



Ship Registration and Certification (Nigeria): The Complete 2026 Guide to Requirements, Steps, Costs, Forms, and Renewals

Description

If you operate, acquire, or finance vessels that will trade in Nigerian waters or fly the Nigerian flag, **ship registration and certification** is not optional; it is the legal bedrock of ownership, safety, and flag-state control. Beyond conferring nationality, registration gives you access to essential regulatory services (surveys, mortgages, changes of ownership, name approvals) and unlocks cabotage participation where eligible. This guide consolidates **everything you need to know end-to-end, only from NIMASA's official sources**, so you can navigate the registry confidently and compliantly from first application to renewals.

Overview: What “Ship Registration and Certification” Covers at NIMASA

- **Who the MDA is:** The **Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA)** is Nigeria's maritime administration and the statutory authority for ship registration and certification under the Nigerian flag. Its **Nigerian Ship Registration Office (NSRO)** in Apapa, Lagos, is the operational hub.

- **What you can do at the Registry:** Flag registration (including provisional), changes of ownership, name approval, mortgage registration/consent to mortgage or sale, cabotage-related registrations, and renewals of certificates.
- **Validity of the Certificate of Registry:** The Nigerian Certificate of Registry is valid for **five (5) years**, after which **renewal** is required with supporting documents.
- **New Certificates:** NIMASA has **introduced updated Certificates of Ship Registration** and phased out older formats, part of ongoing measures to improve document security and standards.

The Nigerian Ship Registration Office (NSRO): Contact & Where Work Gets Done

Most filings and collections are made through the **Nigerian Ship Registration Office** at:

Registrar of Ships
Nigerian Ship Registration Office
4, Burma Road, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria
Email: registrarofships@nimasa.gov.ng

This is also where you submit or pick up certificates, liaise on fee payments, and request checks (for instance, on **name availability**).

Applicant's Guide: The 3-Step Flow for Ship Registration

NIMASA's simplified applicant journey is:

1. **Apply to the Director-General/CEO** with supporting documents required for your specific request.

2. **Liaise with the Nigerian Ship Registry Office** to pay the prescribed fees.
3. **Pick up your certificate/document** from the Registry once processed.

These steps are reiterated in the **Ship Registration** page and the associated **Ship Registration (website) PDF**.

Who Can Register a Nigerian Ship (Eligibility)

Per **Flag Registration Guidelines** on the NIMASA site (reflecting the Merchant Shipping Act, 2007), **eligible owners** include:

- **Nigerian citizens;**
- **Bodies corporate** established under and subject to Nigerian laws with principal place of business in Nigeria;
- **Other persons** as may be prescribed by **regulations of the Minister of Transport**.

NIMASA also provides **minimum share capital guidance** for Nigerian corporate vessel owners: **₦25,000,000**.

Name Reservation and Approval

Before you formalise your application, check (and optionally **reserve**) your vessel's preferred name at the NSRO. **Reservations last 60 days**, and names may be refused if they duplicate existing Nigerian-registered names, are deceptively similar, offensive, or against public interest.

Document Checklists (By Transaction Type)

A. Flag Registration (Standard): Core Requirements

For a standard flag registration, the **Approved NSRO Checklist** lists (among others):

- Formal application (owner/authorised representative)
- Corporate documents (Certificate of Incorporation; **CTC of MemArts, CAC 7** – Particulars of Directors; **CAC 2** – Allotment of Shares) or Status Report.
- Current **Tax Clearance Certificate** and **Bank Reference Letter**
- **Declaration of Ownership** (with passport photo)
- **Tonnage Certificate, Condition Survey Report**
- **Photographs** (bow and stern) showing name, port of registry, official number and registered tonnage marks
- **NIMASA official receipt** for registration payment

(Additional specifics apply to new builds, e.g., **approved plans/specs.**)

B. Provisional Registration

For provisional registration, NIMASA requires, among others:

- Corporate constitutive documents (as above)
- **International Tonnage Certificate** (where applicable), **Class Certificate** (conventional vessels)
- **Declaration of Ownership, Application for Registration**

- **Bill of Sale** and, for foreign-flagged vessels, **Deletion Certificate**
- **NIMASA receipt** for provisional registration payment.

C. Change of Ownership

- Formal application from the **new owner** (or authorised representative)
- Corporate documents and **Tax Clearance**
- Completed **Declaration of Ownership** and **Application for Registration**
- **Approval of ship's name** form
- **Bank reference, Bill of Sale, Return of prior Certificate of Registry, Insurance**
- Evidence of **NIMASA payment** for change of ownership
- **Class Certificate** (where applicable).

D. Mortgage-Related Filings

- **Consent to Mortgage:** application, board resolution (for corporates), and **consent fee** receipt.
- **Registration of Mortgage:** executed deed of mortgage (stamped at FIRS), **CAC Certificate of Registration of Mortgage, NIMASA statutory mortgage forms** (executed with stamp duty), **grant of consent letter**, and fee receipt.

E. Change of Vessel Name

- Application by registered owner; board resolution under seal authorising change; completed name-change form; **return original Certificate of Registry; affidavit** stating reasons; **clearance from Maritime Guard Command**; and **NIMASA receipt** for the name-change fee.

F. Renewal of Flag Registration

- **Formal application** by registered owner/authorised representative
- **Return expired Certificate of Registry**
- **Vessel insurance policy, Class Certificate** (where applicable)
- **Registration license as shipping company** with NIMASA (and relevant **Cabotage operator** licensing where applicable)
- **Renewal condition survey certificate**
- **NIMASA renewal payment receipt.**

The Official Forms You will Use (Downloads)

NIMASA publishes the **forms pack** publicly. Common ones include:

- **Ship Registration Form** (core application; it also reiterates required attachments like **Bill of Sale/Builder's Certificate, Class Certificate, CSR, Deletion Certificate**, corporate documents, and **Tax Clearance**)
- **Declaration of Ownership - Body Corporate**

- **Change of Vessel Name**
- **Vessel Name Approval**
- **Ship's Carving and Marking Note**
- **Mandate Form for Vessel Owners**
- **Declaration of Transfer**

You can download them via the "**Ship Registry - Forms**" page and the specific **Ship Registration Form (PDF)**.

Costs & Tariffs: What You will Pay (Official Fees)

NIMASA publishes the **Ship Registry Unit Tariffs**. The table below extracts headline items from the **official tariff schedule** (all figures in **Naira**). Always cross-check at the Registry as fees can be updated.

Key Tariffs (Extract)

Item	Measurement/Scope	Official Fee (₦)
Flag Registration	15 - 200 tons	100,000
	201 - 1,000 tons	120,000
	Each additional 1,000 tons thereafter	20,000
Provisional Registration	FPSO/FSO	500,000
	Rig	200,000
	Other vessels	100,000
Consent to Mortgage or Consent to Sell	—	50,000

Item	Measurement/Scope	Official Fee (₦)
Change of Ownership	15 – 200 tons	100,000
	201 – 1,000 tons	120,000
	Each additional 1,000 tons thereafter	20,000
Registration of Mortgage	—	100,000
Registration of Cabotage Vessel Operators	—	100,000

Source: NIMASA Ship Registration – website PDF (Tariff schedule).

Tip: Where your filing attracts multiple actions (e.g., name approval + registration + mortgage registration), budget for their combined tariff line items. If your vessel is an FPSO/FSO or a rig, note the **specific provisional registration tariffs**.

Step-By-Step: How to Register a Ship in Nigeria (From First Contact to Collection)

Step 1 — Prepare Your Dossier

- Confirm **eligibility** (citizen/corporate/persons allowed).
- **Reserve or confirm** your **ship name** (valid for 60 days).
- Gather **corporate** and **vessel** documentation per the **Approved NSRO Checklist** and the **Ship Registration Form** attachment list.
- For **new builds**, include **approved plans/specifications**; for **foreign-flagged vessels**, obtain **Deletion Certificate**.

Step 2 — Submit a Formal Application

- Address your application to the **Director-General/CEO, NIMASA** (with all supporting documents).
- You may submit and subsequently **liaise with the NSRO** (Apapa) for file checks and fee assessment.

Step 3 — Pay Official Tariffs

- Upon assessment, **pay the prescribed registry fees** for your transaction (registration, provisional, change of ownership, consent, etc.).
- Obtain the **NIMASA official receipt**.

Step 4 — Surveys, Marking & Carving Note

- Ensure the vessel is **properly marked** (name, port of registry, official number, registered tonnage) and keep **survey/tonnage reports** handy.
- Where applicable, use the **Ship's Carving and Marking Note** form.

Step 5 — Collect Your Certificate(s)

- Once the Registry finalises processing and records, **pick up your Certificate of Registry** (or other issued document).
- Remember that the **Certificate of Registry is valid for 5 years**; set a compliance reminder for timely renewal.

Special Transaction Paths You Should Know

Provisional Registration

Useful for time-sensitive operations while finalising all documents. Requires core corporate and vessel documents, **International Tonnage Certificate, Class Certificate** (conventional vessels), and proof of fee payment.

Change of Ownership

When a vessel is sold, the **new owner** applies for **change of ownership registration**, returning the prior Certificate of Registry and providing **Bill of Sale**, insurance, and other items listed in the **NSRO Checklist**. Tariffs differ by tonnage, mirroring the **flag registration** scale.

Mortgage Registration & Consents

NIMASA handles both **consent to mortgage/consent to sell** and **registration of mortgage** (post-consent), referencing your **stamped mortgage deed, CAC registration**, and NIMASA **statutory mortgage forms**. Fees apply for **consent** and **registration**.

Change of Name

Board resolution, completed form, affidavit with reasons, prior certificate return, **Maritime Guard Command clearance**, and fee payment are required.

Bareboat Charter Flag Registration / Suspension from Original Registry

For bareboat scenarios, provide **bareboat charter party, evidence of suspension from the original registry, Class Certificate** (conventional), and the rest of the core file (corporate, tax clearance, bank reference, etc.). Renewals require charter party, insurance, **suspension evidence**, and survey updates.

Pleasure Craft & Engine-Boat Licensing

NIMASA also lists **individual/non-corporate** requirements for licensing engine boats (≥ 200 HP) and **registration of pleasure crafts**, including personal identification, ownership proof, insurance, tax clearance (where applicable), and relevant forms/fees.

Renewal of Certificate of (Flag) Registration: Timing and Checklist

- **Timing:** Every **5 years** from issuance.
 - **Core items:** Formal application, **return expired certificate, insurance, class/annual survey** evidence, **registration license as shipping company, cabotage credentials** (if applicable), **renewal condition survey**, and proof of fee payment (NIMASA receipt).
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Where to Find and Download the Official Forms

Navigate to **Ship Registry - Forms** for the master list of forms (Ship Registration Form; Declaration of Ownership; Vessel Name Approval; Change of Vessel Name; Ship's Carving & Marking Note; Mandate Form; Declaration of Transfer). Use the **Ship Registration Form PDF** for the attachment list that includes **Bill of Sale/Builder's Certificate, Class, CSR, Deletion Certificate, Tax Clearance, MemArts, CAC filings**, and **#25m minimum share capital** note for Nigerian corporates.

How to Budget: Putting Fees and Process Together (Worked Example)

1. Name Approval & Reservation:

- Conduct availability check & reservation at NSRO (valid **60 days**).
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- Budget: administrative time + subsequent core tariffs.

2. Flag Registration (e.g., 6,500 GT tanker):

- **Base registration fee:** ₦120,000 (201–1,000 tons) + **progression** for each additional 1,000 tons thereafter at **₦20,000** per 1,000 tons (apply progressively based on registry computation).
- **If provisional first:** add **Provisional Registration (Other Vessels)** ₦100,000.
- **If mortgage financing:** add **Consent to Mortgage** ₦50,000 + **Mortgage Registration** ₦100,000.

3. Post-Registration Compliance:

- Maintain class/annual surveys, insurance, and keep track of **5-year renewal**.

Note: The above condenses the tariff framework; NSRO computes official fees against your exact tonnage and transaction mix. Always rely on the **debit note** /assessment and **NIMASA receipts**.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are curated to match what stakeholders commonly ask online (e.g., “people also ask” themes), but **answers here are strictly from NIMASA’s website** and documents referenced in this guide.

1) How long is the Nigerian Certificate of Registry valid?

Five (5) years from issuance; renewal is required with supporting documents.

2) Can I reserve a vessel name before filing?

Yes. You can check availability and **reserve a preferred name for 60 days** at the NSRO. Names can be refused if already taken, deceptively similar, offensive, or contrary to public interest.

3) What's the minimum share capital for a Nigerian company owning a vessel?

₦25,000,000 minimum share capital for vessel owners (companies).

4) Where do I submit applications and collect certificates?

At the **Nigerian Ship Registration Office** (Apapa, Lagos). Certificates are collected there after you complete payment and processing.

5) What documents are required for standard flag registration?

See the **Approved NSRO Checklist**: corporate CTCs (MemArts, CAC 2, CAC 7), **Tax Clearance, Bank Reference, Declaration of Ownership, Tonnage Certificate, Condition Survey, vessel photos, and NIMASA payment receipt** (plus specific items for new builds).

6) What does provisional registration require?

Core corporate and vessel documents, **International Tonnage Certificate, Class Certificate** (for conventional vessels), **Bill of Sale**, and for foreign-flagged vessels, **Deletion Certificate**, with **NIMASA receipt** for provisional fees.

7) How much are registration fees?

Base **flag registration** tariffs start at **₦100,000 (15-200 tons)** and **₦120,000 (201-1,000 tons)**, with **₦20,000** per additional 1,000 tons. Other official tariffs include **Provisional Registration for FPSO/FSO (₦500,000), Rig (₦200,000), Other vessels (₦100,000), Consent to Mortgage or Sell (₦50,000), and Mortgage Registration (₦100,000)**.

8) What do I need to renew my Certificate of Registry?

Formal application, **return expired certificate**, **insurance**, **class/annual survey** evidence, **registration license** (and cabotage operator status if applicable), **renewal condition survey**, and **NIMASA receipt**.

9) How do I process a change of ownership?

Apply as **new owner**, submit required corporate and vessel documents (incl. **Bill of Sale**, **Insurance**, **return prior certificate**), and pay the **change of ownership** tariff (mirrors base registration tonnage scale).

10) Can I change my vessel's name after registration?

Yes, submit application + board resolution, **affidavit**, return old certificate, get **Maritime Guard Command** clearance, and pay the name-change fee.

Common Misconceptions (Debunked with Official Sources)

Myth 1: "Once registered, my ship's certificate lasts indefinitely."

Fact: The certificate is **valid for five (5) years** and **must be renewed** with supporting evidence (insurance, class/surveys, etc.).

Myth 2: "I can pick any ship name I like as long as I pay."

Fact: Name reservations are **time-bound** and subject to **refusal** on several grounds (duplication, deceptive similarity, offensiveness, public interest).

Myth 3: "Provisional registration means I can skip documents."

Fact: Provisional status still requires **core documents** (e.g., tonnage/class, Bill of Sale, Deletion Certificate where applicable) and **official payment**; it's not a shortcut.

Myth 4: "Mortgage paperwork is just bank-to-owner, NIMASA isn't involved."

Fact: NIMASA handles **consent** and **registration of mortgages**. You must file the **executed/stamped deed**, **CAC mortgage registration**, and **NIMASA statutory forms**, with **consent/registration fees**.

Myth 5: "Private boats or pleasure craft have no registry requirements."

Fact: NIMASA provides **requirements for pleasure craft** registration and **licensing** for

high-horsepower engine boats (≥ 200 HP), including identification, ownership proof, insurance, and fee payment.

Practical Tips for a Smooth Filing (All From the Official Flow)

1. **Start with name reservation** to avoid brand conflicts, then build your file around the reserved name.
2. **Use NIMASA forms** (download the current versions) and **attach exactly** what the Ship Registration Form and NSRO Checklist ask for (Bills of Sale/CSR/Deletion Certs/CTCs).
3. **Keep surveys and class current;** many transactions (renewal, cabotage entries) request class/annual survey certificates.
4. **Budget correctly** using the **official tariff schedule**; unusual vessel types (FPSO/FSO, rigs) have their own provisional tariffs.
5. **Always obtain NIMASA receipts;** many checklists explicitly require proof of payment.

Cabotage-Linked Registration Notes (Where Applicable)

NIMASA's NSRO checklist includes **Cabotage** registration paths by ownership structure (Wholly Nigerian Owned, Bareboat Chartered, Joint Venture Owned, and Foreign-Owned participating by waiver). Each path lists **forms, waiver evidence** (where applicable), **class/annual survey, insurance, company licensing**, and **payment evidence**. If you intend to trade domestically under the Cabotage regime, map your file to the relevant checklist section.

Renewal & Lifecycle Management Checklist (At a Glance)

- **Every 5 years:** schedule **Certificate of Registry renewal** (prepare insurance, class/surveys, licensing).
 - **When ownership changes:** file **Change of Ownership** (return old certificate, attach Bill of Sale, etc.).
 - **Funding events:** process **Consent to Mortgage**, then **Register Mortgage** (with FIRS stamp & CAC mortgage registration).
 - **Rebranding:** pursue **Change of Vessel Name** (with affidavit, security clearance).
 - **Operational shifts:** consider **Provisional Registration** if timing is critical while completing documents.
- All steps and lists are from the NSRO checklist and renewal guidance.

Where to Start Today (Links to the Official Materials)

- **Ship Registration (Applicant's Guide + Name Reservation + Tariffs + Contact):** use the main **Ship Registration** page and its supporting PDF.
- **Forms:** download the **Ship Registration Form, Declaration of Ownership, Change of Name, Carving & Marking Note**, and more.
- **Approved NSRO Checklist:** for requirements across **Flag Registration, Change of Ownership, Provisional, Mortgage, Name Change, Cabotage, Pleasure Craft, Engine Boats**, etc.

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- **Renewal of Certificate of Registration:** validity and renewal requirements.
 - **New Certificates Announcement:** for awareness of updated certificate formats.
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Conclusion

Registering and certifying ships in Nigeria is straightforward if you follow **NIMASA's official 3-step pathway**, attach the exact **NSRO checklist** items for your transaction, and pay the correct **tariffs**. Set early markers for **name reservation, survey/class** readiness, and **5-year renewal** planning; file changes (ownership, mortgages, name) promptly to keep the registry accurate. Every element in this guide is taken directly from **NIMASA's official website** so you can proceed with confidence and without guesswork.

Category

1. Industry Insights