

GROWING THE MASTER FOR THE 2030S



THE HONOURABLE COMPANY OF MASTER MARINERS

*People & Safety
Working Group*

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The issue

The roles and duties of the vessels' masters are constantly changing to adapt to changes in legislation, to requirements from charterers, managers and manning agencies, to changes in technology and to changes in social responsibility.

The basis of the determination of the master's ability to command is his/her Certificate of Competency. The developmental content is described in the International Maritime Organisations (IMO) Standards of Training Certification & Watchkeeping Convention (STCW) 1978, as amended in the 2010, Manila amendments. STCW forms the minimum standard necessary to hold command of a vessel, but it is now 11 years since it was updated.

This training and assessment standard forms the basis of the legal authority to hold the position of a vessel's master. However, the ability to successfully command at sea and all the facets associated with that role, depends on the master's supplementary development and training and also on his/her personality.

In some companies, elements of development are offered by the employer but, more often, individuals have to rely on other development opportunities that become available on an ad-hoc basis. Nevertheless, Continued Professional Development (CPD) is recognised internationally to assist a vessel's master, and others, in maintaining the currency of their ability to successfully command but is optional rather than mandatory. Without CPD, there is a probability that masters will not be fully aware of the changes within their industry and will be disadvantaged in their role.

The facts

The STCW amendments are now 11 years old and in need of detailed review and modernisation to reflect the changes which have occurred within that period and to provide a sound basis to train and assess seafarers for their roles at sea.

It is recognised that, within the 11-year time period, there has been substantial change within the maritime industry and the knowledge required successfully to command a vessel. The changes in fuel types, with the introduction of ultra-low sulphur fuels and alternative fuels such as LNG, hydrogen and ammonia, being one example. The introduction of ballast water treatment systems is another example, where STCW 2010 is deficient in mandating the detailed training and assessment for new and existing mariners. Without sufficient knowledge, training and assessment, mariners in general and masters in particular are not being set up for success.

The IMO is currently addressing the STCW (Fishing Vessels) Regulations and this review is expected to be concluded at the end of 2021. Then the process of review of STCW 2010 will commence.

There is an opportunity for the Honourable Company of Master Mariners to be involved in that review, specifically in the role of the vessel's master and the basis of competence and continued professional development particularly as there is increasing evidence that structured, managed and reviewed CPD benefits both the individual as well as the employer.

The arguments

The STCW convention is outdated, deficient in key areas and does not form a suitable baseline qualification for the challenges a ship's master has to manage today.

The pace and ability of an organisation such as the IMO to make amendments to the STCW convention based upon consensus, is not matched to the pace of change within the maritime industry and therefore

always lags behind what is required. The change process followed by the IMO is long and tortuous and always involves compromises between member states.

Historically, STCW has been described as, “A race to the bottom” by those who saw its introduction as mandating qualifications of the lowest common denominator. However and more constructively, it has also been described as, “A sharing of knowledge and a helping hand from the developed maritime nations to the emerging maritime nations for the benefit of all.”

A specific example of where STCW requires amendment concerns the medical fitness assessment of British seafarer's, the ENG1, developed to support the medical fitness standards as described in STCW 2010. It looks in detail at the physical condition of the seafarer and his/her ability to meet the physical demands of the role of a mariner at sea. However, it does not examine the mental condition of that person and their mental capacity and ability to perform at sea. A seafarer's mental condition is equally as important as physical ability efficiently and safely to perform the tasks required of them but is not assessed. This omission means that a gap exists, which provides opportunities for unforeseen incidents to occur and harm to individuals, shipmates, or to the vessel itself.

The Honourable Company of Master Mariners is unique in having a wide range of highly experienced and knowledgeable senior Master Mariners with a huge collective knowledge of command of many different types of seagoing vessels. This deep skill and knowledge pool of marine expertise is coupled with an increasing number of younger members serving at sea. They bring valuable knowledge of current conditions and problems at the operational end of the industry. We are thus particularly well placed to assist in the development of the components applicable to the master in any revision of the STCW 2010.

The HCMM, in partnership with The Nautical Institute and other maritime organisations, has established a global chartership for Master Mariners. The Chartered Master Mariner scheme seeks to endorse those who demonstrate outstanding professional and personal performance, recognising their exceptional knowledge, development and experience. A key component of the Chartership is the Continued Professional Development, the CPD.

Furthermore, the HCMM regularly meets and collaborates with the International Federation of Shipmasters Association, IFSMA as described below.

IFSMA is conscious of the needs for shipmasters in the future and has joined with the Nautical Institute, Trinity House and the Honourable Company of Master Mariners in organising periodic command seminars. These seminars are arranged every two years and visit a number of maritime centres around the world to seek the views of both mariners and the industry on how shipmasters should be prepared to meet the needs of the 21st century. IFSMA defines shipmasters as those who are in possession of an internationally recognised Certificate of Competency, issued by the Government of an established maritime nation, who are serving or have previously served, in command of seagoing ships whether or not engaged upon international or domestic trade.

There is increasing evidence that structured, reviewed and managed CPD is beneficial to both the individual as well as to the employer, yet there is no facility for this within such Codes as The International Safety Management Code, the ISM Code. There are opportunities for this review to be conducted during the internal company audit and flag state verification.

Conclusions

STCW 2010 is the underlying convention for the training and development of mariners and currently is in need of amendment to bring it to a standard where new technology and developments within the maritime industry are adequately incorporated.

There is a plan for the IMO to commence the review of the existing STCW in 2022. To influence this review, the HCMM needs to partner with organisations who have Non-Governmental Observer status (NGO's) in order to get our positions heard. The HCMM is not eligible under the current rules to become an NGO at the IMO.

The HCMM has a unique skill set and knowledge base to provide valued and unique contributions to the review process.

The HCMM, in conjunction with The Nautical Institute, operates the Chartered Master Mariners scheme, a key part of which is the CPD of mariners and this is seen as a key area to ensure development continues in a structured way through an individual's career.

The HCMM Position

The HCMM intends to pursue the following actions to assist in the development of masters, in order to support them in their roles in command at sea over the next ten years, growing the master to meet the industry's demands in the 2030's.

- The HCMM will review and identify suitable partners to work with in developing "The Master 2030".
- The HCMM will identify suitable industry and maritime organisational partners to work with to make representation to the IMO in respect of the much-needed review and amendment of STCW 2010.
- The HCMM will review and identify suitable partners, including in government, to influence the need for continued intersessional review and development of the STCW Convention to ensure it remains relevant and is not detached from the industry to which it is applicable.
- The HCMM will continue to champion the benefits of the chartered Master Mariner scheme and the CPD component of that chartership.