



Surveys - Alternative Compliance Scheme

Notice to all operators, shipowners, masters and UK Recognised Organisations

This notice replaces MGN 537.

This notice should be read in conjunction with MSN 1672 (as amended), MSN 1751 (as amended) and MSN 1848

Summary

This guidance note advises on:

- The requirements of the Alternative Compliance Scheme (ACS) for shipowners/operators and Recognised Organisations;
- The appropriate certification to be issued to participants of the scheme;
- The requirements for vessels (new buildings, flag-ins and existing vessels) under ACS;
- Circumstances where ACS may be revoked from participating vessels;
- The availability of the Enhanced Authorisation Scheme, which is new and is different from ACS. Details of EAS are published separately in MGN 561.

1. Introduction/ Background

1.1 The Alternative Compliance Scheme (ACS) streamlines the survey and certification process whilst maintaining standards and minimising duplication of effort with Recognised Organisations (ROs).

1.2 This scheme delegates all survey work to the United Kingdom's (UK) authorised Recognised Organisations. This allows the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to maintain an oversight of the structure of the ship and its management systems through ACS inspections (for issuance of Certificates of Inspection), International Safety Management (ISM) audits, International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) audits and Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 inspections. All statutory certificates except ISM Document of Compliance (DOC)/Safety Management Certificate (SMC), International Ship Security Certificate (ISSC) and MLC Certificate (which remain the responsibility of the MCA) are issued by the UK Recognised Organisations, commonly known as classification societies.



1.3 From 2017, an Enhanced Authorisation Scheme (EAS) has been introduced, details of which are published in MGN 561. EAS will require a phase in period in order to implement on a voluntary basis across the UK ship register, during this time EAS and ACS will be run in parallel. For ships not on EAS, the Alternative Compliance Scheme (ACS) remains available for eligible vessels. Once EAS is fully implemented, ACS may be withdrawn.

2. Eligibility

2.1 The Alternative Compliance Scheme is available on a voluntary basis to all UK registered vessels other than passenger ships, which trade internationally and to which the principal maritime conventions apply.

2.2 For a vessel to be eligible and to be considered, the following conditions shall apply:

- The vessel has not been detained within the previous 36 months;
- During any port state control inspection within the previous 12 months no inspection report shall have recorded more than 5 deficiencies;
- The vessel is classed with one of the Recognised Organisations authorised by the UK viz. ABS, BV, DNV-GL, LR, ClassNK and RINA;
- The owner shall permit access by the MCA to any or all records, files, reports, documents and certificates held or issued by the ACS Recognised Organisation the vessel is classed with; and,
- The owner or operator shall notify the MCA one-month in advance of all in water surveys or dry docking dates.

3. Entry into the Scheme

3.1 The owner or operator of a vessel applies to the UK Ship Register (UKSR) for enrolment into the scheme. This is made by completing the form titled *Request to Participate in the Alternative Compliance Scheme for UK Registered Vessels* (MSF 4753) and submitting this together with the Application for Survey and Inspection (MSF 5100), both are available on the MCA website or directly from a Marine office. The UK Ship Register verifies the eligibility of the vessel to enter the scheme. On confirmation of the vessel satisfying the entry criteria, the UK Ship Register forwards this confirmation to the Survey Operations Branch.

3.2 A date where the vessel can be inspected is included in the application form. For new buildings or ships flagging in to the UK the inspection may be undertaken on delivery or during the surveys for change of flag. Upon successful completion of inspection an Interim Certificate of Inspection (Col) (MSF 1114) is issued by the MCA Lead Surveyor or Customer Service Manager (CSM) with the same expiry date as the vessel's Interim Safety Management Certificate (SMC). Another inspection is conducted in conjunction with the initial ISM/ISPS audits and a full term Col is issued with the SMC. For ships already on the flag the full term Col (MSF 1115) is issued, if the CSM is satisfied with the condition of the vessel. All surveys except the ISM, ISPS audits and MLC 2006 inspections are undertaken by the relevant ACS Recognised Organisation as they fall due. The Col indicates that the vessel is on the ACS scheme.



4. Responsibilities under the ACS scheme

Sl. No.	Owner / Operator	MCA	Recognised Organisation
New Builds			
1	Send an application for entry into the scheme to the UKSR	<p>Verify entry criteria, advise applicant of outcome and send confirmation to Survey Operations Branch, owner, CSM and RO about entry to the scheme – UKSR.</p> <p>Issue Instrument of Appointment (IOA) to the class surveyors – Survey Operations Branch.</p> <p>Visit the shipyard to assess the quality assurance (QA) procedures and the class society local office (only for the 1st ship in a series) – Lead Surveyor.</p> <p>However there may be circumstances where MCA may waive the right to visit the shipyard for quality assessment if in the opinion of MCA the yard has built similar types of ships under other European Union (EU) and/or Red Ensign Group (REG) flags and where the operational performance of those ships have caused no concern.</p>	Carry out surveys during new construction on receipt of IOA.
2	Request for interim Col inspection, ISM, ISPS interim audits and MLC 2006 interim inspection on completion of new-build.	<p>Issue interim Col, interim SMC, ISSC and MLC 2006 certificates - Lead Surveyor.</p> <p>If MCA is not attending the vessel upon delivery at shipyard, no interim Col will be issued.</p>	Issue all statutory certificates on completion of new construction surveys.
3	Request for initial audits of ISM, ISPS and MLC 2006.	Issue full term Col with the SMC after an inspection in conjunction with the initial ISM/ISPS/MLC 2006 audit/inspection – Lead Surveyor.	



Sl. No.	Owner / Operator	MCA	Recognised Organisation
4	Request for surveys as they fall due.	Carry out an inspection in conjunction with the intermediate / renewal audits / inspections for ISM, ISPS and MLC 2006 and issue full term Col or endorse the certificate as the case may be – Lead Surveyor.	Carry out surveys and endorse certificates as required (no IOA required).
5	Notify MCA CSM of dates and location of docking or in-water surveys.	Attend docking survey based on a statistical sample.	Carry out surveys as required (no IOA required)
Flag In			
1	Send an application for entry into the scheme.	Verify entry criteria, advise applicant of outcome and send confirmation to Survey Operations Branch, owner, CSM and RO about entry to the scheme – UKSR.	
2	Request for flag in surveys.	Issue Instrument of Appointment (IOA) to the class surveyors – Survey Operations Branch. Issue interim Col with the interim SMC – Lead Surveyor	Carry out flag in surveys on receipt of IOA. Issue all statutory certificates on completion of surveys
3	Request for initial audits of ISM, ISPS and MLC 2006.	Issue full term Col with the SMC after an inspection in conjunction with the initial ISM/ISPS/MLC 2006 audit/inspection – Lead Surveyor	
4	Request for surveys as they fall due.	Carry out an inspection in conjunction with the intermediate / renewal audits / inspections for ISM, ISPS and MLC 2006 and issue full term Col or endorse the certificate as necessary – Lead Surveyor.	Carry out surveys as required (no IOA required)
5	Notify MCA CSM of dates and location of docking or in-water surveys.	Attend docking survey based on a statistical sample.	Carry out surveys as required (no IOA required)



Sl. No.	Owner / Operator	MCA	Recognised Organisation
Existing ships			
1	Send an application for entry into the scheme.	Verify entry criteria, advise applicant of outcome and send confirmation to Survey Operations Branch, owner, CSM and RO about entry to the scheme – UKSR. If satisfied with the condition of the vessel, issue Full term Col harmonised with the SMC and MLC certificate – CSM.	
2	Request for surveys as they fall due.	Carry out an inspection in conjunction with the intermediate / renewal audits / inspections for ISM, ISPS and MLC 2006 and issue full term Col or endorse the certificate as necessary – Lead Surveyor.	Carry out surveys as required (no IOA required) and continue endorsing certificates issued by the MCA until their expiry after which new certificates can be issued by Class.
3	Notify MCA CSM of dates and location of docking or in-water surveys.	Attend docking survey based on a statistical sample.	Carry out surveys as required (no IOA required).

5. Damage surveys and Marine Casualties

5.1 Nothing in the Scheme shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the authority of the MCA to exercise control over vessels as provided in existing laws and regulations. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) may conduct marine accident investigations as authorised and required by UK legislation. Following any marine accident participating vessel owners must authorise the ACS Recognised Organisation to assess the condition of the affected vessel and approve repairs. Generally, the MCA will accept the RO's approval of recommended repairs in non-reportable marine incidents. In cases involving reportable marine incidents, the MCA may take into account the RO's repair recommendations.

5.2 The MCA retains ultimate authority to review and approve temporary repair proposals in cases in which damage to the vessel involves or is likely to result in a pollution incident or safety hazard. Generally, the MCA will accept the Recognised Organisations' approval of recommended permanent repairs when the vessel no longer poses an immediate pollution or navigation safety threat.



6. Revocation of a Col and Detentions

6.1 The MCA retains the authority to deny or revoke certification under ACS, or may consider detaining participating vessels under any of the following circumstances:

- the vessel's involvement in a serious marine accident, casualty or pollution incident;
- failure to correct an ACS Recognised Organisations' condition of class or statutory deficiency within the permitted time;
- expiry or invalidation of required documents;
- Port State Control (PSC) detention which in view of MCA is technically justified. In reaching this decision, MCA shall technically evaluate the PSC inspection report; or,
- Repeated failure in rectifying deficiencies identified at PSC inspections and/or surveys.

A detention may result in a vessel being re-examined more frequently by the MCA.

6.2 The owner/operator and will be informed by MCA if the Certificate of Inspection is revoked or denied.

Annex

Table of authorisation for issuing statutory certification.

More Information

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Annex - Statutory certificates authorised to ACS Recognised Organisations by MCA

STATUTORY CERTIFICATE	Initial	Full Term	Short Term	Annual/ Intermediate	Exemption	Interim
Cargo Ship Safety Construction (SAFCON)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Cargo Ship Safety Equipment Certificate (SEC)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Cargo Ship Safety Radio Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Cargo Ship Safety Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
High Speed Craft Safety Certificate / Permit to Operate	N	N	N	N	N	N/A
International Oil Pollution Prevention Certificate (IOPP)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Pollution Prevention Certificate for the Carriage of Noxious Liquid Substances in Bulk	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Sewage Pollution Prevention Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Air Pollution Prevention Certificate (MARPOL Annex VI)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Energy Efficiency Certificate (MARPOL Annex VI)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Load Line Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Tonnage Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Anti-Fouling System Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Document of Authorisation for the Carriage of Grain	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Liquefied Gases in Bulk (GC & IGC Codes)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
International Certificate of Fitness for the Carriage of Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (IBC & BCH Codes)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
MODU Code Statement of Compliance	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Document of Compliance for Carriage of Dangerous Goods or Bulk Cargoes (IMDG/BC)	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Special Purpose Ship Statement of Compliance	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Diving System Safety Certificate	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Certificate of Survey of Vessel Standing by Offshore Installations	N	N	N	F	N	N/A
Ballast Water Management Statement of Compliance	F	F	A	F	N	N/A
Maritime Labour Convention 2006 Certificate	N	N	N	N	N	C ⁽¹⁾



STATUTORY CERTIFICATE	Initial	Full Term	Short Term	Annual/ Intermediate	Exemption	Interim
ISM Safety Management Certificate	N	N	N	N	N	C⁽¹⁾
International Ship Security Certificate	N	N	N	N	N	N
Passenger Ship Safety Certificate	N	N	N	N	N	N/A

F - Full authorisation⁽²⁾,

N – No,

C - Case by Case basis,

A – Advise MCA of the need to issue a short term certificate where significant defects would affect the issue of a full term certificate.

⁽¹⁾ Audit carried out in exceptional cases by Class, certificate issued by MCA

⁽²⁾ As defined in the MCA Agreement with each Recognised Organisation in accordance with Directive 2009/15/EC

