

COMMANDANT’S GUIDANCE
TO PY05 OFFICER SELECTION BOARDS

1. Our selection board system uses either a fully qualified or best-qualified standard for selecting officers. It is designed to select those officers meeting the appropriate standard (fully or best qualified), without regard to their particular specialty. There are no preferred career paths either command or staff. Rather, you should consider whether an officer has made meaningful or out-of-the-ordinary contributions within their area of responsibility in either supporting or executing Coast Guard missions. To assist you in this endeavor, you shall consider the factors below as you evaluate the officers' records. Apply the guidance in paragraph 2 to all officers before you for consideration; then apply the guidance in paragraph 3 to officers under consideration for selection to O-3 and O-4; paragraph 4 to officers under consideration for selection to O-5 and O-6; or paragraph 5 for officers under consideration for selection to Flag, as appropriate.
 - a. You are to select those officers you consider either fully or best qualified, as appropriate, to serve the Coast Guard in the next higher pay grade using their past performance (as recorded in OERs), Reporting Officer comments on Potential, and the other official documents in their personnel records as indicators of their relative potential to excel in the next higher pay grade.
 - b. **BILLET DESCRIPTION:** Given the changes in our organization over the past several years, many officers are serving in assignments that may not be fully understood solely by their titles. In your evaluation, ensure understanding of the full scope of the officers' duties and assignments; carefully review the “Description of Duties” block of the officers' OERs (block 2). You should pay close attention to the overall scope of authority and responsibilities for all positions, command and non-command.
 - c. **ASSIGNMENTS:**
 - i. Board members are reminded that while officers have input to their assignment process, ultimately, they are issued orders based on the needs of the Service. Boards should not base decisions on speculation as to why an officer was assigned to a certain billet.
 - ii. The Coast Guard’s operational excellence requires a systems-based approach. Every specialty community contributes to our overall success.
 - iii. Because of declining opportunities for assignment of junior officers afloat, I recently approved a proposal to discontinue sending all Academy graduates to sea. In this regard, the board should avoid making value judgments about individual officers starting their careers afloat as compared to ashore. All officers are assigned to billets to meet specific Service needs.

- d. **EVALUATIONS DURING ADVANCED EDUCATION ASSIGNMENTS:** Many officers are detailed to postgraduate or advanced/specialized training. While assigned to these duties, the majority of OERs will consist solely of their course grades. There will not be, nor is there expected to be, detailed performance information while assigned to duty under instruction.

2. FOR SELECTION TO ALL OFFICER GRADES:

- a. **CONTINUOUS REINFORCEMENT OF CORE VALUES AND SERVICE STANDARDS:** Officers must consistently demonstrate character that reflects the Coast Guard core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. Integrity is foremost among the traits that we expect in our leaders. Through their personal example, conduct, and decisions -- every day, on and off duty -- they should instill in their people the culture of our core values.
- b. **ABILITY TO ALIGN WITH THE COMMANDANT'S DIRECTION:** The Commandant's Direction represents my priorities for the Coast Guard. Officers must demonstrate through their performance, alignment with the themes of Readiness, People, and Stewardship. Officers must have the ability to contribute to achieving the Coast Guard goals by leading their part of the organization toward them. People are center stage in the Commandant's Direction and selectees for promotion must place the welfare of our shipmates first. They must create an environment where everyone understands their value, receives recognition for their service contributions, and has the ability to reach their full potential.
- c. **RISK TAKING & RISK MANAGEMENT:** Officers who have shown themselves willing to take reasonable risks to achieve positive results, and who learn from the lessons that accompany reasoned risk-taking, greatly help advance the organization. Look for major accomplishments and discount minor errors. Officers should be anticipatory and innovative, even if unconventional in their methods, as long as those methods comply with law, regulation, doctrine, and core values. Officers should also apply these principles to those who work with them, encourage innovation, and help their people apply the lessons learned for continuous systemic improvement.
- d. **FLEXIBILITY:** The officer corps must be adaptable and flexible to meet challenges resulting from the dynamic environment within which the Coast Guard operates. Selectees should have demonstrated that they seek the opportunity to pursue excellence, see opportunity in change, adapt readily, and led their units and personnel forward with optimism.
- e. **FOSTER DIVERSITY:** The Coast Guard is firmly committed to equal treatment and opportunity for all personnel, but diversity is bigger than equality. Diversity is not limited to the traditional areas of race, gender, color, and creed. Diversity is also the diversity of thought, experience, perspective, and culture. Selectees must, through their actions, promote diversity and foster cohesiveness in the workforce to gain value for the service.

3. **FOR SELECTION TO O-3 AND O-4:** Officers primarily develop their specialty/technical/professional expertise in the O1-O4 pay grades through assignments, on-the-job training, and formal education, or any combination of these. By developing expertise as a junior officer, these officers not only contribute the expertise they have acquired, they lay the foundation for contributing to the Service at more senior levels.
4. **FOR SELECTION TO O-5 AND O-6:** By the time officers compete for promotion to these ranks, they are generally top performers in specialty. In addition to performing technical or specialized aspects of their assignments well, officers in the O-5 and O-6 grades must demonstrate that they possess the leadership, management, and professional skills necessary to obtain optimal performance from people.

Today the environment in which the Coast Guard operates is increasingly complex and technologically oriented. To meet current and emerging Service demands, the Coast Guard is requiring more officers to remain within their respective specialty areas. As officers move into senior ranks, they must have an understanding of the major issues facing the Coast Guard as a whole in order to best contribute, through their particular expertise, to the overall needs of the Service. This understanding of macro Service issues can be acquired in many ways even within specialty, through assignment diversity (different type of unit/different type of billet/different geographic location), participation in studies and task forces, and special assignments which provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues important to our Service. Board members shall not place undue emphasis on “out-of-specialty tours” or “command cadre” assignment histories that may have been considered requisite in the past for selection to O-5 and O-6.

Because of the dramatically increased scope of authority and responsibility for O-6 positions, officers you select to serve in this grade must be empowering leaders who rely heavily on the leadership and technical competence of their subordinates. They must be capable of acting with vision in a complex and uncertain environment. They must have the ability to maintain our multi-mission effectiveness and functionality with the capability to make risk-based decisions under stressful circumstances. The qualities that we look for in Flag officers should be apparent in our best-qualified O-6’s.

5. **FOR SELECTION TO FLAG RANK:** Flag officers greatly influence the success of the Coast Guard, both internally and externally. They serve as the Commandant’s senior field representatives, Coast Guard program directors, and in positions of significant responsibility in other agencies and military services. They are members of the Commandant’s senior leadership team and must contribute substantially to the advancement of Service goals.
 - a. **VISION:** Selectees must be able to articulate a vision and to engage in strategic thinking for their command or program that is aligned with and supports the Coast Guard’s goals. Vision is not acquired with promotion. It is demonstrated at every

grade level and is a measure of how an officer translates personal and professional experience into innovation that drives the Service into the future.

- b. **LEADERSHIP:** Leadership has long been a criterion for promotion. The future of the Coast Guard requires enlightened and empowering leaders in our Flag corps. Selectees must be our very best leaders and have demonstrated especially strong commitment to achieving the Coast Guard's established goals and both adherence to and enforcement of our highest standards. They have a special responsibility to be at the forefront of advancing initiatives that benefit our people. They must embody "Semper Paratus" in their actions contributing to readiness. During the course of their careers, they must have demonstrated the capability to be innovative in the management of our human, financial and technological resources to effectively and efficiently achieve desired Service outcomes. Examples of good stewardship and entrepreneurship should reveal their leadership in maximizing return on taxpayer investment.
- c. **PARTNERING:** Selectees must be able to form effective partnerships inside and outside the Service, develop networks and build alliances, and use their contacts to build and strengthen bases of support to advance attainment of Service goals. Partnerships are developed through coordination, collaboration, and teamwork. Selectees must be able to collaborate across boundaries and find common ground while at the same time demonstrate the skill and wherewithal to convince others of the merits of their position and prevail on issues critical to the Coast Guard.
- d. **PUBLIC PRESENCE:** Selectees must have the knowledge, presence, confidence, and bearing to represent the federal government in situations of national interest. They must demonstrate political savvy and a level of professionalism reflective of both the excellence of the Coast Guard and an ability to impact national-level policy processes. Continuing intellectual development and external awareness of national and international political, economic, and social issues and trends over the course of a career enables this.
- e. **KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:** Selectees must have a broad and in-depth intellectual capacity to learn, retain, and apply knowledge. They must have keen analytical skills and the ability to readily assimilate elements of information regarding unfamiliar subjects. They must be able to make judgments on the quality of information provided through diverse mediums, and make good decisions in areas not within their area of expertise. They must value and effectively use information as a leadership tool to gain alignment and empower others to achieve organizational goals.
- f. **ORGANIZATION CONTEXT:** Selectees must have a demonstrated understanding of how the Coast Guard fits into the broader structure of the Department, Executive Branch, federal government, nation, and international community. Selectees must be able to identify the internal and external relationships that impact the Coast Guard and the Department, approach each situation with a clear perception of external reality, and recognize the potential impact of Coast Guard courses of action.