



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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COMDTINST 16672.5F
21 AUG 2019

COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION 16672.5F

Subj: COAST GUARD DECK WATCH OFFICER EXAMINATION PROGRAM

- Ref: (a) Navigation Rules and Regulations Handbook, August 2014 Edition
 (b) Education Services Officer (ESO): Volume I, Getting Started, ETQCINST M1000.1 (series)
 (c) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) For the Coast Guard’s Training System, Vol. 10: (Testing)

- PURPOSE. This Instruction establishes the Coast Guard's Deck Watch Officer (DWO) examination program and minimum qualification requirements.
- ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements shall comply with the provisions of this Instruction. Internet release is authorized.
- DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The Coast Guard Deck Watch Officer Examination Program, COMDTINST 16672.5E is cancelled.
- DISCUSSION. Controlling the safe movement of a Coast Guard vessel as Officer of the Deck (OOD) or as coxswain is a challenging and highly demanding duty. Assuming such an important responsibility represents a high level of trust by the Coast Guard that our personnel and resources will be safeguarded. The intent of this examination program is to verify an OOD’s or coxswain’s knowledge and application of Reference (a).
- DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide operational guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

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6. MAJOR CHANGES.

- a. With the disestablishment of the Coast Guard Institute (CGI) in 2017, the Education and Training Quota Management Command (ETQC) assumed all functions of the CGI that pertain to the administration of the DWO Examination in accordance with this Instruction.
- b. The requirement for Station and Aids to Navigation Team (ANT) command cadre to pass the DWO Exam within one year prior to the execution of orders was removed.
- c. An Administration section was added that includes information regarding challenge questions, refresh questions and the creation of a DWO Examination Review Board (DERB).

7. IMPACT ASSESSMENT. The requirements of this Instruction apply only to officer and enlisted personnel serving or assigned to serve aboard U. S. Coast Guard cutters. There are no unit funding requirements mandated by this Instruction.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.

- a. The development of this Instruction and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Environmental Management, Commandant (CG-47). This Instruction is categorically excluded under current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) categorical exclusion DHS (CATEX) A3 from further environmental analysis in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1 and the Environmental Planning (EP) Implementing Procedures (IP).
- b. This Instruction will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policy in this Instruction must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions, Executive Order 12114, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) NEPA policy, Coast Guard Environmental Planning policy, and compliance with all other applicable environmental mandates.

9. DISTRIBUTION. Paper distribution will not be made of this Instruction. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) web sites:

Internet: <http://www.dcms.uscg.mil/directives/>, and CG Portal: <https://cgportal2.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

10. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Instruction has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements, in accordance with Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. 3101 et seq., NARA requirements, and Information and Life Cycle Management Manual,

COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.

11. DEFINITIONS. For the purpose of this Instruction, the following definitions apply:

- a. Deck Watch Officer (DWO) Examination. This examination is required for all personnel performing underway OOD or coxswain duties. It is similar in content to the merchant marine credentialing examination modules distributed by the National Maritime Center (NMC) and covers both the 1972 COLREGS and the Inland Navigation Rules. There are two versions of the DWO examination, the initial and the renewal.

(1) Initial DWO Examination (DWINTO) (Closed Book). DWINTO is required for members who have not previously passed the DWO Examination or have exceeded a period of five years since the date of their last successful examination. Completion code is 000701.

(2) Renewal DWO Examination (DWINTR) (Open Book). DWINTR is administered to members who have previously passed an Initial Examination or a Renewal Examination within the last five years. This five year period of eligibility commences on the date of their last successful examination. Completion code is 000702.

(a) It is not the intent of this Instruction to penalize members for taking the examination on a regular basis (i.e., annually) in order to “restart” the five year period. If a member fails an interim attempt, the original successful completion date remains in effect until the five year period is exceeded.

(b) An examination failure does not necessarily require a decertification of an OOD or coxswain qualification unless the Commanding Officer/Officer-in-Charge (CO/OIC) has lost faith in the member’s overall ability.

(c) This test is proctored open book permitting the candidate to use a new, corrected-to-date but otherwise unmarked copy of Reference (a).

(d) As an alternative, members may elect to take the DWINTO (Closed Book) examination in order to meet the same 5 year renewal requirement.

- b. Merchant Mariner Credentialing Rules of the Road Examinations. There are several Rules of the Road examinations that may be taken in conjunction with an application for a merchant mariner credential that may earn Coast Guard DWO examination credit.

(1) Members who have successfully completed this examination at a Coast Guard Regional Exam Center (REC) should request a memo indicating this. A member should submit this documentation to their servicing Education Services Officer (ESO) to apply for credit.

(2) Members who have taken a commercial course approved by NMC should submit a copy of a signed certificate from the course provider to their servicing ESO to apply for

credit. A current list of approved courses may be found on the NMC website: https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/training_assessments/. Click on "Approved Courses," then use "Ctrl F" and search for "USCG Deck Watch Officer." Only these course providers meet the Coast Guard requirement for DWO.

- (3) For the DWO commercial equivalency, ETQC will use code 000706 (DWO INTERNATIONAL/INLAND-COMMERCIAL SOURCE (DWCOMM)) to document a member's completion of the DWO Exam equivalent via a commercial provider or REC when entering in Direct Access.
 - (4) A member who has successfully completed a DWINTO or DWINTR DWO examination will not receive credit towards a Merchant Mariner Credential. There is no credentialing equivalent for either CG DWO exams.
 - (5) Coast Guard members who were qualified via testing through an REC or commercial provider for initial qualification must take the DWINTR examination before the five year period expires in order to meet currency requirements.
- c. Execution of Orders. The date a member detaches PCS from a duty station en route to an afloat assignment involving underway OOD/ship control duties.

12. RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. Office of Cutter Forces (CG-751). Maintains the policy pertaining to the completion of the DWO Examination in accordance with this Instruction.
- b. ETQC. Administers the DWO Examination in accordance with this Instruction.
- c. Unit ESO. Manage and administer non-resident End-of-Course Tests in accordance with Reference (b).

13. POLICY.

- a. Affected Personnel.
 - (1) Prospective cutter Commanding Officers (CO), Officers-in-Charge (OIC), Executive Officers (XO) and Executive Petty Officers (XPO) shall pass the appropriate (Initial or Renewal) DWO Examination within one year prior to executing orders. Members shall follow the procedures outlined in Paragraph 14.c. of this Instruction. Failure to pass the examination within two attempts following receipt of orders will result in the cancellation of those orders and documentation, at a minimum, via an administrative remarks entry. Suitable action for these unique cases will be coordinated amongst the affected command, the Coast Guard Personnel Service Center (PSC) and the Office of Cutter Forces (CG-751).
 - (2) Prospective cutter Operations Officers and Operations Petty Officers shall pass the appropriate (Initial or Renewal) DWO Examination within one year prior to executing

orders. This applies only to members assigned to specified Personnel Allowance List (PAL) positions designated as Operations Officer or Operations Petty Officer. Members assigned to these specified billets shall follow the procedures outlined in Paragraph 14.c. of this Instruction. Failure to pass the examination within two attempts following receipt of orders will result in the cancellation of those orders and documentation, at a minimum, via an administrative remarks entry. Suitable action for these unique cases will be coordinated amongst the affected command, PSC and the Office of Cutter Forces (CG-751).

- (3) Cutter command designated underway OODs and DWOs designated in unit PALs shall pass the appropriate (Initial or Renewal) DWO Examination. While failure to pass the test will not preclude the execution of orders, the examination must be passed prior to performing duties as an underway OOD. This requirement cannot be waived. If the member fails to pass the examination within six months after reporting, that fact shall be documented, at a minimum, via an administrative remarks entry, and the member will normally be transferred during the next assignment season. Suitable action for these unique cases will be coordinated amongst the affected command, PSC, and the Office of Cutter Forces (CG-751). OODs and DWOs whose examinations have lapsed will lose their certification until they have passed the examination.
 - (4) BMs shall be current in the appropriate (Initial or Renewal) DWO Examination for advancement. BMs that have not passed the DWO examination are not eligible to advance, or to be placed on the supplemental or striker eligibility lists.
 - (5) All prospective coxswains, regardless of rate, shall pass the appropriate (Initial or Renewal) DWO Examination prior to certification as a coxswain. Coxswains who have exceeded a period of five years since the date of their last examination will lose their certification until they have passed the examination in accordance with Paragraph 11.a. (1) of this Instruction.
- b. Merchant Mariner Credentials. Members who possess a valid Merchant Mariner Credential are not exempt from the requirements of this Instruction. Members are required to take the Initial DWO Examination (DWINTO) if they do not meet the requirements of a renewal examination as described in Paragraph 11.a. (2) of this Instruction.
 - c. Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Orders. For afloat CO/OIC/XO/XPO or Operations Officer/Petty Officer, the applicable examination (Initial or Renewal) must be passed no more than one year prior to the execution of PCS afloat orders. This standard applies even if the member is currently assigned to a cutter and/or possesses a valid merchant marine license. However, personnel who have received extensions to their current afloat assignment are exempt from this requirement. Commands shall ensure that the departing member complies with the policies contained within this Instruction before authorizing the member to execute PCS orders.
 - d. Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) Assignments. Members assigned TAD to a cutter must have passed an authorized examination within the prior five years to temporarily serve as an afloat CO/OIC/XO/XPO, Operations Officer/Petty Officer or underway OOD.

e. Frequency.

- (1) For personnel discussed in Paragraphs 13.a. above, the July to December time frame is within the one-year requirement of the typical summer PCS season. Prior to receiving orders, a member may take the DWO examination multiple times without repercussions. Once orders are issued, the member must pass the test within two attempts.
- (2) Procrastination can lead to failure. Delayed examinations and subsequent failures impact cutter readiness, disrupt operations, affect careers and can cause stress to members' families.
- (3) References (b) and (c) establish a twenty-one (21) calendar day waiting period before retaking end of course tests (EOCT) and this waiting period applies to the DWO Examination. The 21-day period commences the first day after the day of a failed exam and therefore, the day of the exam does not count towards the wait period. Members should take into consideration this rule when planning pipeline (pre-arrival) training schedules, billet reliefs and other PCS related events. A first examination failure can significantly disrupt future plans.

14. PROCEDURES.

a. Preparation. A thorough knowledge of the rules, obtained by concentrated study of Reference (a), is required to successfully pass the examination.

- (1) Information. Information on the Rules of the Road examination administered for Merchant Mariner credentialing is available on the NMC website at: <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/examinations/>. Click on "Exam Guides" (in the middle of the page), then "Exam Guides: Regulations Effective as of March 24, 2014" to view the appropriate information. Sample exams can also be found at this link.
- (2) Hardcopies of the Navigation Rules and Regulations Handbook are available and may be requested through ETQC by ESO's for use at test sites only. Members who desire a copy may request a digital version of the handbook. All requests shall be submitted to ETQC-SMB-CST@uscg.mil.

b. Examination Procedures, Grading and Recording. Members desiring or required to take the Coast Guard DWINTO or DWINTR examination should contact their local ESO for guidance. Further information can be found at: <https://cg.portal.uscg.mil/units/forcecom/ETQC/SitePages/DWO.aspx>.

c. Prospective Command Cadre and Operations Officer/Petty Officers Procedures.

- (1) Members anticipating to be screened or in the candidate pool for an afloat command cadre or designated operations position are strongly encouraged to prepare early and take the DWO examination prior to attending the Prospective CO/XO/OIC/XPO Afloat Course (340380) or Prospective Operations Officer (POPS) course (501080). This is especially true for those members assigned to PATFORSWA cutters.

- (2) Prior to the convening of a PCO/PXO or POPS class, the Command and Operations School staff will review student qualifications in Direct Access and determine which members need to take the DWO examination. If members were unable to take the DWO examination prior to the PCO/PXO or POPS class, or failed the first attempt prior to attendance, members shall be prepared to take the DWO examination during the first week of the PCO/PXO or POPS class. The Command and Operations School stands ready to assist in scheduling the examination.
- (3) Based on Command and Operations School reports concerning DWO completion, Commandant (CG-751) will follow up with individuals who need to take the examination after attendance at the PCO/PXO or POPS courses.
- (4) Members requesting a PCO/PXO or POPS course waiver shall provide a copy or proof of DWO Examination completion to Commandant (CG-751) before the waiver is considered.

15. ADMINISTRATION.

a. Challenges to Examination Questions.

- (1) Historically, the Coast Guard Institute (CGI) gathered and responded to DWO exam question challenges. With the decommissioning of CGI, all question challenges should be forwarded to Commandant (CG-NAV) via e-mail to cgnav@uscg.mil.
- (2) Similar to merchant mariner guidance, if a Coast Guard member believes there is a problem with a question that prevents it from being answered correctly, the member can submit a challenge within 30 days of taking the examination. The member should include the question number, any calculations or references, and a complete description of the nature of the challenge. Commandant (CG-NAV) in conjunction with Commandant (CG-751) and FORCECOM (FC-T) will review DWO challenge questions and work with NMC to make corrections to the examination, if applicable. Challenges will not affect a member's score, but are valuable and will be used to improve the quality of questions and future examinations. Suggestions as to how the question could be corrected are also welcomed.

b. Refresh Questions. Annually, FORCECOM (FC-T)/Commandant (CG-751) will pull the latest DWO question bank from NMC and upload it into the Learning Management System (LMS). This will ensure that the newest questions with the latest wording are captured for the CG DWO examination that is managed/administered by ETQC/ESOs.

c. DWO Examination Review Board (DERB). The DERB is comprised of members from Commandant (CG-NAV), Commandant (CG-751), FORCECOM (FC-T) and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from other offices as selected. The DERB will meet, as needed, or at least once every three years from the promulgation of this update.

16. FORMS/REPORTS. None.

17. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Change recommendations should be routed via memo through the chain of command to the Office of Cutter Forces, Commandant (CG-751).

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