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## MEMORANDUM

Coast Guard District Eight Coastal Region, Auxiliary Policy Directive TRNG-14-02

Subj: QUALIFICATION EXAMINER (QE) SESSION GUIDELINES

Ref: (a) Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual, COMDTINST M1679.51A  
(b) Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series)

- PURPOSE.** The purpose of this directive is to provide uniform policy to Qualification Examiners (QE) on how to perform QE sessions within District Eight Coastal Region (D8CR). D8CR QE's performing QE sessions in D8CR for members outside D8CR's membership shall conform to these policies. D8CR QEs conducting QE sessions outside of D8CR, with concurrence from the Operations Training Officer (OTO), on members of other regions shall defer to the region's OTO for policy guidance.
- DIRECTIVES AFFECTED.** None.
- DISCUSSION.** The purpose of a Qualification Examiner (QE) session is to assess a candidate's ability to perform all required tasks as stated in the applicable initial or currency check sheets without prompting or hesitation. No additional tasks may be added to the Commandant established check sheets nor may any tasks be deleted or abbreviated without prior approval of the Operations Training Officer (OTO). A QE session is the final step in the member's training cycle, but it is not a training session. Once training begins during a QE session by the QE or any member of the session's boat crew or supporting boat crew, the session is over.
- ROLE OF THE QE.** Qualified Examiners (QE) are the backbone of the boat crew training program. Whereas a QE session is not a training session, QEs should be heavily involved in their Flotilla and Division boat crew training programs. Applicable flotilla and division staff officers should be working hand in hand with the area's QEs and Area Qualification Examiner Coordinators (AQEC) to set members within this program up for success. A QE session should not be the first time a member, who has been training for months in the boat crew program, engages with a QE. Though QEs may be limited on whose boat crew PQS tasks they can sign off, they should remain active trainers for all members desiring boat crew qualifications. QEs are directed to be active classroom instructors as well as on the water instructors.
- RESPONSIBILITIES:** Everyone in the Flotilla and/or Division leadership has the duty to ensure that candidates within the boat crew training program are set up for success on the day of their QE session. The QE has the duty of providing the candidate with a fair evaluation of the candidate's basic skills as outlined on the applicable check-sheet on an acceptable operational platform while abiding by all applicable policies governing boat crew operations. The QE is responsible for providing the candidate with positive, constructive feedback on the candidate's performance at the conclusion of the session.

- a. The Area Qualification Examiner Coordinator (AQEC) has the responsibility, among other duties, to ensure that the candidate's training record is complete prior to assigning a QE to facilitate the session. This includes ensuring that the candidate has completed all requirements to be given a QE session. The AQEC shall confirm that the candidate has completed all ICS, Auxiliary TCT class, 1 hour TCT refresher, etc and that such requirements have been entered into AUXDATA prior to scheduling a QE session. This does not relieve the QE from inspecting all paperwork presented at the session for completeness.
- b. The Flotilla Information Systems Officer is responsible for verifying the candidate is not in REYR status due to the underway hours requirement. In the case of coxswain check-rides, the FSO-IS is responsible to ensure the candidate's Rules of the Road exam is current and document the date of the last passed exam on Appendix F: Third Year Currency Maintenance. The FSO-IS shall ensure all test requirements and the TCT requirements have been met by the candidate as well.
- c. Perhaps the greatest responsibility is that of the candidate's Flotilla Commander. The Flotilla Commander (FC) is responsible for recommending a candidate for an initial and/or third year currency check-ride. The QE is only there to evaluate a candidate's performance. This activity may result in either the QE recommending the candidate be qualified or that more work is needed before qualification can be granted. The FC is responsible for ensuring the candidate is ready for evaluation. If, in the opinion of the FC, a candidate is not ready, the FC should inform the member, provide opportunities to get the member ready and inform the FSO-MT and AQEC of his decision. The FC is also responsible for ensuring that the candidate has all of the required personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to complete the QE session.

6. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS:** Qualification Examiners serve many roles in order to set the membership up for success. One of these roles is that of Guardians of the Standards. Should a QE observe diversion from established policy, it is the QE's duty to correct the problem through education. When a QE sees something that is inconsistent with policy and does nothing about it, the QE is communicating to the member that their incorrect actions or performance is in compliance. This does not set the membership up for success in the long term and may be a safety concern in the short term. Prior to conducting a QE session, the QE shall ensure the following standards are met. If any of the below requirements are not met, the QE session shall be immediately cancelled.

- a. The candidate is to be in an authorized boat crew uniform, per reference (b), for all aspects of a QE session.
- b. The candidate is required to have and to wear while underway the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the operating area and time of season. Whereas an Orders Issuing Authority may issue a waiver for PPE in order to execute missions of a one-time nature, no waivers may be issued for such requirements for QE sessions except where unusual weather conditions could create a potential health concern. In such cases, it is preferred that the QE session be re-scheduled rather than seeking a waiver. The PPE required for a boat crew member includes the proper flotation device, whistle, mirror and strobe light. These shall be connected to the flotation device or a separate container worn in conjunction with the personal flotation device by a lanyard to each piece of equipment. In the case of the coxswain, a personal locator beacon (PLB) is required. Initial coxswain may not have PLBs issued to them; therefore the coxswain of record must have this. All PPE shall be in serviceable condition. All members of the facility on which the candidate is performing on, as well as those of any supporting facilities, must meet this requirement.

- c. When both the candidate's vessel and supporting boat are Auxiliary operational facilities, all members aboard both the candidate's facility and the supporting facility must be members of the Auxiliary. A QE session is not the time to have visitors aboard for recruiting efforts. Orders Issuing Authorities have the authority to grant civilian 'riders' aboard Auxiliary facilities in order to support Auxiliary recruiting efforts. However, this is not allowed for QE sessions.
- d. All Auxiliary vessels used during the QE session must be current Auxiliary operational facilities. Active Duty vessels may be used as the supporting facility during QE sessions. A supporting vessel is defined as the vessel in distress for the purposes of a QE session. An Auxiliary boat crew program candidate may not use an Active Duty vessel in place of an operational facility. At no time may a private vessel, not an Auxiliary facility, be used during a QE session.
- e. All operational facilities used in QE sessions shall have a current ANSC 7003 or 7008 on file. All equipment onboard the facility shall be as per the facility's current ANSC 7003 OR 7008. Facilities shall have properly spaced numbering if applicable and proper USCG Auxiliary markings.
- f. All members involved with the QE session shall have orders.

7. **SHORESIDE COMPONENT:** In D8CR the shore side component of an initial QE session includes the oral board, knot tying and for coxswain candidates, a plotting exercise. For third year currency maintenance, the shore side component encompasses knot tying, questions focusing on policy and for the coxswain a navigation exercise. All of these tasks are to be conducted shore side and may not be performed while underway for evaluation. This is so in order for the candidate to concentrate on one task at a time while underway without unnecessary distractions.

- a. Knot tying. Only those knots listed on the check sheet are to be tied for evaluation. Note that the check sheet does not require that these knots be tied around anything. All knot tying demonstrations will be conducted individually by a candidate, not in groups.

(1) Initial knot tying requirements. Only the boat crew is required to tie four knots. This should be the same knots listed in the third year currency maintenance check sheet. Initial coxswains and personal watercraft operators may have to tie knots only if the QE selects that portion of the subset of tasks during the oral board.

(2) Currency knot tying requirements. In this case both the coxswain and the boat crew member are required to tie four knots. The coxswain and crew member must tie the bowline, clove hitch, sheet bend and a round turn and half hitch. A PWC operator does not have to tie any knots in order to meet currency requirements as a PWC operator.

- b. Oral Boards are required for initial qualification. Candidates for oral boards or currency maintenance question sessions shall not be given the questions prior to the board. QEs that are very active in boat crew training programs are encouraged to provide questions to candidates during their training in order to emphasize key areas of learning, but these should not be asked verbatim at an oral board nor should they comprise all of the QE's question bank.
- c. Round robin style oral boards and question sessions shall not be conducted. An oral board or question session shall be administered to one candidate at a time. Such questioning of a candidate shall be conducted in as private a setting as practical. There should be no on lookers at a candidate's oral board or question session.

(1) Oral board are for initial QE sessions and should be comprised of no more than 25 to 30 questions related to a candidate's knowledge, duties and function for the position the QEs session is evaluating. Simple yes or no questions or questions needing a short answer should

be avoided. Stump-the-chump questions are unnecessary and serve only to demoralize a candidate and therefore shall be avoided.

(2) Question sessions are for third year currency maintenance and are required as tasks 15, 16 and 11 on check ride sheets for crewmember, coxswain and PWC operator respectively. These sessions should comprise no more than 15 to 20 questions focusing on policies. However a minority of the questions may be function and knowledge based. Coxswains may be asked navigation questions that require chart work. However these questions should not involve the plotting of a search pattern as that is a specific task need for completion of the currency session. QEs are reminded that these other chart work based questions are merely a small part of the overall question session and should not compose such a portion that missing these chart questions alone would be enough to end the QE session.

- d. Chart work is required for coxswains. For coxswain candidates operating in areas with no charts designated for the area, chart work shall be performed on an authorized training chart available from the Auxiliary National Stock Center or a locally produced training chart. This task will not be waived.
- e. There will be only one coxswain candidate per chart. Having multiple coxswain candidates solving the same navigation problem on the same chart is unauthorized. There should be no on lookers around the coxswain candidates while the candidates are completing their navigation exercise.

(1) In D8CR an initial coxswain QE session the candidate must label and plot correctly three courses, convert true course to compass courses, determine speed/time/distance computations, calculate ETAs, determine set and drift and properly obtain fixes. The candidate must also properly plot three legs of a search pattern. A coxswain must do all of this, not some of these tasks. This requires considerable work for a QE to prepare. Though this task for evaluation is conducted shore side, the candidate must show that he is safely navigating the facility during the underway portion of the session, including knowing the facility's position. Simply reading the latitude and longitude off the GPS does not satisfy fixing the facility's position underway.

(2) Third year currency maintenance requires that a coxswain simply plot three legs of a search pattern.

(3) Accuracy of chart work is a must for coxswains. The following is guidance regarding acceptable tolerances for chart work:

- A. Speed - within 1 knots
- B. Time - within 2 minutes
- C. Position - within 200 yards
- D. Distance – within 200 yards
- E. Course – within 10 degrees

8. **UNDERWAY COMPONENT:** The number one concern for the QE during the underway portion is safety. QEs shall immediately stop any QE session for a major safety violation or constantly repeated minor safety violations.

- a. Though qualification tasks related to night time underway operations are not waived, no portion of an underway QE session may be performed at night.
- b. A candidate is required only to complete the tasks as required on the applicable check ride sheet. No drills can be combined into one drill, such as a man overboard while conducting the towing

portion of the check ride. This should not be confused with tasks that are routinely completed while other events are taking place such as look out duties. Most tasks for currency maintenance sessions are not as in depth as those for initial certification. Note that for an initial coxswain QE session the candidate must moor the disable vessel to a pier or floating dock, but a third year currency candidate does not.

- c. Though there is nothing stating in either the initial or third year currency maintenance check ride sheets that the coxswain candidate actually has to steering and maneuver the facility personally, the candidate must have absolute control of the facility. In the case where the coxswain of record is steering and maneuvering the facility under the command of the coxswain candidate during a coxswain QE session and the coxswain of record maneuvers the facility without direction from the coxswain candidate at any point, that portion of the session shall be considered incomplete and must be repeated until the coxswain has shown complete control of the facility.
- d. The supporting or disabled boat used during a QE session is an important asset to the QE during the session. As such the QE should meet with members of the supporting boat and set expectations. These expectations should include the boat crew's role playing behavior. The supporting boat crew should pose as regular civilians on a recreational outing. For role playing purposes, the supporting boat crew should not do anything unless they are directed by the candidates of the QE's facility. Supporting crew members shall refrain from playing the part of obnoxious, intoxicated boaters. Naturally, the session is stopped and marked incomplete if the supporting boat crew begins training the candidate.
- e. Noted that there is no first aid task evaluation for any candidate during a QE session.
- f. With the exception of the PWC operator having to remount a PWC from the water, no other scheduled live persons in the water are authorized during a QE session. Unscheduled persons in the water during a QE session require the submission of a Mishap report via the Orders Issuing Authority and notification of the Operations Training Officer within 24 hours of such an event.
- g. Nervousness sometimes affects candidates to the point where they make mistakes they normally would not. To this end a candidate may fail a drill or two and be given another opportunity to successfully complete the drill during the same QE session as long as no feedback other than the drill was unsatisfactory and no training takes place.

9. **COMBINATION SESSIONS:** Multiple QE sessions are authorized in D8CR. Many Divisions have a QE weekend once or twice a year in order to facilitate scheduling, reduce QE travel costs and to have senior leadership present. Often time QE sessions are part of a Flotilla boat crew program.

- a. When scheduling multiple QE sessions to be completed in one day, the AQEC/QEs shall take crew fatigue standards into account. Crew fatigue waivers shall not be issued for QE sessions. Conducting a thorough, quality QE session should take between two to three hours, depending upon initial or currency requirements. A QE should be performing no more than four QE sessions in a 24 hour period. If there are more candidates than a QE can attend to without entering crew fatigue, add more QEs or reschedule some candidates for another time.
- b. A QE may conduct two sessions at once. A session can be a currency session for both the coxswain and a crew member. If both these candidates are current at the time of the third year currency maintenance session, the candidates can also be the coxswain and crew member of record. The session can be made up of two boat crew members needing third year currency maintenance or one needing an initial session and the other crew member needing currency maintenance. If two boat crew members are scheduled at the same time, all drills need to be conducted twice with each crew member changing positions so that all crew members get to perform all tasks required. No other combinations or numbers of members per session is authorized.

- c. A coxswain of record may serve as a boat crew member for a coxswain candidate provided he maintains his role as crew member and realizes he is still responsible for the safety of the facility.
- d. A coxswain who has completed his QE session for a third year currency maintenance or who is scheduled to perform such task next may serve as the boat crew member for a coxswain currently sitting through a third year currency maintenance session.
- e. At least one week must pass after completing a boat crew college before a candidate may sit for a QE session. A weekend boat crew college with QE sessions scheduled on the last day is not authorized. The end of a boat crew college means that all classroom instruction, underway instruction, and/or practice QE sessions have ended. QEs of record may not have any training contact with any candidate for one week prior to conducting a QE session on a candidate. This applies to assisting QEs as well.

10. **COMMENTS:** At the conclusion of a QE session, QEs will document areas where a candidate needs improvement and areas where the candidate surpassed expectations as established by the requirements of the applicable check sheet. These comments are to be recorded on the check ride sheets in the space provided, in the margins and/or around the individual tasks or on a separate, but attached sheet of paper. Written comments must be legible. Forms turn in without comments will be returned to the QE, with no action taken by the OTO to enter information into AUXDATA until comments are completed. Comments should be specific with the point of reference being the task requirements as listed on the applicable check sheet. Comments such as 'best I have ever seen' do not have a reference based on established tasks. The recording of areas of excellence and needs improvement are necessary to evaluate both a candidate's and a QE's performance. Furthermore this documentation is offered up to the training staff to identify training successes and areas that trend 'needs improvement' so that they can refocus their boat crew training program's emphasis if necessary in order to better set their membership up for success. Should a QE observe excellent performance or a practice that needs to be addressed that is not on the established check sheet, this should be recorded as well in order to inform the Boat Crew Advisory Board of field practices. This documentation will allow the Boat Crew Advisory Board to distribute 'best practices' to other divisions and districts as well as promote possible changes to the boat crew program through the Standardization Team.

11. **PAPERWORK SUBMISSION:** Upon completion of a QE session the following paperwork shall be forwarded to the OTO via the QE chain of leadership. For initial qualification, the QE shall forward the complete applicable Appendix B: Mentor Tracking Form, the completed Dockside Oral Examination check sheet, the completed Underway Check Ride, and Appendix: USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew Program Qualification Letter. Third year currency maintenance sessions require the submission of the applicable underway check ride check sheet and Appendix F: Third Year Currency Maintenance. No other forms or attachments should be sent to the Director's office at the conclusion of a QE session. In the event that a candidate does not complete a session by the candidate's own decision or can't be recommended for certification by the QE only the applicable oral board (if applicable) and the underway check ride sheets, annotated with why the session was stopped and/or what areas need improvement shall be sent to the OTO. All of these packages may be traditionally mailed to the Director's office or scanned and sent e-mail, but not both.

12. **QE'S QE SESSION:** QEs shall have their third year currency maintenance performed by the Division's AQEC. In the event the Division AQEC is unable to perform the needed mission, the Chief Qualification Examiner Coordinator (CQEC), OTO or, with prior approval from the Director, an AQEC from another Division will conduct the session. The AQEC's third year currency maintenance session will be conducted by either the CQEC or the OTO. In the event these two are not available, with prior

approval of the Director, an AQEC from another Division will administer the session. The OTO will conduct the CQEC's third year currency maintenance session.

13. **REPEAT SESSIONS:** Sometimes a candidate is not fully prepared to successfully complete a QE session. Most of the time a session ending in a negative recommendation finding is due to the lack of preparation on the candidate's part, sometimes it is due to the candidate not being set up for success by his mentors and chain of leadership.

- a. Regardless of the reason for a session resulting in a negative recommendation finding, the QE shall submit the applicable check ride sheets to the OTO. The first page will have the wording "Not Recommended" written at the top of the page. The sheets will have been marked with what tasks were completed successfully and which ones were not and comments recorded as to what task(s) was consider below standard. When the candidate returns for a subsequent follow up QE session, the candidate needs only to complete tasks not considered acceptable on the original check ride. A candidate has 90 calendar days to complete a follow-up QE session in order to not have to repeat all tasks. In the event that for some unusual reason this is not enough time for the candidate to complete a follow-up session, the candidate's AQEC may request a waiver from the OTO. Simply not being able to execute the task(s) is not an unacceptable reason. However, should the candidate need a third QE session due to not satisfactorily completing the original initial or currency scheduled session, the candidate shall complete a full session.
- b. QE sessions that are not completed due to weather, facilities being diverted for SAR, etc are not considered a full session unless the QE has observe enough of the candidates performance to render a negative recommendation. If this is so, follow the steps in 13.a. If the QE has observed enough of the candidate's performance to render at positive recommendation, the session is to be continued. This does not result in the incomplete packages being forwarded to the OTO. The QE shall use the original check sheets and continue the session at the next convenient opportunity

14. **QUESTIONS:** Questions, concerns and/or recommendations regarding this directive can be addressed to the OTO, via the QE chain of leadership.



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