



# Inspection Programmes Report Validation: Best Practice

(First edition 2019)



Issued by the

**Oil Companies International Marine Forum**

29 Queen Anne's Gate

London SW1H 9BU

United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7654 1200

Email: [enquiries@ocimf.org](mailto:enquiries@ocimf.org)

[www.ocimf.org](http://www.ocimf.org)

**First edition 2019**

© Oil Companies International Marine Forum

**The Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF)**

is a voluntary association of oil companies having an interest in the shipment and terminalling of crude oil and oil products. OCIMF is organised to represent its membership before, and consult with, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and other government bodies on matters relating to the shipment and terminalling of crude oil and oil products, including marine pollution and safety.

**Terms of Use**

While the advice given in this information paper ("Paper") has been developed using the best information currently available, it is intended purely as guidance to be used at the user's own risk. No responsibility is accepted by the Oil Companies International Marine Forum ("OCIMF"), the membership of OCIMF or by any person, firm, corporation or organisation (who or which has been in any way concerned with the furnishing of information or data, the compilation or any translation, publishing or supply of the Paper) for the accuracy of any information or advice given in the Paper or any omission from the Paper or for any consequence whatsoever resulting directly or indirectly from compliance with, or adoption of or reliance on guidance contained in the Paper even if caused by a failure to exercise reasonable care.

## **Contents**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Report validator qualifications</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Programme report type and variant</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>General checks</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Mandatory comments to questions</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Additional comments</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Language and grammar</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Objectivity</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Observation and comment consistency</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Observation and comment accuracy</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Report detail level and report padding</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Double dipping</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Cross checks against other sources</b>	<b>4</b>

## Purpose

To provide Submitting Members with an overview of best practice for proofreading and validating vessel inspection questionnaires before they are published as reports in the relevant programme database.

## 1 Introduction

Submitting Members are obliged to verify that the reports uploaded to each programme website meet the relevant OCIMF inspection programme requirements.

Vessel inspection reports underpin the OCIMF inspection programmes and it is vital that every report is accurate and complete. Reports must provide the necessary factual information to enable the reader to assess the risk of using the vessel that has been inspected. This paper provides best practice guidance on the process to check and validate an OCIMF report before submitting it to the programme database.

Inspectors write OCIMF inspection programme reports to identify the status of the vessel at the time of inspection. These reports are read by a variety of Submitting Members, Programme Recipients, and approved Third Party Vetting Contractors. The reader is often unfamiliar with the vessel, operator, or region where it was inspected. While the inspector should write with concise accuracy, the description should not fall short of clearly identifying the intent of a comment or observation.

## 2 Report validator qualifications

To be capable of reviewing a programme vessel inspection questionnaire submitted by an inspector, the individual(s) selected to carry out validation before uploading to the programme database should possess the following qualifications:

- Sound knowledge of the submitting member's internal guidance on risk-rating OCIMF inspection questions.
- Completed the submitting member's internal training for writing and interpreting comments and observations in OCIMF reports.
- A minimum of five years' service on board vessel types covered by the inspection programme(s), and/or sufficient training and time engaged in the operational management of vessel types covered by the inspection programme as determined by the submitting member.
- Conversational proficiency in the English language.

## 3 Programme report type and variant

OCIMF inspection reports consist of several hundred questions arranged in chapters. There are several inspection types, operations and variants available in each inspection programme. Specific question sets are defined by the inspector when the vessel type, operation and variant are selected in the report editor. Member companies must instruct their chosen inspectors to select the correct variants before creating the inspection template. The variant selected should be aligned to the relevant OCIMF programme guidance.

If it is found during the opening meeting that the requested variant is incorrect for the inspection, inspectors should be provided with the necessary Submitting Member contact details to request prompt clarification. Submitting Member companies may also allow inspectors to activate the correct variants and question sets in the report editor, based on published guidance and the vessel's current operation, classification or configuration. The decision is to be governed by the Submitting Member and not the vessel or vessel manager.

The first five sections of all OCIMF inspection programme Vessel Inspection Questionnaires provide a full guide to the inspection process, plus details of member expectations for the conduct of the inspection and the completion of the report.

If it is found that the inspection does not cover the correct vessel type and variants, the member must take steps to correct this, up to and including withdrawing the report.

## 4 General checks

The first step for a Submitting Member company when reviewing report is to check that the inspector has used the correct variant (e.g. oil tanker with or without a cargo pumproom or anchor handling tug with or without dynamic positioning).

Verify that the basic information in chapter one is correct, i.e. the date and port of the inspection, type operations, etc. Also check this section of the report for any information that might need a follow-up, e.g. the presence on board of Port State control officers or Flag/Class surveyors.

Simple data-entry errors can make reports unusable by other members until corrected. Incorrectly spelled vessel names, wrong identification numbers, and wrong dimensions can prevent vessels from being located in the report database. The member should check these.

Verify that the topsides inspection was done in daylight, and that it accounted for the vessel's staff work/rest hours and the seasonal solar cycles or that the proper permission was given to inspect in darkness. Take care when reviewing a report to ensure that all relevant information has been included and note that questions answered 'Yes' without comment will not appear in the standard report output. If a lot of 'Not seen' or 'Not applicable' answers are given, the member shall check with the inspector to ensure the validity and quality of the report. The inspector's boarding and departure times should be consistent with the vessel operations and the time needed to carry out the inspection.

## 5 Mandatory comments to questions

Some questions in the report editor are highlighted in yellow. This indicates that the inspector must enter a mandatory comment. These questions come in two forms:

- Where a comment is necessary regardless of whether the question is answered 'Yes' or 'No'. The OCIMF report editor software will not permit a report to be uploaded without an entry in these mandatory fields.
- Where the mandatory comment is conditional and only necessary in certain cases.

Blank fields may indicate that the relevant information was not entered in text. In this case, the member should address this issue with the inspector and have the report corrected.

Ensure that the inspector has properly answered all mandatory questions and added comments as required by the question guidance.

## 6 Additional comments

Each chapter has a section for additional comments, which the inspector can use to record information, beyond the specific questions and mandatory comments, that give added value for the reader of the report. The inspector may also use the additional comments section to provide other information on the subject matter of that chapter.

Additional comments must not contain negative observations or comments, other than to amplify or clarify information already recorded for questions in the chapter.

## 7 Language and grammar

All reports must be written clearly and concisely in the English language.

All comments, observations and descriptions in a report shall be free of major spelling, grammar and typographical errors, particularly if they could be seen to change the meaning of the text.

Verify that the inspector has written the report as a third-person narrative, i.e. without using 'I' or 'we' or other pronouns, and that all comments are written in the past tense. Require the inspector to correct other writing styles.

This type of narrative also requires inspectors to describe what they witnessed on board without including opinion or feelings. Instead, the report must give an objective, unbiased point of view based on the fact of what was seen at the time of the inspection. As a third-person narrative, the comments and observations should have a neutral tone throughout.

## 8 Objectivity

All comments and observations must be objective, without opinions, speculation or subjectivity. Observations shall include relevant details of the conditions found on the vessel, giving readers a clear and meaningful description of the conditions and issues as witnessed at the time of inspection.

The reports must not contain the names or nicknames of any individuals present at the inspection. Job titles are acceptable.

Verify that the inspector has not offered recommendations or advice to rectify any of the observations made in a report. Require the inspector to remove any identified incidences.

The inspector's comments must never be seen to indicate a partial or overall suitability or rating of a vessel or onboard practice.

Reports must not refer to any existing or potential charter activity.

## 9 Observation and comment consistency

Observations and comments made to questions must be consistent throughout the report. The inspector should include comments that add clarity to a 'Not applicable' or 'Not seen' entry, while avoiding repetition.

Negative comments or other deficiencies shall not be recorded in the comments field where the question is answered 'Yes'.

Any text entered in an additional comments field must not contradict or alter the perception of the question answer or observations attached to specific questions.

Additional comments to 'No' observations or negative findings may contain positive information that offers some mitigating explanation for the issue or indicates that it was put right during the inspection. These additional comments do not reverse the 'No' answer or observation.

## 10 Observation and comment accuracy

Comments and observations should be entered against the appropriate question and should be relevant to that particular vessel at the time of inspection. Many questions have guidance notes to help the inspector and final reader of the report. Member companies should ensure their inspectors do not enter a comment to a 'Yes' answer unless it adds value to the report.

Where the inspector has discovered a situation onboard that clearly creates a safety risk and no question exists to capture this risk the inspector may choose a question in a suitable chapter to record the details of the unsafe situation as an observation. The inspector must inform the OCIMF member company of this departure from question guidance. The member company must agree to the selected chapter and question used during the validation process.

Inspectors are obliged to create unique reports each time a vessel is inspected. The Submitting member must offer the inspector counsel and guidance where the practice of copy and paste is discovered to be excessive or creates inaccuracies in a report.

Where inspectors make observations that affect compliance to regulations of the Administration or other relevant authority, they are obliged to correctly cite this within the comment. If any citation is found to be inaccurate, raise the matter with the inspector.

## 11 Report detail level and report padding

There is a balance between the correct level of detail to describe conditions found on board and overly 'padding' reports with excess wording. Member companies are obliged to provide guidance to help inspectors develop this skill and review the level of detail in reports.

If the report has excessive or repetitive detail, ask the inspector to amend all the relevant sections before publishing.

Every observation must include a full description of:

- What was observed.
- Where it was observed on the vessel.
- Why an observation needs to be noted.
- When it became an issue.

An inspector's descriptions should give an accurate estimate the extent of the identified issue or concern without straying into generalisations or adding unrelated information.

When it is found that observations and comments repeat the question or guidance and do not add value to the report, member companies must review the issue with the inspector. The same inspector comment must not be repeated throughout a report.

## 12 Double dipping

The same observation should not be repeated in multiple questions. This is known as 'double dipping'. Where an observation or comment is raised that applies to multiple questions, it should be recorded against the most appropriate question. The inspector should answer 'Yes' to the other questions and avoid further observations by adding a reference to the comment left with the first question.

Distinct parts of an identified issue or concern that affect separate areas of guidance may still lead to more than one observation about a single identified fault. Check that the inspector has made careful distinctions between these issues in the report writing and this should be verified by the Submitting Member. If this wording is inadequate, Submitting Member companies and inspectors must be prepared to respond on short notice to that feedback.

## 13 Cross checks against other sources

The report validator is encouraged to confirm that the content of the report does not conflict with other publicly available information concerning the vessel inspected. If possible, check whether any Port State control deficiencies or classification reports have been published that the inspector should have identified during the inspection.

Member companies must notify OCIMF if they discover a report is inconsistent with other publicly available information on the vessel. The OCIMF secretariat will follow up the matter.



A voice for safety

**Oil Companies  
International Marine Forum**  
29 Queen Anne's Gate  
London SW1H 9BU  
United Kingdom

**T** +44 (0)20 7654 1200  
**E** [enquiries@ocimf.org](mailto:enquiries@ocimf.org)  
**ocimf.org**