



Maritime and Coastguard Agency

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## **Certificates of Equivalent Competency – Amendment of Procedures**

**Notice to all Owners, Operators, Managers, Masters, Skippers and Officers of Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels.**

*This notice should be read in conjunction with Marine Guidance Note 220 (F) and Marine Guidance Note 221 (M) and replaces Marine Information Note 242 (M+F).  
This notice expires on 7 November 2010.*

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### **PLEASE NOTE:-**

Where this document provides guidance on the law it should not be regarded as definitive. The way the law applies to any particular case can vary according to circumstances - for example, from vessel to vessel and you should consider seeking independent legal advice if you are unsure of your own legal position.

### **Summary**

Details for obtaining Certificates of Equivalent Competency for officers on board Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels are found in Marine Guidance Note 221 (M) and Marine Guidance Note 220 (F).

This Marine Information Note has been issued to restate the guidance contained in Marine Information Note 242 (M+F). It also includes new sections on: oral examination requirements for applicants holding US Coastguard Chief Engineer (Limited-Oceans) Licenses; the measures taken by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to prevent fraud and other unlawful practices involving the certification process; and right of appeal.

The layout of the document and minor aspects of the text have been updated for clarity.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Marine Guidance Note 221 (M) and Marine Guidance Note 220 (F) were issued in March 2003 to explain the requirements for obtaining Certificates of Equivalent Competency for officers serving on board UK-registered Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels. The MCA constantly reviews procedures to ensure they remain relevant. In reviewing the processes for obtaining Certificates of Equivalent Competency, the MCA has streamlined a number of procedures and improved quality control to enhance maritime safety.
- 1.2 This notice repeats procedures set out in Marine Information Note 242 (M+F). In particular those relating to the application procedure including: the issue of Confirmation of Receipt of Applications and temporary certificates; Medical Fitness and Sight Test Certificates; requirements for UK Legal and Administrative Processes and English Language (UKLAP); and acceptance and verification of Certificates of

Competency. It also includes new sections on oral examination requirements for holders of US Coastguard Chief Engineers (Limited Oceans) Licenses; the measures taken by the MCA to prevent fraud and other unlawful practices involving the certification process; and right of appeal.

## 2. Application Procedure

- 2.1 A table of the procedures for obtaining a Certificate of Equivalent Competency is set out in **Annex 1**. Applications must be submitted to the Seafarer Training and Certification Branch with the full supporting documentation specified in that Annex.
- 2.2 The MCA endorses the Confirmation of Receipt of Application, presented in **Annex 2**, to acknowledge receipt of the Certificate of Equivalent Competency application and cover the applicant for up to three months service on board a UK vessel; in accordance with Regulation 1/10 paragraph 5 of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) 1978, as amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant (or company in the case of company applications) to ensure that all applications are made in accordance with the Regulations i.e. that applicants hold recognised Certificates of Competency, Medical Fitness and Sight Test Certificates (where appropriate) and meet the English Language requirements. It is an offence under the Merchant Shipping Act to knowingly make a false application.
- 2.3 The MCA will verify all Certificates of Competency with the issuing administration to confirm validity and authenticity. Once confirmation has been received, a Certificate of Equivalent Competency will be issued, subject to all other requirements being met.
- 2.4 Temporary Certificates will only be issued in limited circumstances, for instance where a Master requires longer than three months to complete the UK Legal and Administrative Procedures (UKLAP) Grade 1, or where verification of the Certificate of Competency has not been received.

## 3. Medical Fitness and Sight Test Certificates

- 3.1 Attention is drawn to the list of Medical Fitness and Sight Test requirements for Certificate of Equivalent Competency applicants contained in Marine Guidance Note 221 (M) and Marine Guidance Note 220 (F). In particular, countries whose medical fitness and sight test certificates are accepted by the MCA. Full details on UK medical requirements can be found in Merchant Shipping Notice 1765 (M)<sup>1</sup> and Merchant Shipping Notice 1818 (M)<sup>2</sup>. **Please note that it is an offence under the Merchant Shipping Act to employ a seafarer on a UK-registered vessel who does not hold an appropriate medical fitness or sight test certificate.**
- 3.2 Applicants are no longer required to submit the Medical Fitness or Sight Test Certificate with the application for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency. However it is emphasised that it remains the responsibility of the company to ensure that seafarers employed on its vessels fully comply with the Regulations. Medical Fitness and Sight Test certificates must be verified by the Master or Skipper when the applicant reports for duty and will be liable to Flag State Inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> Merchant Shipping Notice 1765 (M): Seafarer Medical Examination System and Medical and Eyesight Standards

<sup>2</sup> Merchant Shipping Notice 1818 (M): Approved Medical Practitioners (Approved Doctors) with effect from 1 June 2008

## **4. UK Legal and Administrative Procedures Requirements**

### **4.1 Grade 1**

4.1.1 Masters and Skippers are required to obtain **UK Legal and Administrative procedures (UKLAP) Grade 1** by undertaking the MCA oral examination or Scottish Qualifications Authority written test. A temporary Certificate of Equivalent Competency may be issued for up to six months to enable the Master or Skipper to obtain the qualification. European Union and European Economic Area nationals may alternatively serve an Adaptation Period of up to six months in a lower rank. A full (five year) Certificate of Equivalent Competency will only be issued once all requirements have been met and verified by the MCA.

### **4.2 Grade 2**

4.2.1 The company will be responsible for ensuring that Chief Mate, Chief Engineer and Second Engineer are sufficiently familiar with UK Legal and Administrative procedures (UKLAP) requirements equivalent to the Grade 2 syllabus. The on board Adaptation Period has been streamlined and companies will no longer be required to submit completed Adaptation Period Reports to the MCA. A written record confirming that each officer has attained the necessary standard must be kept on board. The written record should be in the form at **Annex 3** for Merchant Vessels and **Annex 4** for Fishing Vessels. This may be verified by Flag State Inspection.

## **5. English Language**

### **5.1 Merchant Navy**

5.1.1 The requirements for English Language remain as set out in Marine Guidance Note 221 (M).

5.1.2 However, for applicants choosing to prove competence in English language by taking the Marlin's test, there is an additional alternative. Previously applicants were required to supply evidence of a pass in the Marlin's test supported by evidence of a company interview confirming that the applicant's standard of spoken English was satisfactory. MCA approved Marlin's test centres offer a Test of Spoken English (TOSE), which will be accepted in lieu of the company interview, provided that it is accompanied by the normal Marlin's test certificate indicating a pass at the levels indicated in Marine Guidance Note 221 (M). This offers applicants the option to complete both parts of the requirements at one test centre.

### **5.2 Fishing Vessels**

5.2.1 The MCA expects there to be a common language between officers on board UK-registered fishing vessels.

5.2.2 Applicants for a Fishing Certificate are not required to provide evidence of knowledge of English language. However, to maintain the necessary standards of safety, especially for ship/shore communication and for the understanding of UK Safety Publications, it is the responsibility of the owners and operators to ensure that **at least one officer on board** every fishing vessel is competent in English language to the standard specified in **Annex 5**.

## **6. Certificates of Competency**

6.1 The MCA requires evidence of the authenticity and validity of the applicant's Certificate of Competency. Ideally, the original should be submitted with the application. However, the MCA recognises that this may be difficult in some circumstances and therefore will accept photocopies attested by:

- an MCA Marine Office;
  - the issuing administration; or
  - the company responsible for the day to day operation of the vessel (subject to entering a formal attestation agreement with the MCA. Please contact the Seafarer Training and Certification Branch for further details).
- 6.2 The Master or company representative should check the Certificate of Competency to ensure it is authentic and valid when the officer reports for duty.
- 7. US Coastguard Chief Engineer (Limited Oceans) Licenses**
- 7.1 Certificates of Equivalent Competency will be endorsed for US Coastguard Chief Engineer (Limited Oceans) Licenses for use on yachts only. Applicants will be required to pass either a Yacht 1 or Yacht 2 oral examination from Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 156 as applicable. Full details are included in **Annex 6**.
- 8. Prevention of Fraud and other unlawful practice.**
- 8.1 The UK is required under European law to take and enforce appropriate measures to prevent fraud and other unlawful practices involving the certification process and to provide for penalties that are effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
- 8.2 In the UK, the authorities that are competent to detect and combat fraud and to exchange information concerning the certification of seafarers with other Member States are the MCA and the police. If a document is thought to be fraudulent the matter should in the first instance be reported to the MCA. The MCA can be contacted using the contact details at the end of this Marine Information Note. A list of addresses for local police stations can be found on the following websites: [www.police-information.co.uk](http://www.police-information.co.uk) or [www.scottish.police.uk](http://www.scottish.police.uk)
- 8.3 A list of contact details for designated authorities in other Member States can be found on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) website at [www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org)
- 9. Right of Appeal in relation to applications for Certificates of Equivalent Competency**
- 9.1. The Merchant Shipping (Training and Certification) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 introduced a right of appeal in relation to applications for Certificates of Equivalent Competency. An applicant for a Certificate of Equivalent Competency whose application is refused, or deemed to have been refused because no response has been given within 28 days of making the application, may have the application reviewed at an inquiry. An applicant who wishes to exercise this right should contact the MCA in writing within 28 days of the refusal or deemed refusal (the relevant contact details can be found at the end of this Marine Information Note) and arrangements will be made for a panel to review the application and for the applicant to be advised of the outcome.

## More Information

Seafarer Training and Certification Branch  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
Bay 1/17  
Spring Place  
105 Commercial Road  
Southampton  
SO15 1EG

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Fax : +44 (0) 23 8032 9252  
e-mail: [cec@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:cec@mcga.gov.uk)

General Inquiries: [infoline@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:infoline@mcga.gov.uk)

MCA Website Address: [www.mcga.gov.uk](http://www.mcga.gov.uk)

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**Transport***

**Merchant Navy**  
**Application Procedures for Certificates of Equivalent Competency**

A	B	C	D
Application For:	Application Requirements	Company Action	MCA Action
Master	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Application Form</li> <li>• Fee</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Proof of English Language</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of CoC</li> <li>• CRA with Section 1 completed</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of Passport or Discharge Book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify validity of medical fitness or sight test certificate</li> <li>• Check original CoC for correctness</li> <li>• Complete application in accordance with the Regulations &amp; requirements in Column B and send to MCA</li> <li>• Send proof of UKLAP Grade 1 to MCA as soon as obtained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Section 2 of CRA and return</li> <li>• Verify CoC with issuing administration</li> <li>• Issue Temporary CEC and instruction to take UKLAP Grade 1</li> <li>• Issue Full (5 year) CEC when proof of successfully passing UKLAP Grade 1 received from the company and all other checks are complete</li> </ul>
Chief Mate Chief Engineer 2 <sup>nd</sup> Engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Application Form</li> <li>• Fee</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Proof of English Language</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of CoC</li> <li>• CRA with Section 1 completed</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of Passport or Discharge Book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify validity of medical fitness or sight test certificate</li> <li>• Check original CoC for correctness</li> <li>• Ensure officer receives sufficient training to satisfy the knowledge requirements of UKLAP Grade 2 and retain records</li> <li>• Complete application in accordance with the Regulations &amp; requirements in Column B and send to MCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Section 2 of CRA and return</li> <li>• Verify CoC with issuing administration</li> <li>• Issue Full (5 year) CEC when checks are complete</li> </ul>
OOW Deck OOW Engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Application Form</li> <li>• Fee</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Proof of English Language</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of CoC</li> <li>• CRA with Section 1 completed</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of Passport or Discharge Book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify validity of medical fitness or sight test certificate</li> <li>• Check the original CoC for correctness</li> <li>• Complete application in accordance with the Regulations &amp; requirements in Column B and send to MCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Section 2 of CRA and return</li> <li>• Verify CoC with issuing administration</li> <li>• Issue Full (5 year) CEC when checks are complete</li> </ul>

## Fishing Vessels

### Application Procedures for Certificates of Equivalent Competency

A	B	C	D
Application For:	Application Requirements	Company Action	MCA Action
Skipper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Application Form</li> <li>• Fee</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of CoC</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of Passport or Discharge Book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify validity of medical fitness or sight test certificate</li> <li>• Check original CoC for correctness</li> <li>• Complete application in accordance with the Regulations &amp; requirements in Column B and send to MCA</li> <li>• Send proof of UKLAP Grade 1 to MCA as soon as obtained</li> <li>• <b>Ensure at least one officer on board is competent in English Language to the standard specified in Annex 4</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify CoC with issuing administration</li> <li>• Issue Temporary CEC and instruction to take UKLAP Grade 1</li> <li>• Issue Full (5 year) CEC when proof of successfully passing UKLAP Grade 1 received from the company and all other checks are complete</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Hand and Engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed Application Form</li> <li>• Fee</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of CoC</li> <li>• Original or properly attested copy of Passport or Discharge Book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify validity of medical fitness or sight test certificate</li> <li>• Check original CoC for correctness</li> <li>• Ensure officer receives sufficient training to satisfy the knowledge requirements of UKLAP Grade 2 and retain records</li> <li>• Complete application in accordance with the Regulations &amp; requirements in Column B and send to MCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify CoC with issuing administration</li> <li>• Issue Full (5 year) CEC when checks are complete</li> </ul>





## Merchant Vessels

**WRITTEN RECORD OF UKLAP GRADE 2 FAMILIARISATION TRAINING**

A report must be completed for each officer serving with the company holding a Certificate of Equivalent Competency.

Name of officer		
Name of ship		
Capacity in which served		
Period of assessment	From	To

**UKLAP – in this section confirmation is required of the officer’s knowledge of the subject areas listed below. Confirm in the space provided that the officer has been assessed and would, if required, be able to demonstrate knowledge.**

<b>List of certificates and documents required to be carried on a UK-registered vessel</b>	
SAFCON, SEC and Radio Certificates	
Loadline Compliance	
Period and Maintenance of Validity on UK ships	
Understanding of survey procedures	

<b>Role and function of the MCA and its organs</b>	
Registry of Shipping and Seamen	
HM Coastguard	
Port State Control	
M Notices	

<b>Provision of Muster, Drills and Training on Board</b>	
Muster, Drills and Training	

<b>Provision of Health and Safety on UK Ships to include</b>	
Safety Officials, meetings	
Comprehensive understanding of the Code of Safe Working Practices	
Entry into enclosed spaces, safe movement aboard ship	
Hatches and lifting appliances	
Means of access and risk assessment	

<b>An outline knowledge of entries to be made in the Official Log Book</b>	
Dedicated pages	
Narrative section to include disciplinary procedures	

**COMMUNICATION, CONDUCT AND SOBRIETY – in this section, a report is required of the officer’s ability to communicate in written and spoken English within the context of VHF, official and social communication, integrate within the ship’s community, establish relationships and maintain discipline. A report is also required upon signs of alcohol or drug abuse.**

<b>Communication</b>	
Clarity of speech	
Initiation of dialogue, ability to continue and progress of conversation	
Vocabulary, including job functions	
Understanding of the overall theme of the conversation/radio report	
Clarity of written English	
<b>Conduct and Sobriety</b>	
Relations with colleagues	
Conduct and ability to maintain discipline	
Alcohol and drug related problems	

<b>Overall Assessment – use this space to summarise the report and provide any relevant information not included elsewhere</b>

I am personally satisfied that the content of this report is a fair and accurate reflection of the performance, competence and conduct of the officer during the period and assess the officer as follows:

- PASS** – I am satisfied that the officer has met the full requirements of UKLAP Grade 2 and English and has demonstrated a satisfactory standard of conduct, discipline and sobriety
- EXTENSION** – the officer has made good progress toward the necessary standard but requires some further improvement in the following areas:

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**I expect the necessary standard to be reached by.....**

- FAIL** – the officer has failed to reach the standard in the following area(s):

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Signature of Company Representative	
Full Name of Company Representative	
Company	

Company stamp
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## Fishing Vessels

**WRITTEN RECORD OF UKLAP GRADE 2 FAMILIARISATION TRAINING**

A report must be completed for each officer serving with the company holding a Certificate of Equivalent Competency.

Name of officer		
Name of vessel		
Capacity in which served		
Period of assessment	From	To

**UKLAP – in this section confirmation is required of the officer’s knowledge of the subject areas listed below. Confirm in the space provided that the officer has been assessed and would, if required, be able to demonstrate knowledge.**

<b>List of certificates and documents required to be carried on a UK-registered fishing vessel</b>	
UK FVC or IFVSC	
Period and Maintenance of Validity on UK ships	
Understanding of survey procedures	

<b>Role and function of the MCA and its organs</b>	
Registry of Shipping and Seamen	
HM Coastguard	
M Notices	

<b>Provision of Muster, Drills and Training on Board</b>	
Muster, Drills and Training	

<b>Provision of Health and Safety on UK Ships to include</b>	
Safety Officials, meetings	
Crew Agreement & Crew Accommodation Regulations	
Hatches and lifting appliances	
Means of access and risk assessment	

<b>An outline knowledge of entries to be made in the Official Log Book</b>	
Dedicated pages	
Narrative section to include disciplinary procedures	

**CONDUCT AND SOBRIETY – in this section, a report is required of the officer’s ability to establish relationships and maintain discipline. A report is also required upon signs of alcohol or drug abuse.**

<b>Conduct and Sobriety</b>	
Relations with colleagues	
Conduct and ability to maintain discipline	
Alcohol and drug related problems	

<b>Overall Assessment – use this space to summarise the report and provide any relevant information not included elsewhere</b>

I am personally satisfied that the content of this report is a fair and accurate reflection of the performance, competence and conduct of the officer during the period and assess the officer as follows:

- PASS** – I am satisfied that the officer has met the full requirements of UKLAP Grade 2 and has demonstrated a satisfactory standard of conduct, discipline and sobriety
- EXTENSION** – the officer has made good progress toward the necessary standard but requires some further improvement in the following areas:

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**I expect the necessary standard to be reached by.....**

- FAIL** – the officer has failed to reach the standard in the following area(s):

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Signature of Company Representative	
Full Name of Company Representative	
Company	

Company stamp
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### **Acceptable Evidence of Knowledge of English Language for Service on Board**

The following is acceptable evidence of competency in English. Candidates for Fishing Vessel Certificates of Equivalent Competency are not required to demonstrate this evidence at the application stage. However, the company must ensure that AT LEAST ONE OFFICER on board is able to demonstrate competency in English to the satisfaction of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) which may be verified at Flag State Inspection.

- Confirmation of proficiency through passing an oral examination in English from an MCA surveyor on board the vessel or in a Marine Office.
- Passing the Marlins written test and Test of Spoken English (TOSE) at an approved Marlins Test Centre – the minimum acceptable pass mark is 70%. Addresses of approved centres are available from the MCA and the Marlin company website at [www.marlins.co.uk](http://www.marlins.co.uk)
- Satisfying the MCA that English is the candidate's mother tongue.
- Holding a Certificate of Competency for which the examinations are conducted in English.
- Holding an advanced English language certificate issued by the British Council or an International Language Testing System (IELTS) test report showing Overall Band level of at least 6.
- Holding a certificate of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as applicable for admission to US universities.
- Passing the MCA English language test administered for the MCA by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and conducted by arrangement with the SQA in any British Council Office.

**Oral Examination of Competency**

**Holders of US Coastguard Chief Engineer (Limited Oceans) Licenses**

Applicants holding US Coastguard Chief Engineer (Limited-Oceans) Licenses are required to pass the following Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) oral examinations, for which an additional fee is payable.

Chief Engineer (Limited-Oceans) Motorships limited to 3000 kW or more	Y2 oral from MGN 156
Chief Engineer (Limited-Oceans) Motorships limited to 9000 kW or more	Y1 oral from MGN 156

The Certificate of Equivalent Competency will be limited to yacht service only, for use under the Large Commercial Yacht Code (LY2)<sup>3</sup>.

To be eligible for the Y2 oral examination, applicants require proof of three months sea service as a yacht engineer on a yacht less than 3000gt and more than 350 kW propulsion power whilst in possession of their Chief Engineer (Limited-Ocean) License.

To be eligible for the Y1 oral examination, applicants require proof of six months sea service as a yacht engineer on a yacht between 500gt and 3000gt and not less than 1500 kW propulsion power whilst in possession of their Chief Engineer (Limited-Ocean) License.

All candidates should note that any limitations as to area of operation or capacity on the original US Coastguard License will be carried over to the Certificate of Equivalent Competency.

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<sup>3</sup> MSN 1792 (M) or any subsequent update.