



**REPUBLIC OF  
THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

**OFFICE OF THE  
MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR**

**Marine Guideline**

**No. 5-34-4**

**9/09**

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**TO: ALL SHIPOWNERS, OPERATORS, MASTERS AND OFFICERS OF  
MERCHANT SHIPS, AND RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

**SUBJECT: U.S. Coast Guard QUALSHIP 21 Application.**

**Reference:** U.S. Coast Guard Navigation and Inspection Circular 06-03 Change 2 (link:  
[http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/nvic/pdf/2003/NAVIC06\\_03\\_Ch2.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/nvic/pdf/2003/NAVIC06_03_Ch2.pdf))

**PURPOSE:**

The United States Coast Guard's QUALSHIP 21 program represents the most difficult quality certification to attain in the world. As the Marshall Islands Registry is a QUALSHIP 21 approved Flag State, all Marshall Islands Flagged vessels may apply for this certification. The purpose of this Marine Guideline is to explain the QUALSHIP 21 program and provide guidance to vessel owners on how to have their vessel(s) designated within the QUALSHIP 21 program.

**APPLICABILITY:**

These guidelines are applicable to all owners of Marshall Islands Flagged vessels that maintain a high-quality operation, routinely call at a United States (U.S.) port, and meet the specific eligibility requirements for the QUALSHIP 21 initiative.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2000, the U.S. Coast Guard developed an initiative to acknowledge the foreign flagged vessels that call in U.S. ports, whose careful safety management enables them to operate high-quality vessels safely, and to provide direct benefits to those vessels. This initiative is called QUALSHIP 21, quality shipping for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To encourage quality vessel operations, the U.S. Coast Guard will provide a QUALSHIP 21 Certificate to all QUALSHIP 21 designated vessels, with a maximum two (2) year period of validity which corresponds to the vessel's last U.S. Port State Control Safety and Protection Environmental Compliance exam. QUALSHIP 21 freight ships will be eligible for a maximum of two (2) years of limited Port State Control oversight. While annual exams of these vessel will be eliminated (and replaced with biennial exams), the U.S. Coast Guard may continue to examine these ships when

overriding factors are present. QUALSHIP 21 tank ships must still be examined once per year, but the annual / “mid-period” examination of a QUALSHIP 21 tank vessel may be reduced in scope. QUALSHIP 21 passenger vessels will not be eligible for a reduction in any Port State Control exams. However, passenger vessels receiving the designation may find that it is a valuable marketing tool.

Personnel at the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. perform an initial screening of vessels to determine QUALSHIP 21 eligibility. The U.S. Coast Guard will send letters to eligible vessel owners, and invite them to participate in the initiative. To qualify for the original list, owners will be required to answer a series of questions to verify that the U.S. Coast Guard screening of the vessel was correct. However, if the vessel owner has not been sent an eligibility letter and they feel that their vessel qualifies with the below requirements, they may follow the below guidance on how to apply to the U.S. Coast Guard for the QUALSHIP 21 initiative.

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

### **1.0 Qualifying Requirements**

1.1 To qualify for the QUALSHIP 21 initiative, the following eligibility requirements must be met:

- .1 The vessel may not have been detained, and determined to be substandard, in U.S. waters within the previous 36 months;
- .2 The vessel may not have any marine violations, no more than one (1) paid Notice of Violation cases (tickets), and no reportable marine casualties that meet the definition of a serious marine incident (Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations § 4.03-2) or major marine casualty (Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations § 4.40), in U.S. waters within the previous 36 months. Casualty reports of crewmember or passenger injuries that are not in conjunction with any other criteria of a serious marine incident or major marine casualty will not be considered. For the purpose of the QUALSHIP 21 initiative, a marine violation is any violation of a law, regulation, or order that is enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard, and results in a final assessed monetary civil penalty by a hearing officer, or a judgment by the U.S. Attorney in a criminal proceeding;
- .3 The vessel must have completed a successful, U.S. Port State Control Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance examination within 12 months of eligibility determination. A Port State Control Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance examination is defined as an examination of a non-U.S. flagged vessel for the purposes of assessing a vessel’s compliance with the relevant provisions of applicable international conventions, domestic laws and regulations, with a scope to the extent necessary to verify that no unsafe conditions exist. The term successful means that the vessel did not leave port with any serious, outstanding deficiencies (e.g., are considered such a serious nature that they may warrant the detention of the vessel);

- .4 The vessel may not be owned or operated by any company that has been associated with a substandard vessel detention in U.S. waters within 24 months. A vessel is considered to be owned or operated by a company, if that company has been issued a U.S. Certificate of Financial Responsibility as the responsible operator of the vessel, and/or is listed on the vessel's certificate of registry, and/or is the company responsible for the safe operation of the vessel as indicated on the vessel's Safety Management Certificate;
  - .5 The vessel may not be classed by, nor have their statutory convention certificates issued by, a targeted Classification Society. A Classification Society is targeted if points are assigned to them in the PSC Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance targeting matrix (refer to the List of Targeted and Non-targeted Classification Societies located at <http://homeport.uscg.mil> – scroll down on the left hand column and click on “Port State Control,” then “Foreign Vessel Safety,” then “List of Targeted and Non-Targeted Classification Societies,” then “Class Society Points Table” in the box labeled “Supporting Documents.” This list is updated regularly). The Classification Societies accepted by the Marshall Islands are not targeted by the U.S. Coast Guard and no points or boarding priority has been assigned to these societies;
  - .6 The vessel may not be registered with a Flag State that has a detention ratio greater than or equal to 1.0%, determined on a three (3) year rolling average, and the Flag State must have a least 10 distinct vessel arrivals in each of the last three (3) years. The Marshall Islands Flag Administration is QUALSHIP 21 Certified;
  - .7 The vessel's Flag State must submit their Self-Assessment of Flag State performance to the IMO, and provide a copy to the U.S. Coast Guard. The Marshall Islands provides this Self-Assessment the U.S. Coast Guard every year; and
  - .8 The vessel may not be owned or operated by any company that is required by the U.S. Department of Justice to have an Environmental Compliance Exam.
- 1.2 Though not specifically mentioned in the above eligibility requirements, the U.S. Coast Guard reserves the right to restrict eligibility in the QUALSHIP 21 initiative to any vessel because of special circumstances, including, but not limited to, significant overseas casualties or detentions, and pending criminal or civil investigations.

## **2.0 Application**

- 2.1 Vessel owners that believe that they have vessels eligible for QUALSHIP 21, and that have not been notified by the U.S. Coast Guard, should send an email to [HQS-PF-FLDR-CG-543@USCG.MIL](mailto:HQS-PF-FLDR-CG-543@USCG.MIL) with a copy to [Inspections@register-iri.com](mailto:Inspections@register-iri.com) to also notify the Maritime Administrator. In the email, the vessel owner should provide sufficient documentation (including that the vessel is a Marshall Island flagged vessel and the Classification Society for the vessel) to establish their eligibility for the initiative. The Maritime Administrator is also available to assist any vessel owner with their application.