

CORONAVIRUS (Covid-19) Contingency Plan and Guidelines for the services provided to Seafarers and Shipowners by the MCA – Latest Changes highlighted in yellow.

The department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) are leading the UK government response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

You can access up-to-date information about the situation in the UK on:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

The MCA's response and advice to Industry on services provided are as detailed below:

Joining and Repatriation of seafarers from vessels

The areas affected by Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the strategy implementation by countries affected by the pandemic is constantly evolving.

Many Governments have now introduced national and local restrictions including:

- Delayed port clearance;
- Prevention of crew or passengers from embarking or disembarking (preventing shore leave and crew changes);
- Prevention of discharging or loading cargo or stores, or taking on fuel, water, food and supplies; and
- Imposition of quarantine or refusal of port entry to ships (in extreme cases).

Countries have resorted to screening passengers at airports and various ports have implemented pre-boarding screenings, including mandatory health check questionnaires accompanied with a thermal scan test. The Master should contact the local port authority to enquire if crew repatriation is available.

Safe Manning Document (SMD) and exemptions to SMD

The SMD will be issued in a digital format. Where it can be demonstrated that a crew member is required to depart a vessel due to them testing positive for COVID-19, and the ship owner/operator is unable to replace them, exemptions to the SMD will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Each request should be supported by a risk assessment from the company.

Issue or Revalidation of a UK Certificate of Competency where a seafarer is unable to disembark a vessel

For guidance on the Issue or Revalidation of a UK Certificate of Competency, please refer to [MIN 655](#) sections 3 and 4. Please note that if your UK Certificate of Competency has expired while you are onboard, you should be able to apply for revalidation as per [MIN 655](#).

Issue of a UK Flag State Endorsement (FSE)/ Certificate of Equivalent Competency (CEC) where a seafarer is unable to disembark a vessel

For guidance on the issue of your FSE/CEC, please refer to MIN 655 section 5. Please note that if your FSE/CEC has expired while you are onboard, you should be able to apply for revalidation as per [MIN 655](#) section 5.

Seafarers with UK Certificates of Competency (CoC) working on UK flagged vessels, who are unable to disembark a vessel

For a UK CoC holder, the MCA can provide an exemption for those officers who are on board a vessel and their STCW safety training has expired. This will be based on a self-declaration (as per the STCW 2010 Manilla Amendment requirements). **This will be reviewed in the future taking into account the needs of the industry and the global outlook on COVID-19.** Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption or for CoC extension requests.

Seafarers with a UK CoC working on Non-UK flagged vessels

For a UK CoC holder, the MCA can provide an exemption for those officers who are on board a vessel and their STCW safety training has expired. This will be based on a self-declaration (as per the STCW 2010 Manilla Amendment requirements). Ship owners/operators should email exams@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption.

Seafarers with UK Certificate of Equivalent Competency (CEC) working on UK flagged vessels

The expiry date of a CEC is the same as the expiry date of a seafarers original CoC. If required, the MCA will liaise with the parent administration regarding requests for an extension of a CoC for a seafarer holding a CEC on a UK registered vessels. The MCA will issue CECs against any extension to CoCs (temporary or full). Ship owners/operators should email fse@mcga.gov.uk to request this exemption.

Issue or Revalidation of a UK Certificate of Competency where a seafarer is unable to complete the updating/refresher training requirements but needs to join a vessel

Any seafarer who is unable to complete some, or all, of the updating refresher requirements for the issue or revalidation of a CoC, should accompany their application with:

- Scanned copies of their original STCW Safety Training Certificate(s) that they have not undertaken the required refresher training for; and
- The applicable self-declaration for the STCW training that requires updating/refreshing (as per Annex B, C, D and E of [MSN 1865](#));
- An explanation as to why refresher training could not be undertaken.

The MCA will then issue them with a full five-year CoC with the onus on the Seafarer to undertake the required refresher training at the soonest possible date to satisfy STCW and Port State Control requirements. The MCA will also issue an extension letter for STCW safety courses valid until 31 December 2021.

Where STCW requires a standard to be met prior to the issue of a new CoC, the MCA will be unable to issue the CoC until this standard has been achieved.

*For new/upgraded Deck CoCs – deck@mcga.gov.uk. For new/upgrades Engineers/ETO's CoCs engineering@mcga.gov.uk. For all CoC Revalidations (Deck, Eng or ETO): revalidation@mcga.gov.uk.

Where a Seafarer is unable to complete updating training requirements but needs to join a vessel

Any seafarer required onboard a vessel who is unable to complete some or all the updating/refresher requirements but originally completed the MCA-approved training should send an email to exams@mcga.gov.uk and be accompanied with:

- A company letter confirming the vessel they need to join and the date they are required;
- Scanned copies of their original STCW Safety Training Certificate(s) that they have not undertaken the required refresher training for; and

- The applicable self-declaration for the STCW training that requires updating/refreshing (as per annex B,C,D and E of [MSN 1865](#)).

The MCA will then issue the seafarer with a letter extending the validity of the training that needs updating/refreshing.

Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC)

Please refer to separate document: Maritime Labour Convention 2006, 2006 and COVID-19.

Sea-time Matters

Sea time on any vessel which is fully crewed and operational, although not working cargo, will be accepted at full rate towards the issue or revalidation of a UK CoC.

Crew who are directly involved in the operation of the vessel that is in warm lay-up will have their service accepted at full rate towards a UK CoC **upgrade or revalidation, providing that:**

- For Deck Officers: while the vessel is at anchor or lay-up, and they are engaged in duties to maintain the safety of the vessel. The applicants must be able to demonstrate evidence of the required watchkeeping time as per MSN 1856.
- For Engineering Officers/ETOs who are sailing on a vessel on which the main generators and auxiliary equipment are running.

For Deck or Engineer/ETO Cadets please see the appropriate section below.

In the case of cadets who are not able to join vessels due to travel restrictions, alternative sea time for up to 1 month may be accepted by the MCA. **Proposals must be submitted to the MCA in a structured format¹ from the cadet's sponsoring company by email to exams@mcga.gov.uk. Once approved the cadet may undertake the approved seagoing service alternative:**

- For Deck cadets, up-to 1 month of sea time will be accepted on domestic vessels e.g. Domestic passenger ferries in categorised waters which are **24m or over.**
- For engineering cadets, **industrial time**, workshop training or simulator training of 1 month will be accepted in lieu of 1-month sea-service.

The Seafarer Services team will issue Notices of Eligibility (NOE) to candidates who are up to one month short of the required sea time (if a seafarer is over this allowance, we look at it on a case-by-case basis). Seafarers can take oral exams once they have

¹ These requirements have been circulated to sponsoring companies but are available upon request.

an NOE, however the full CoC will only be issued when the full sea service requirement has been met.

Warm Lay-Up Seagoing Service Requirement – For Deck Cadets

The seagoing service requirement for cadets is 12 months, out of which no more than 2 months service spent in dry-docks or standing by for a delivery of a new vessel from the shipyard will be counted.

The regulations require 6 months of bridge watchkeeping to be performed on vessels which are fully operational.

Due to Covid-19, there are vessels which are in warm lay-up at anchor or alongside.

6 months of sea service can be performed on vessels at warm lay-up at anchor. 1 month of bridge watchkeeping time will be allowed for 5 months of sea service on ships in warm lay-up at anchor.

4 months of service can be performed on vessels which are in warm lay-up, but alongside. No bridge watchkeeping time will be allowed for service on ships which are in warm lay-up alongside.

Warm Lay-Up Seagoing Service Requirement – For Engineer/ ETO Cadets

Provided main generators and auxiliary equipment are running, sea time will be accepted at full rate. Companies must ensure that adequate support and guidance will be given to cadets to allow them to complete their Training Record Book.

Medical fitness certificates

Please refer to: Revised medical certification policy information for Merchant Seafarers and Fishermen.

Survey and Certification of UK Flagged Vessels

Where surveys are due on vessels located overseas and it becomes difficult for attendance by a surveyor either MCA or RO, the MCA will consider the extension of mandatory statutory survey windows by issuance of short-term certificates, on a case-by-case basis. Operators are advised to make requests to their Customer Service Managers in good time before the expiry date to avoid Port State Control issues.

Additional information relevant to the Maritime industry can also be found at these websites (Please note: the list is not exhaustive):

[International Maritime Health Association](#)

[World Health Organisation](#)

[International Maritime Organisation](#)

[International Chamber of Shipping](#)