

Service Obligation After Graduation

When you graduate from the U.S Merchant Marine Academy, you will have achieved a milestone in your academic career. Since the Federal government has a substantial investment in your education, you will be required to fulfill the terms of a service obligation after graduation. This obligation is set forth in this section of the catalog.

The merchant marine is a component of the Nation's defense. It is the Federal Government's intention to have a sufficient number of highly trained licensed officers available to operate American flag merchant vessels in both peace and war. Your service in the merchant marine is the vehicle through which this goal is achieved.

The Law

With the passage of the Maritime Education and Training Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-453), Congress imposed mandatory service obligations, outlined in this section, for USMMA graduates. The obligations relate to a graduate's employment, maintenance of a U.S. Coast Guard license, commissioning in the reserve forces of the United States, and reporting compliance to the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD).

Graduate Service Obligation

Employment:

A graduate may fulfill the employment obligation portion of his/her service obligation in five ways as follows:

Serve in the foreign and domestic commerce and the national defense of the U.S. for at least five (5) years following graduation as:

1. A merchant marine officer in the U.S. flag fleet;
2. A commissioned officer on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Corps;
3. With the federal Government in a maritime-related position that serves the national security interest; or
4. If a determination has been made that no afloat positions are available for you, you may serve ashore in a U.S. maritime-related industry, profession or marine science.

By combination of the services specified above.

Maintenance of Coast Guard License:

Maintain (or upgrade) the license as an officer in the U.S. merchant marine, including all endorsements held at graduation, for six (6) years following graduation.

Service as a Commissioned Officer in the Reserves of the U.S. Armed Forces of the United States:

Apply for and accept, if tendered, an appointment as a commissioned officer in the reserves of the U.S. armed forces for at least eight (8) years following graduation.

Report Compliance to MARAD:

Report to MARAD annually concerning your compliance with the foregoing maritime service obligations, as set forth in the next paragraph.

You are required to complete a service obligation report in each year following your year of graduation to inform MARAD about your compliance with your service obligations. Regardless of the date of your graduation, each graduate must submit a service obligation report from between January 1 and March 1, starting the first January 1 after graduation and for at least an additional six (6) consecutive years thereafter. Graduates are required to file

reports through to the last report to demonstrate that all obligations have been satisfied. If a graduate completes the service obligations within the six years following graduation, each graduate should only have to file a total of seven (7) reports in order to give information on all six (6) years of service obligations.

Service as a Merchant Marine Officer

Unless a graduate serves as an active duty commissioned officer in the U.S. armed forces or in the NOAA Corps or in a maritime-related position with the Federal government serving the national security interests of the United States, he/she must first seek employment in the maritime industry as a licensed officer aboard vessels operating under the U.S. flag. Employment aboard such ships supports the government's objective of providing fully trained merchant marine officers to operate U.S. flag merchant vessels in peace and war.

For service obligation purposes, a year of employment aboard merchant vessels is defined as the median number of days of seafaring employment under Articles achieved by deck or engine officers in the most recent calendar year for which statistics are available. The median number of days required for each year will be posted on MARAD's web-based internet system at:

<https://mscs.marad.dot.gov>.

Maritime-Related Ashore Employment Option

Graduates who are unable to obtain employment as a licensed officer aboard a U.S.-flag vessel may work in a U.S. maritime-related industry, profession, or marine science. Prior to accepting a position, the graduate must seek a determination from the Maritime Administrator that such U.S.-flag vessel employment is not available. Additionally, the graduate must obtain approval of the position as meeting the maritime-related requirement. Among the areas of employment the Administrator may consider acceptable as U.S. maritime-related employment are positions of operational, management and administrative responsibility with organizations or maritime-related fields, such as:

- Steamship companies
- Stevedoring companies
- Vessel chartering and brokerage operations
- Cargo terminal operations
- Naval architecture
- Shipbuilding and repair
- Municipal and state port authorities
- Port development
- Marine engineering
- Tug and barge companies
- Oil and mineral operations
- State agencies involved in maritime affairs

The foregoing list does not set forth all types of positions, organizations, or fields that may be acceptable to satisfy the service obligation.

Waiver of the Service Obligation

The Federal Government realizes that there may be situations that prevent graduates from fulfilling the requirements of the service obligation contract. Waivers may be granted in cases where there would be undue hardship in the performance of satisfactory maritime service or when it is impossible to perform satisfactory maritime service due to an accident, illness or other justifiable reason as determined by the Maritime Administrator.

Deferment of the Service Obligation

The Maritime Administration may grant, upon request, a deferment for a period not to exceed two years of all or part of the service obligation contract. This deferment privilege exists only for graduates considered to have superior academic and conduct records while at the USMMA. Deferments are available only to individuals desiring to enter a marine or maritime-related course of study at an accredited graduate school or to accept a



scholarship of national significance, as determined by the Maritime Administrator, in a non-maritime related field.

Active Military Duty

Active duty as a commissioned officer with the Navy or any other branch of the U.S. armed forces or the NOAA Corps is a way of satisfying the employment portion of the service obligation contract. Graduates of the Academy have an understanding of naval procedures and operations that contribute to our national defense requirement for an adequate merchant marine, and can make a valuable contribution to the U.S. armed forces.

Federal Government Service

A graduate may fulfill the employment portion of the commitment by serving in a full time position with a Federal agency, if that position serves the national security of the United States in a maritime-related area. Positions with the Department of Homeland Security in the maritime sector are one example of acceptable Federal positions.

Navy Reserve Appointment

Any U.S. citizen who applies to the Academy also applies for an appointment as Midshipman, Merchant Marine Reserve, U.S. Navy Reserve. Your application will be reviewed by the Office-In-Charge of the Department of Naval Science. To qualify for a midshipman appointment you must have satisfactorily completed the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board

(DoDMERB) entrance physical. You must also complete an Electronic Personnel Security Questionnaire (EPSQ) prior to reporting to the Academy.

The ESPQ is an honesty and loyalty check required prior to receiving a security clearance. This questionnaire must be honestly and thoroughly completed. Issues that will cause a problem include failure to report an arrest by civil or federal authorities, and possessing a non-U.S. passport, or dual country citizenship. If any of these issues apply, you should contact the Academy's Department of Naval Science for clarification of Navy policy and for guidance on resolving the issue.

In the event that a midshipman fails to display the qualities of leadership, character, and aptitude expected of a prospective commissioned officer in the U.S. Armed Forces, the Naval Service Training Command (NSTC) may terminate the midshipman's appointment. The midshipman is also separated from the Academy in such a case.

Reserve Military Duty

In order to comply with your service obligation you must apply for and accept an appointment as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Navy Reserve, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, or any other Reserve or National Guard unit of an armed force of the United States. With the recommendation of the Officer-In-Charge, Department of Naval Science, and the Academy superintendent, you will receive your commission at graduation. Although

officer appointment applications may be made to any armed force, the majority of graduates will be appointed as ensigns in the Merchant Marine Reserve, U.S. Navy Reserve. After appointment as Ensign, USNR, you must perform satisfactorily in the Navy Reserve for eight years. An individual's requirements and options under this program will vary depending on whether the graduate is working at sea or ashore. Details will be provided by the Naval Science Department either through their course of instruction or upon request.



Breach of Service Obligation

Graduates who breach their service obligation contract may be ordered to active duty in the U.S. armed forces. In lieu of being ordered to active duty, graduates may be required to repay the cost of the education provided by the Federal Government. The Maritime Administration's Office of the Associate Administrator for Policy and International Trade will make a determination of whether a graduate has breached the service obligation. Such decisions may be appealed to the Maritime Administrator.