



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Maritime Safety Authority**

# ISM Code Certification Guidelines for Regulated Australian Vessels

December 2020

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# 1. Introduction

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is the competent authority responsible for regulation of the ISM Code and its requirements in Australia. From the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 AMSA has delegated ISM authorisation, to conduct required audits and issue applicable certificates, to recognised organisations.

The purpose of this Guide is to:

- assist companies<sup>1</sup> in understanding how Australia is implementing the ISM Code, and
- provide information on the mechanisms for the survey and certification of a vessel under the ISM Code.

*Note: This Guide is advisory and designed to provide a distinction between the different elements of relevant legislation and the Code. This Guide should not be read in isolation and interested parties are advised to consult applicable legislation and the Convention when considering the application of the ISM Code.*

Any questions relating to the ISM Code should be forwarded to [ism@amsa.gov.au](mailto:ism@amsa.gov.au).

Additional advice may also be found in industry rules and guidelines such as:

- Marine Order 58, Safe Management of Vessels (MO58)
- Marine Order 31, SOLAS and non-SOLAS certification (MO38)
- International Safety Management (ISM) Code
- SOLAS Chapter IX – Management for the Safe Operation of Ships
- IMO Resolution A.107(28) – Guidelines on implementation of ISM Code by Administration
- IMO MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.8 - Revised Guidelines for the Operational Implementation of the ISM Code by Companies
- IMO MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.6 – Guidance on the Qualifications, Training and Experience necessary for undertaking the role of the Designated Person under the provisions of the ISM Code
- ICS / ISF Guidelines on the application of the IMO International Safety Management (ISM) Code.

## 1.1. Terms and definitions

The terms and definitions used in the Guide are from the ISM Code, the Navigation Act 2012, and Marine Order 58. Considerations should be given to relevant legislation and the Convention in conjunction with this Guide.

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<sup>1</sup> As per the ISM Code, Company means the Owner of the ship or any other organization or person such as the Manager, or the bareboat Charterer, who has assumed the responsibility for operation of the ship from the Shipowner and who on assuming such responsibility has agreed to take over all the duties and responsibility imposed by the Code.

## 2. Application of the ISM Code

In Australia, the *International Safety Management* (ISM) Code is implemented primarily through the *Navigation Act 2012*. Implementation is supported by domestic legislation including *Marine Order 58* (Safe Management of Vessels).

A Regulated Australian Vessel (RAV) is defined in section 15 of the Navigation Act 2012.

In accordance with SOLAS Chapter IX, MO 58 applies to all Convention and RAV vessels regardless of the date of construction, as follows:

- a. all passenger ships, including passenger high-speed crafts;
- b. all cargo ships, including cargo high-speed crafts, of 500 GRT or more;
- c. mobile offshore drilling units propelled by mechanical means of 500 GRT or more; and
- d. any company owning, operating or managing such a ship or unit.

The ISM Code does not apply to government-operated ships or ships used for non-commercial purposes.

Note that all RAV's <500 GRT require a declaration that an ISM system, meeting Part A, is implemented onboard as per MO 31. This is to be forwarded to [ism@amsa.gov.au](mailto:ism@amsa.gov.au) before the initial voyage.

## 3. ISM Certification of Regulated Australian Vessels

Regulated Australian vessels of 500 GRT and over that are proceeding on an overseas voyage or for use on an overseas voyage are required to obtain ISM Code certification. Non-SOLAS vessels that are regulated Australian vessels must meet the requirements in MO 31.

For the purpose of the ISM Code, AMSA appointed Recognised Organisations (ROs) have been authorised as 'Issuing bodies'. This authorisation permits ROs to conduct audits and issue AMSA statutory certification, including Document of Compliance and Safety Management Certificates.

Recognised Organisations are listed in Marine Order 1 (Administration). A current list is also available at [www.amsa.gov.au/vessels/ship-safety/flag-state-administration/](http://www.amsa.gov.au/vessels/ship-safety/flag-state-administration/).

### 3.1. Application and certification process

The process shall follow the ISM code and guidelines, as summarised below:

- a. A Company should apply for issue of a Document of Compliance or Safety Management Certificate to a recognised organisation.
- b. The certification and audit process shall follow the recognised organisation's instructions, rules, MO 58 and ISM Code.
- c. Subsequent to the issue of DOC certificate by the recognised organisation, the Company should apply for Safety Management Certificate(s) for its ship(s), as mandated by SOLAS Chapter IX/Reg.2 and MO 58/Div.4, by submitting an application to the recognised organisation.

## Interim DOC and SMC

- a. Interim DOC and SMC will be issued to a Company or vessel in accordance with the ISM Code and MO 58.
- b. An Interim DOC should be valid for 12 months. There is no provision to extend an Interim DOC in the ISM Code or MO 58. An Interim SMC should be valid for 6 months and under special circumstances, the Interim SMC may be extended for a further 6 months.
- c. The RO will issue an Interim DOC or SMC upon satisfactory completion of an interim assessment.

## Full Term DOC and SMC (INITIAL and RENEWAL)

- a. A full term DOC or SMC will be issued by the recognised organisation, following their procedures and ISM code.
- b. The period of validity of a full term DOC or SMC will be five (5) years. This is subject to the annual verification audit being carried out within three (3) months before or after the initial verification audit date or, in the case of SMC, subject to the intermediate verification audit carried out between the second and third anniversary after the initial verification audit date. The expiry date of the DOC or SMC will be five (5) years, minus one (1) day, after the initial verification audit date.
- c. A new full term DOC or SMC issued after a renewal audit will have the same expiry date as the existing full term DOC or SMC, plus five (5) years, provided the renewal audit is completed within three (3) months prior to the original expiry date of the certificate. When the renewal audit is completed more than three (3) months prior to the original expiry date of the DOC or SMC, the new full term DOC or SMC will be issued with an expiry date of five (5) years, minus 1 day, after the renewal verification audit date. When the renewal audit is completed after the expiry date of the existing SMC, the new SMC will be valid from the date of completion of the renewal audit to a date not exceeding five (5) years from the date of expiry of the existing SMC.
- d. It is the responsibility of the Company to advise the recognised organisation of any changes affecting their ISM certification, including change of DPA. The Company must also lodge notices when it changes name or changes address.<sup>1 2 2</sup> Similarly notices must be lodged when the vessel changes names<sup>3</sup>
- e. It is the responsibility of the Company to make copies of the DOC and distribute to each ship covered by the Company's SMS.

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<sup>2</sup> When an ISM Company changes name or changes address, the company must:

- complete form AMSA484 and lodge it with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission within 28 days;
- complete Form AMSA210 (Change of name or address) and lodge it with the Australian Registrar of Ships within 14 days after the change occurs;
- complete form AMSA174 (Amendment to the Continuous Synopsis Record) and lodge it with the Australian Registrar of Ships within 14 days after the change occurs.

*Note: The company name and address details must be exactly the same as those recorded by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.*

*If the ISM Company is also the Registered Owner of a vessel, then the company must send the existing Certificate of Registration to the Australian Registrar of Ships so it can be updated.*

*The new Certificate of Registration or Continuous Synopsis Record will show the company's current "Registered Office Address". The new Document of Compliance will show the company's current "Principal Place of Business Address".*

<sup>3</sup> When a vessel changes name, the company must complete Form AMSA200 (Change of name) and lodge it with the Australian Registrar of Ships.

## Annual Endorsement of DOC and Intermediate Endorsement of SMC

- a. The recognised organisation will endorse the full term DOC or SMC on completion of an annual or intermediate audit as per their procedures and ISM code.
- b. A DOC or SMC will not be endorsed if a major non-conformity exists.
- c. If an annual or intermediate verification is not endorsed within the DOC periodical audit window (between +/- 3 months of the initial verification anniversary date) or the SMC periodical audit window (between the 2nd and 3rd anniversary dates of the initial verification date) the full term DOC or SMC becomes invalid.

## 4. Notes on FPSO and FSO

It is mandatory for both the operating/management company and the FPSO/FSO to comply with the ISM Code and be issued with DOC and SMC, respectively.

When this FPSO/FSO (also known as 'the facility') is connected to the seabed the vessel is under the jurisdiction of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA).

The company will normally declare in the facility safety case and/or safety management system that the FPSO/FSO must comply with applicable mandatory marine regulations and Classification Society Rules. Hence, the Company and the FPSO/FSO must maintain their ISM Code certification at all times. Accordingly, MO 58 will apply. If the Company DOC or 'facility' SMC is cancelled, withdrawn and varied, NOPSEMA will be informed through AMSA.

## 5. Recognition of overseas Document of Compliance

Where an overseas company operating outside of Australia operates and/or manages Australian Registered Vessels from their overseas office, or through a subsidiary Australian office, then AMSA may recognise the Company DOC for the ship type as issued by:

- a. one of AMSA recognised IACS members on behalf of the relevant overseas Administration; or
- b. the relevant overseas administration.

The company should submit its safety management system manual to AMSA, [ism@amsa.gov.au](mailto:ism@amsa.gov.au) for review.

Upon recognition of the overseas issued company DOC by AMSA, AMSA will issue a letter of approval confirming the recognition with any applicable requirements or special conditions as follows.

## 6. Australian flag vessels detained overseas

If a Registered Australian Vessel issued with a SMC is detained at an overseas port as a result of serious PSC deficiencies or major ISM non-conformities, the company operating the detained ship should contact the responsible recognised organisation and AMSA to request assistance. This will normally require an additional shipboard verification audit prior to departure.

If the detained ship is in a remote overseas port and the recognised organisation is unable to attend, the recognised organisation following consultation with AMSA may request the detaining PSC authority to consider release of the ship with all appropriate hardware deficiencies rectified to the satisfaction of the PSC authority. An additional audit shall be conducted at the next available port.

## 7. ISM Code exemptions

An operator may apply for an ISM code exemption.

An example of when this may be required is when a domestic commercial vessel wants to conduct a single return voyage to an overseas port for docking.

All ISM code exemptions applications should be sent to AMSA at [ism@amsa.gov.au](mailto:ism@amsa.gov.au) and must state the reason for the application using form AMSA288 – Exemption or equivalence application <https://www.amsa.gov.au/forms/exemption-or-equivalence-application>.

## 8. AMSA Flag states inspections and audits

AMSA will continue to ensure ISM code compliance in conjunction with a flag state inspection, on an Australian Registered vessel, in line with the AMSA procedures.

AMSA may at any time attend a DOC and/SMC audit with the recognised organisations.

Not-for-profit organisations may apply to AMSA directly for certification to the ISM Code at [ism@amsa.gov.au](mailto:ism@amsa.gov.au).