



# Merchant Marine **Notice**

Panama Maritime Authority  
General Directorate of Merchant Marine  
Control and Compliance Department

F-34  
(DCCM)  
V.04

## QUALSHIP 21 Program – United States Coast Guard (USCG)

No: **MMN-03/2023**

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### 1. What is QUALSHIP 21?

1.1. U.S. Coast Guard efforts to eliminate substandard shipping have focused on improving methods to identify poor-quality vessels (targeting schemes). However, regardless of the score that a vessel receives in U.S. Coast Guard targeting matrix, all foreign-flagged vessels are examined no less than once each year. This provides few incentives for the well run, quality ship. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of vessels are operated responsibly, and are typically found with few or no deficiencies. Under U.S. Coast Guard current policies, vessels operating at a higher-quality share nearly the same examination intervals as those vessels operating at lower-quality standards. These high-quality vessels should be recognized and rewarded for their commitment to safety and quality. Therefore, on January 1, 2001, the U.S. Coast Guard implemented an initiative to identify high-quality ships, and provide incentives to encourage quality operations. This initiative is called QUALSHIP 21, quality shipping for the 21st century.

### 2. The QUALSHIP 21 Program

2.1. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) in continued efforts to ensure safe, secure, and environmentally sound maritime commerce, offers this program to reward those companies, operators, and vessels that demonstrate the highest commitment to quality and safety through the highest level of compliance with International standards and United States law and regulation.

### 3. Qualship21 pamphlet

3.1. The Qualship21 pamphlet provides a full overview of the program including incentives, eligibility requirements and application instructions. Refer to [Qualship 21/E-Zero Pamphlet](#)

### 4. Vessel Eligibility for QUALSHIP 21

- 4.1. For the purpose of QUALSHIP 21, the initial eligibility criteria are:
- Must be a non-U.S. flagged vessel.
  - The vessel must be registered to a QUALSHIP 21 qualified flag administration.
  - No substandard vessel detentions in the U.S. within the previous 36 months.



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- No marine violations or serious marine casualties and no more than one Notice of Violation (NOV) ticket in the U.S. within the previous 36 months.
- A successful U.S. PSC safety exam within the previous 24 months.
- Not owned or operated by any company (listed on vessel's Continuous Synopsis Record) that has been associated with more than one PSC detention in U.S. waters within the previous 24 months.
- Vessels cannot have their statutory convention certificates issued by a targeted recognized organization (RO). Targeted ROs are those that have points assigned in the U.S. Port State Control Matrix as listed in the most recent PSC Annual Report.
- The USCG reserves the right to restrict eligibility in the QUALSHIP 21 program to any vessel because of special circumstances. This includes but is not limited to significant overseas casualties or detentions and pending criminal or civil investigations.

## 5. Application for QS21 Initial Designation

5.1. For those companies that believe their vessel(s) qualify for the USCG's QUALSHIP 21 Program or QUALSHIP 21 with E-Zero Designation, applications **must** be made using the application below. For vessels with existing QUALSHIP 21 certificate desiring to add the E-Zero Designation, please use the second application located below. In order to receive the E-Zero designation, a vessel must be currently in QUALSHIP 21 and remained in the program for a minimum of the last three years to qualify. All applications should be e-mailed to [portstatecontrol@uscg.mil](mailto:portstatecontrol@uscg.mil)

- [Application For QS21 Initial/Renewal and E-Zero Designation \(Excel\)](#)
- [Application For Adding E-Zero Designation To An Existing QS21 Certificate \(Excel\)](#)

5.2. **Important:** Each company should carefully review the vessel eligibility criteria detailed in paragraph 4 above to determine which of their vessels are eligible to apply. The company **must** complete and submit the applications be e-mailed to [portstatecontrol@uscg.mil](mailto:portstatecontrol@uscg.mil).

## 6. Present Incentives for QUALSHIP 21 Vessels

### 6.1. All Vessels

- QUALSHIP 21 enrollment valid for 3 years.
- Vessel name posted on U.S. Coast Guard website & EQUASIS.

### 6.2. Tank Vessels

- Certificate of Compliance (COC) annual examination reduced in scope. (For tank vessels, the COC annual examination occurs at the mid-period of the COC's two-year validity.)



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## 6.3. Cargo Vessels

- Three years of limited Port State Control (PSC) oversight.

## 6.4. Passenger Vessels

- No reduced PSC examination, but vessel will receive QUALSHIP 21 certificate and recognition on the QUALSHIP 21 web page & EQUASIS.

## 7. Qualified Flag Administrations

7.1. For the period of July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, **Panama Flag Administration** is eligible for the QUALSHIP 21 Program.

7.2. The list of fully qualified flag administrations will be updated annually on June 30th. This date marks the beginning that any newly qualified flag administration's vessels may begin to enroll in the program and closes enrollment for vessels registered to flags that are no longer qualified. If a flag administration is no longer qualified for the program, any of their vessels currently enrolled in QUALSHIP 21 may remain in the program until their QUALSHIP 21 certificate expires.

7.3. More detailed Information on the eligibility criteria for the QUALSHIP 21, including a listing of qualifying ships, can be found in the Port State Control section of USCG website: [www.dco.uscg.mil/cvc](http://www.dco.uscg.mil/cvc)

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Inquiries concerning the subject of this Merchant Marine Notice or any other request should be forward to:

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