

Qualship 21 - Frequently Asked Questions

What is QUALSHIP 21?

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 our 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 our current policies, these vessels are boarded at similar intervals as vessels that aren't operated responsibly. These quality vessels should be recognized and rewarded for their commitment to safety and quality. Therefore, the 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.

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What are the eligibility criteria?

By closely examining Port State Control data from the previous 3 years, the characteristics of a typical "quality" vessel were identified. **A quality vessel is associated with a well-run company, is classed by an organization with a quality track record, is registered with a Flag Administration with a superior Port State Control record, and has an outstanding Port State Control history in U.S. waters.** Using these general criteria, approximately 10% of the foreign-flagged vessels that call in the U.S. qualify for this initiative (the specific Qualship 21 eligibility criteria is described below).

Eligibility Requirements:

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 1 paid Notice of Violation cases (tickets), and no reportable marine casualties that meet the definition of a serious marine incident (46CFR4.03-2) or major marine casualty (46CFR4.40), 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 this initiative, a marine violation is any violation of a law, regulation, or order that is enforced by the 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 24 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 purpose 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, operated, managed or chartered 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, operated, managed or chartered 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 and/or considered the ship manager or charterer by playing the lead role as a crew provider or chartering the majority cargo space, time or voyage;
5. The vessel may not have their statutory convention certificates issued by, a targeted recognized organization. A recognized organization is targeted if points are assigned to them in the PSC Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance targeting matrix (refer to our Targeted Recognized Organization Page for details on the class societies that meet this criterion);
6. The vessel may not be registered with a Flag Administration that has a detention ratio greater than or equal to 1.0%, determined on a 3-year rolling average, and the Flag Administration must have at least 10 distinct vessel arrivals in each of the last three years (refer to Flag Administration Safety Compliance Performance found in the Coast Guard's most recent **Annual Port State Control** report, for details on the Flag Administrations that meet this criterion);
7. The vessel's Flag Administration must submit their Self-Assessment of Flag State Performance to the IMO, and provide a copy to the Coast Guard;
8. The vessel's Flag Administration must submit the Executive Summary from their Member State Audit Scheme audit to the U.S. Coast Guard or submit a letter/e-mail attesting to the fact that they have not yet undergone the audit but have submitted their request to be audited; and
9. The vessel may not be owned or operated by any company that is required by the U.S. Department of Justice or Coast Guard to have an Environmental Compliance Plan.

- 10 Though not specifically mentioned in the above criteria, the 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.

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What incentives will Qualship 21 vessels receive?

To encourage quality vessel operations, all Qualship 21 designated vessels will receive a Qualship 21 Certificate, issued by the Office of Vessel Activities (CG-CVC) staff. This certificate will have a maximum 3-year period of validity, which will correspond with the date of the COTP's last Port State Control Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance exam of the vessel. For example, an eligible freight ship that completed a successful freight ship exam on 25 September 2014 will receive a Qualship 21 Certificate from CG-CVC that expires on 24 September 2017. Additionally, Qualship 21 vessels will have their names posted on the Qualship 21 page of the headquarters Port State Control internet web site.

Qualship 21 freight ships will be eligible for a maximum of 3 years of limited Port State Control oversight. While annual exams of these vessels will be eliminated (and replaced with biennial exams), the COTP may continue to examine these ships when overriding factors are present, as described in current guidance.

Qualship 21 tank ships must still be examined once a year, but the annual / "mid-period" examination of a Qualship 21 tank vessel may be reduced in scope. In general, the scope of the annual/"mid-period" examination shall be the same as for the renewal exam, but will be in less detail, unless it is determined that major changes have occurred since the last examination, or conditions warrant expanding the exam. The annual / "mid-period" examination shall be performed on these tank ships that visit U.S. waters between the tenth and fourteenth month of the period for which the Certificate of Compliance (COC) and Qualship 21 Certificates are valid. A vessel that does not visit U.S. waters, and receive an annual / "mid-period" examination, before the completion of the last day of the fourteenth month, shall receive an annual exam between the 15th and 18th month.

Qualship 21 passenger vessels will not be eligible for a reduction in any Port State Control exams. While passenger vessels have an excellent safety record in the U.S., there is too much at risk to consider any changes to our passenger vessel examination policy. However, passenger vessels receiving the designation may find that it is a valuable marketing tool.

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Who determines which vessels will be awarded Qualship 21 designation?

After receiving a Qualship 21 application, personnel at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (CG-CVC-2) will screen and process vessels for a determination of Qualship 21 eligibility.

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Why aren't my vessels listed on the QUALSHIP 21 web page?

Although your vessel may have an excellent examination history, there are many other criteria that must be met before a vessel will be designated as a QUALSHIP 21 vessel. **One of the most common criteria vessels fail to meet requires vessels to be registered with a Flag Administration that has a detention ratio less than or equal to 1.0%, determined on a 3-year rolling average.** The Flag Administration must also have submitted its International Maritime Organization Flag State Self-Assessment Form and the Executive Summary from their Member State Audit Scheme (MSAS) or if a Flag Administration has not undergone the audit, submittal of a letter/email attesting to this fact, with a statement that the Administration has requested the audit to the U.S. Coast Guard.

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How should a Qualship 21 vessel be screened by the Port State Control matrix?

All vessels will continue to be screened using the PSC Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance Targeting Matrix. Qualship 21 vessels will not be assigned additional points for ship type (column V). All other overriding conditions in the targeting matrix should be considered.

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What criteria will cause the vessel's Qualship 21 eligibility to be revoked?

To maintain the integrity of the program, and to protect the safety of U.S. ports, a Qualship 21 vessel's designation and incentives will be revoked when the vessel triggers the following exit criteria:

- a. The vessel is detained, and determined to be substandard, in U.S. waters;

- b. The vessel has a marine violation, more than 1 paid Notice of Violation case (tickets), or a reportable marine casualty that meets the definition of a serious marine incident (46CFR4.03-2) or major marine casualty (46CFR4.40), in U.S. waters. Similar to the eligibility criteria, crewmember or passenger injuries that are not related to any other serious marine incident or major marine casualty criteria will not cause the vessel's eligibility to be revoked. A marine violation is any violation of a law, regulation, or order that is enforced by the 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. COTPs shall notify CG-CVC-2 at portstatecontrol@uscg.mil when a prima facie violation case is forwarded to the district office on a Qualship 21 vessel;
- c. The vessel is found with serious deficiencies (e.g., are considered so serious that they may warrant the detention of the vessel) that are not being monitored by the vessel's Flag Administration or recognized organization, acting on behalf of the Flag Administration, or the vessel fails to report a hazardous condition (as defined in 33CFR160.203) prior to arrival. If the vessel is within the time limits imposed by the Flag Administration or recognized organization to correct deficiencies, the vessel will not lose eligibility for incentives;
- d. The vessel transfers to a targeted recognized organization; or
- e. The vessel changes its registry to a Flag Administration that has a detention ratio greater than 1.0%, determined on a 3-year rolling average, or to a Flag Administration that does not have at least 10 distinct vessel arrivals in each of the last three years;
- f. The vessel's owner or operator is ordered by the U.S. Department of Justice or Coast Guard to have an Environmental Compliance Plan.

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Does the vessel owner have to apply for this initiative?

Yes, if an owner/operator believes their vessel(s) qualifies they can apply by providing the vessel's name, IMO number, flag administration, company name, and company IMO number. Applications are to be submitted to the following email address portstatecontrol@uscg.mil.

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How does the vessel owner renew eligibility?

Vessel owners do not have to submit an application to renew their eligibility in the Qualship 21 initiative. However, renewal of eligibility is established under the same conditions as initial certification, including the requirement to have completed a successful, U.S. PSC Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance exam within the previous 24 months. Therefore, vessel owners are encouraged to request a PSC Safety and Environmental Protection Compliance exam from the local COTP during U.S. port visits that fall on the 35th or 36th month of the term of their Qualship 21 Certificate.

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What are the appeals procedures?

A company can submit an appeal to the U.S. Coast Guard to remain in the QUALSHIP 21 program if one of its vessels has been associated with an IMO reportable detention. An appeal request should be submitted via email to portstatecontrol@uscg.mil.

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How do I obtain more information?

The Foreign and Offshore Vessel Compliance Division (CG-CVC-2), of the Office of Commercial Vessel Compliance (CG-CVC) is managing this initiative. Please direct general questions to the Program Administrator, 202-372-1587, or by email at portstatecontrol@uscg.mil.

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