewed all of the evidence submitted; however, we find that the petitioner has not sufficiently developed relative complexity or uniqueness as an aspect of the proffered position. For instance, the petitioner did not submit information relevant to a detailed course of study leading to a specialty degree and did not establish how such a curriculum is necessary to perform the duties it may believe are so complex and unique. While a few related courses may be beneficial, or even required, in performing certain duties of the position, the petitioner has failed to demonstrate how an established curriculum of such courses leading to a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is required to perform the duties of the proffered position. The description of the duties

¹⁰ Although the size of the relevant study population is unknown, the petitioner fails to demonstrate what statistically valid inferences, if any, can be drawn from these advertisements with regard to determining the common educational requirements for entry into parallel positions in similar companies. *See generally* Earl Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* 186-228 (1995). Moreover, given that there is no indication that the advertisements were randomly selected, the validity of any such inferences could not be accurately determined even if the sampling unit were sufficiently large. *See id.* at 195-196 (explaining that "[r]andom selection is the key to [the] process [of probability sampling]" and that "random selection offers access to the body of probability theory, which provides the basis for estimates of population parameters and estimates of error").

As such, even if the job announcements supported the finding that the position of computer systems analyst for organizations that are similar to the petitioner and in the same industry requires a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, it cannot be found that such a limited number of postings that appear to have been consciously selected could credibly refute the findings of the *Handbook* published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that such a position does not require at least a baccalaureate degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, for entry into the occupation in the United States.

does not specifically identify any tasks that are so complex or unique that only a specifically degreed individual could perform them.

This is further evidenced by the LCA submitted by the petitioner in support of the instant petition. Again, the LCA indicates a wage level based upon the occupational classification "Computer Systems Analysts" at a Level I (entry level) wage, which is the lowest of four assignable wage levels. As noted above, the wage level of the proffered position indicates that (relative to other positions falling under this occupational category) the beneficiary is only required to have a basic understanding of the occupation; that he will be expected to perform routine tasks that require limited, if any, exercise of judgment; that he will be closely supervised and his work closely monitored and reviewed for accuracy; and that he will receive specific instructions on required tasks and expected results.

Without further evidence, it is simply not credible that the petitioner's proffered position is complex or unique in comparison to others within the occupation, as such a position would likely be classified at a higher-level, such as a Level III (experienced) or Level IV (fully competent) position, requiring a significantly higher prevailing wage. For instance, a Level IV (fully competent) position is designated by DOL for employees who "use advanced skills and diversified knowledge to solve unusual and complex problems."¹¹

Counsel also refers to several unpublished decisions and asserts USCIS determined "software systems are developed based on a (internal or external) client's individual needs [and as such] were sufficiently complex to qualify as a specialty occupation." Counsel mistakenly refers to these unpublished decisions as precedent decisions. First, it is not clear from counsel's assertion what element of the specialty occupation definition the unpublished decisions allegedly support. Second, counsel has furnished no evidence to establish that the facts of the instant petition are analogous to those in the unpublished decisions. Finally, while 8 C.F.R. § 103.3(c) provides that our precedent decisions are binding on all USCIS employees in the administration of the Act, unpublished decisions are not similarly binding.

Therefore, the evidence of record does not establish that this position is significantly different from other computer systems analyst positions such that it refutes the *Handbook's* information to the effect that a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is not required for entry into the occupation. In other words, the record lacks sufficiently detailed information to distinguish the proffered position as unique from or more complex than computer systems analyst positions that can be performed by persons without at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

Counsel claims that the beneficiary's academic background will assist him in carrying out the duties of the proffered position. However, the test to establish a position as a specialty occupation is not

¹¹ For additional information on wage levels, see U.S. Dep't of Labor, Emp't & Training Admin., *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance*, Nonagric. Immigration Programs (rev. Nov. 2009), available at http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf.

the skill set or education of a proposed beneficiary, but whether the position itself requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge obtained by at least baccalaureate-level knowledge in a specialized area (or its equivalent). The petitioner and its counsel do not sufficiently explain or clarify which of the duties, if any, of the proffered position would be so complex or unique as to be distinguishable from those of similar but non-degreed or non-specialty degreed employment. Upon review of the record of proceeding, we find that the petitioner has failed to establish the proffered position as satisfying the second prong of the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2).

The third criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) entails an employer demonstrating that it normally requires a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, for the position. We usually review the petitioner's past recruiting and hiring practices, as well as information regarding employees who previously held the position when considering this criterion.

To merit approval of the petition under this criterion, the record must contain documentary evidence demonstrating that the petitioner has a history of requiring the degree or degree equivalency in its prior recruiting and hiring for the position. Further, it should be noted that 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 performance requirements of the position. 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 in a specific specialty, or the equivalent.

While a petitioner may believe or otherwise assert that a proffered position requires a specific 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 petitioner 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 388. In other words, if a petitioner's stated degree requirement is only designed to artificially meet the standards for an H-1B visa and/or to underemploy an individual in a position for which he or she is overqualified and if the proffered position does not in fact require such a specialty degree or its equivalent to perform its duties, the occupation 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 position qualifies as a specialty occupation. See generally *Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d 384. 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 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 proffered 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.

As previously discussed, the petitioner did not provide its number of employees on the Form I-129. The petitioner stated in the Form I-129 petition that it was established in 2002 (approximately nine years prior to the filing of the H-1B petition). In response to the director's RFE, counsel submitted [REDACTED] resume and credential evaluation.¹² On motion, counsel provided Mr. [REDACTED] pay stub and Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement for 2011. We observe that on motion, counsel claims that "Mr. [REDACTED] performed the same duties as were outlined" in the job description for the proffered position. However, we note that the organizational chart, submitted in response to the RFE, indicates Mr. [REDACTED] position as "Lead Developer/Systems Analyst," which supervises the senior developer/systems analyst, who supervises the system analyst. Based on this information, it appears that Mr. [REDACTED] is employed in a more senior or different position. Further, it cannot be determined how representative the petitioner's claim regarding *one individual over a nine year period* is of the petitioner's normal recruiting and hiring practices. The petitioner has not persuasively established that it normally requires at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, for the position.

Upon review of the record, the petitioner has not provided sufficient probative evidence to establish that it normally requires at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, for the proffered position. Thus, the petitioner has not satisfied the third criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).

The fourth criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) requires a petitioner to establish that the nature of the specific 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 or its equivalent.

Upon review of the record of the proceeding, we note that the petitioner has not provided probative evidence to satisfy this criterion of the regulations. In the instant case, relative specialization and complexity have not been sufficiently developed by the petitioner as an aspect of the proffered position. That is, the proposed duties have not been described with sufficient specificity to establish that they are more specialized and complex than positions that are not usually associated with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

Furthermore, we incorporate our earlier discussion and analysis regarding the duties of the proffered

¹² We observe that counsel also submitted a resume for [REDACTED] however, counsel indicates that he is an independent contractor. Thus, the document is irrelevant to the instant matter.

position, and the designation of the proffered position in the LCA as an entry-level position relative to others within the occupational category of "Computer Systems Analysts." The petitioner designated the position as a Level I position (the lowest of four assignable wage-levels), which DOL indicates is appropriate for "beginning level employees who have only a basic understanding of the occupation." Without further evidence, it is simply not credible that the petitioner's proffered position is one with specialized and complex duties compared to others within the occupation as such a position would likely be classified at a higher-level, such as a Level III (experienced) or IV (fully competent) position, requiring a substantially higher prevailing wage. As previously discussed, a Level IV (fully competent) position is designated by DOL for employees who "use advanced skills and diversified knowledge to solve unusual and complex problems."

The petitioner has submitted inadequate probative evidence to satisfy this criterion of the regulations. Thus, the petitioner has not established that the duties of the position are so specialized and complex that the knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent. The AAO, therefore, concludes that the petitioner failed to satisfy the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

For the reasons related in the preceding discussion, the petitioner has failed to establish that it has satisfied any of the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) and, therefore, it cannot be found that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation. The appeal will be dismissed and the petition denied for this additional reason.

IV. CONCLUSION AND ORDER

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.