
ISM Code Safety Management System Auditing Training Course: Evidence, Findings and Review

2 – 6 August 2027
Vienna





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Programme Summary

ISM Code safety management system auditing is the subject of this one-week training course for safety, quality and marine managers and internal auditors, ending in an audit pack for one ship management company. Audit findings on a safety management system often repeat because evidence is thin, non-conformities are graded inconsistently and shore oversight is weak. The programme links audit planning, shipboard and office evidence, finding grades and management review in one method, applied to a system of the participant's own. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on ISM Code safety management system auditing to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Where ISM Code safety management system auditing is treated as a yearly formality, ships carry the same defects from audit to audit and shore staff learn of problems late. Companies that plan audits from risk and test evidence on board and ashore see weak controls sooner, and designated persons ashore can brief senior management on facts.

- Repeat Findings: Fall as root causes are tested and corrective actions are verified.
- Incident Reporting Quality: Improves as reports are traced from vessel to shore review.
- Management Review Value: Improves as audit results feed decisions on resources and policy.

Principles and Evidence Base

- ISM Code: The international code for the safe management and operation of ships structures the audit criteria used in Sessions 1 to 4.
- Guidelines on the Application of the ISM Code: The IMO guidelines inform how requirements are interpreted when findings are graded in Session 4.
- ISO 19011: The guidelines for auditing management systems shape audit programme, planning and evidence work in Sessions 2 and 3.

Intended Participants

- Safety and quality managers who own the safety management system of a ship management company.
- Designated persons ashore who give vessels a direct line to top management.
- Marine and technical superintendents who prepare vessels for internal and external audits.
- Internal auditors who plan and report shipboard and office audits.

Typical functions include ship management, tanker and bulk operations, offshore support and port services.



Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to construct an audit plan from the ISM Code requirements and company risk.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate objective evidence gathered on board and ashore.
3. Participants will be able to diagnose weak links between vessel reports and shore follow-up.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise findings by grade and write clear non-conformity statements.
5. Participants will be able to assess the duties and authority of the designated person ashore.
6. Participants will be able to justify a management review submission to senior management.

Programme Structure

Day 1: ISM Code Safety Management System Auditing Fundamentals

What does the ISM Code require, and what does an audit test against it?

- ISM Code Requirement Map
- Company Responsibilities and Authority Review
- Audit Criteria Register
- System Document Hierarchy Chart
- Audit Programme Outline

Day 2: Audit Planning and Evidence Gathering

How is an audit planned, and how is evidence collected on board and ashore?

- Risk-Based Audit Plan
- Interview Question Set
- Sampling Record Sheet
- Shipboard Observation Checklist
- Evidence Reliability Rating

Day 3: Operations, Emergencies and Incident Follow-Up

Do onboard practices match the procedures and the reports sent ashore?

- Key Shipboard Operations Audit Trail
- Emergency Preparedness Drill Review
- Accident and Hazardous Occurrence Report Trace
- Maintenance Record Cross-Check
- Crew Familiarisation Evidence Test



Day 4: Findings, Grading and the Designated Person Ashore

How are findings graded, and what does the designated person ashore do with them?

- Non-Conformity Statement Template
- Finding Grade Scale
- Root Cause Analysis Tree
- Designated Person Ashore Duty Map
- Corrective Action Verification Log

Day 5: Applying the Tools to One Ship Management System

Do the earlier tools support one defensible audit pack and review submission?

- Applying the Session 1 Requirement Map
- Using the Session 2 Risk-Based Audit Plan
- Testing the Session 3 Report Trace
- Checking the Session 4 Finding Grade Scale
- Completing the Management Review Audit Pack

Methodology

The programme uses a field-style audit method built on anonymised procedures, drill records, incident reports and audit reports from tanker, bulk and offshore operations. Participants work in audit teams on a shared company system, challenge each other's grading and receive written facilitator feedback.

- Suggested activity: Tracing a near-miss report from a vessel to the shore review.
- Suggested activity: Writing and grading three non-conformity statements from sample evidence.
- Suggested activity: Briefing senior management as the designated person ashore.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a management review audit pack for one ship management system. It holds a risk-based audit plan, an evidence log, graded non-conformity statements, a root cause summary and a corrective action tracker. The pack is used at work to prepare internal audits, brief the designated person ashore and support the annual management review.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is ISM Code safety management system auditing suitable for staff who have never led an audit?

Yes. ISM Code safety management system auditing assumes some experience of ship operations, safety or quality work and builds audit planning and grading skills step by step.



Which standards does ISM Code safety management system auditing rest on?

ISM Code safety management system auditing rests on the ISM Code, the IMO guidelines on its application and ISO 19011 for auditing management systems.

How is the pack from ISM Code safety management system auditing used at work?

You use the management review audit pack to prepare internal audits, brief the designated person ashore and support the annual management review.

How does ISM Code safety management system auditing differ from general quality auditing?

ISM Code safety management system auditing centres on ship safety requirements, shipboard evidence and shore oversight, while general quality auditing centres on product and process conformity across industries.