

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What is a Qualified Assessor?*

The term “Qualified Assessor” (QA) is defined in 46 CFR 10.107 as “a person who is qualified to evaluate, for STCW endorsements, whether an applicant has demonstrated the level of competence in the task for which the assessment is being made. This person must be individually approved by the Coast Guard or through a Coast Guard approved or accepted course or program of training.”

QAs who assess mariners independent of approved training, including in-service assessments on board a vessel, must be individually approved by the Coast Guard to conduct specific assessments (46 CFR 11.301(a)(1)(i) and 12.601(b)(1)(i)).

A QA assesses the ability of an individual to perform a task, duty, or responsibility properly, using established criteria and professional judgment in determining whether an acceptable level of proficiency and competence has been demonstrated. A QA must always personally witness the performance of the task, duty, or responsibility by the person whose competence is to be assessed. This performance is called a “practical demonstration” and is defined in 46 CFR 10.107 as “the performance of an activity under the direct observation of a ... QA for the purpose of establishing that the performer is sufficiently proficient in a practical skill to meet a specified standard of competence or other objective criterion.” For purposes of assessment of competence of a skill or ability required for an STCW endorsement, the assessment criteria are set out in the standards of competence contained in the tables in the STCW Code.

2. *Do I need to be approved as a QA to conduct shipboard assessments?*

On or after January 1, 2017, assessors must be approved by the National Maritime Center. In order to facilitate the transition to the new requirement for approval of QAs, the Coast Guard will accept assessments that have been demonstrated in the presence of and signed by an assessor who has not been Coast Guard approved until December 31, 2016, provided that the assessor meets the professional requirements in 46 CFR 10.405(a)(3) to assess competence for the specific endorsement. During this interim period, assessors must be in possession of the level of endorsement, or other professional credential, which provides proof that he or she has attained a level of experience and qualification equal or superior to the relevant level of knowledge, skills, and abilities to be assessed (46 CFR 10.405(a)(3)). Until December 31, 2016, the Coast Guard will accept assessments signed by mariners who hold an appropriate national endorsement and meet the qualifications described in Enclosure (2).

3. *What are the requirements to be a Qualified Assessor?*

As specified in 46 CFR 10.405(a), to become a QA you should:

- Have experience, training, or instruction in assessment techniques;
- Be qualified in the task(s) for which the assessment is being conducted; and
- Hold or have held the level of endorsement or other professional credential which provides proof that he or she has attained a level of experience and qualification equal or superior to the relevant level of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the task to be assessed.

4. *How do I demonstrate that I have experience and/or training in assessment techniques?*

Documentation of training or instruction may be in the form of performance evaluations that include an evaluation of effectiveness in on-the-job conduct of assessment activities and/or a certificate of successful completion from a “train the trainer” or an assessor training course. A “train the trainer” course should be based on IMO model course 6.09, *Training Course for Instructors* and an assessor training course should be based on IMO model course 1.30, *On-Board Assessment*, or a similar syllabus covering the following areas:

- Identification of performance standards;
- Assessment of knowledge;
- Assessment of skills and abilities;
- Measurement of progress toward objectives and of adequate performance;
- Favorable and unfavorable conditions for assessment; and
- Use of feedback for performance improvement.

5. *What experience do I need to be “qualified in the task(s) to be assessed”?*

Guidance on qualifications and experience for assessors is provided in Enclosure (2).

6. *Do I have to hold a current and valid merchant mariner credential (MMC) to be a Qualified Assessor?*

No. While a QA should have the training and experience described above, they do not need to have a current, valid MMC. A mariner may not have a current MMC for a variety of reasons that are unrelated to having the experience and other qualifications needed to serve as a QA. For example, a mariner who is disqualified from holding a mariner credential for medical reasons may still be capable of competently serving as a QA.

A specialist in a particular field of non-maritime education (such as fire fighting or first aid), is not required to hold an MMC to be approved to conduct assessments in that field. A specialist is someone whose expertise, experience, and current practice are concentrated within a particular subject matter.

7. *How can I become a Qualified Assessor?*

You should submit a written request to be approved as a QA to either NMCCourses@uscg.mil or to:

Commanding Officer (NMC-21)
National Maritime Center
100 Forbes Drive
Martinsburg, WV 25404

Your request should identify the specific portions of the STCW you wish to assess and provide evidence that you meet the qualifications discussed above.

8. *I am approved as an instructor in Coast Guard approved courses. Do I need approval as a Qualified Assessor in order to perform the assessments in the courses that I teach?*

No. Approved instructors may conduct all assessments within the course(s) they are approved to instruct without further approval. Also, a faculty member employed at a state maritime academy or the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy operated in accordance with 46 CFR Part 310 and instructing in a navigation or engineering course, is qualified to serve as a Qualified Assessor in their area(s) of specialization without individual evaluation by the Coast Guard.

9. *Does an approval as a Qualified Assessor expire?*

Yes. Approvals are granted for 5-year periods, and may be renewed as described below (46 CFR 10.405(d)).

10. What should I do to renew my approval as a Qualified Assessor?

As specified in 46 CFR 10.405(d), in order to renew their qualifications, each QA must have either experience, training, or evidence of instruction in effective assessment within the past 5 years. To renew your approval, you should request renewal from the NMC as described above for an original approval, and submit evidence of your most recent experience as a Qualified Assessor, your recent experience performing the tasks you are approved to assess, and your continued ability to assess the competence of candidates for STCW endorsements.

11. Can the company I work for request approval for me to serve as a Qualified Assessor on my behalf?

Yes. Employers may request approval of the persons who will serve as QAs on their vessels or at their training facilities. The approval as a QA is given to the individual assessor, not the company. Upon approval, the company should give the QA approval letter to the assessor.

12. Does a Qualified Assessor have to use the national assessment guidelines in the relevant NVIC?

No. However, unless approval for the alternative assessment(s) is given by the National Maritime Center (NMC), shipboard QAs may only make minor changes to the assessments in the national guidelines to reflect differences in shipboard equipment and operating procedures (46 CFR 11.301(a)(1)(i) and 12.601(b)(1)(i)). Approval is not needed to use the assessment guidelines included in the applicable NVIC.

13. I have been assessing mariners for various STCW endorsements without approval. May I continue to do so?

Yes, but only until December 31, 2016. After that date, the Coast Guard will only accept assessments conducted and signed by an approved Qualified Assessor.

14. Is there any guidance about conducting assessments?

Yes. Enclosure (3), *Assessor's Manual for Conducting Mariner Assessments*, provides an overview of the STCW assessment process.