



Maritime &  
Coastguard  
Agency

## MARINE INFORMATION NOTE

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# MIN 615 (M) Amendment 1 The Support for Maritime Training (SMarT) Fund During the COVID-19 Period

Notice to all ship owners and managers, masters, deck and engineering officers and ratings of merchant vessels and those concerned with maritime training.

This notice should be read with MGN 455.

This MIN expires 30 June 2022

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## Summary

This MIN summarises the UK Government's additional financial support to assist cadets during COVID-19 outbreak period. The eligibility requirements and how to apply are detailed in this MIN.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The MCA plans to support cadets who, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, are unable to complete their training and obtain their Certificate of Competency (CoC) within the allotted 150-week SMarT funding period. This additional funding is designed to assist the cadet to remain sponsored and allow them to develop relevant knowledge and skills through online learning. In order to meet State Aid requirements and ensure accountability of

funding, each Training Provider<sup>1</sup> will be required to provide a breakdown of how the funding will be allocated.

## **2. The Proposal**

2.1 The MCA plans to provide support for those cadets who are unable to or will be unable to obtain their first CoC within the allotted 150-week period of funding due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Due to the potential 'knock on effect' of this period, eligible cadets still going through the system may be entitled to additional funding for the next 3 years but this will be kept under review. This will include all those cadets who are enrolled or will enrol over the next 12 months from the date of this MIN. The funding extension is initially planned for a period of 3 months with the potential to extend this by a further 3 months (6 months in total). For this reason, the MIN has a validity period of 3-months and will be replaced once further information is available.

## **3. Eligibility Requirements**

### **3.1 Training Provider Eligibility**

To be eligible to claim this funding each Training Provider will need to provide a breakdown of how the funding will be allocated<sup>2</sup>. This is to ensure that the funding benefits the cadet's development needs, meets State Aid Reporting requirements and can be accounted for in the interest of public spending. Each Training Provider must submit a proposal of how the funding will be allocated, this should take into account the following items if applicable:

- Cadet allowance;
- Additional Tuition/College Fees/Training fees (online);
- Accommodation;
- Costs of repatriation to and from vessels for sea service;
- Training berth costs for sea service or alternative proposals (see section 5 of this MIN); and
- Admin fees (HR and management support).

Training Providers should provide details of the training they plan to provide their cadets during the lockdown period. It is expected that they are enrolled in training or provided with online learning materials which are related to MCA Oral Written/Exam preparation or modules related to maritime e.g. port management, marine insurance, ship operations etc. Training Providers may adjust this allocation over time as the situation changes, e.g. as alternatives to sea service become available. Any adjustments must be submitted to the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this MIN a Training Provider is defined as either a shipping company acting alone for recruiting and sponsoring their own cadets; or a trainee management company representing their client companies (shipping companies and charities) for the recruitment of cadets and claiming SMarT on their behalf.

<sup>2</sup> This proposal must be emailed to the MCA. Any future amendments to the allocation levels must also be emailed to MCA: [smart@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:smart@mcga.gov.uk).

MCA for assessment. **The MCA reserves the right to audit against these to ensure State Aid rules are adhered to.**

To ensure that we meet State Aid reporting requirements, the MCA may require some further information from Training Providers who wish to access the funding to support their cadets. We will aim to make this as straightforward and streamlined as possible.

### 3.2 Cadet Eligibility

Each claim will need to be supported a statement to confirm the cadet was unable to complete the course within 150 weeks due to the COVID-19 lockdown, i.e. they still need to:

- Complete an STCW Advanced Short Course; and/or
- Complete an MCA/MNTB Approved Long Course (Foundation Degree, HND etc); and/or
- Attend MCA Written Exams; and/or
- Complete the seagoing service requirement; and/or
- Attend an MCA Oral exam due to availability of MCA examiners.

This information<sup>3</sup> should be submitted to MATSU to support each claim.

## 4. How to Claim

Training Providers who are approved by the MCA against the criteria set out in section 3.1 of this MIN may claim this funding for each cadet for whom 150 instalments of SMarT 1 funding has been claimed on or after 1st March 2020 (or where the trainee has completed their training in less than 150 weeks) **and** where the cadet has met the requirements of section 3.2 of this MIN.

Training Providers may claim up to 13 weeks of additional funding at the SMarT 1 higher rate of £107 per week from 30th March 2020. Claims must be submitted as usual on a monthly basis from P1 onwards using the new COVID-19 category on the portal, further details will be provided in due course.

If you have eligible cadets, please email [smart@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:smart@mcga.gov.uk) and provide an initial estimate of the number of eligible cadets you intend to claim for over the next three months.

## 5. Plans to Assist Cadets to meet MCA requirements Due to Lockdown Restrictions of COVID-19

5.1 The MCA has developed guidance to assist seafarers to continue to work, and cadets to continue to study, during this period. Further guidance is available and detailed in

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<sup>3</sup> This will be a simple process in the form of a statement or simple declaration. More information will follow in the claim instructions.

MIN 611 and on our webpage: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-seafarer-careers-training-provision-and-information#covid-19--contingency-plan-and-guidelines-for-seafarers>.

This guidance is continuously developed as the situation evolves. Some proposed solutions to assist with cadet training are provided below.

## **5.2 University/College Course Required for a UK CoC**

The MCA is liaising with nautical universities/colleges and encouraging alternative ways of course delivery and assessments e.g. assessments through assignments followed up by Vivas on skype. We have already approved several proposals for online course delivery and assessment.

## **5.3 MCA Oral Exams**

The MCA is exploring conducting the oral exams in alternative ways e.g. Skype plus online assessment. We would look to prioritise Officer of the Watch (OOW) Engineer Officer of the Watch (EOOW), Electro-technical Officers (ETO) to allow them to gain their first CoC and start working as an Officer.

## **5.4 Seagoing Service Requirements**

The MCA proposes that up to 4 weeks of sea time can be supplemented by alternative equivalent means. This can be done by approved simulator training or by engaging in activities which can be accepted to meet the competency requirements of the STCW table. e.g. Time in a VTS centre in ports (equivalent to satisfy STCW competency table: Radar, Navigation etc), NHS volunteering or other roles (equivalent to satisfy STCW competency table; Leadership, management, responding to emergencies, use of medical equipment). Each proposal must be emailed to the MCA for approval: [exams@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:exams@mcga.gov.uk).

## **More information**

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Please note that all addresses and telephone numbers are correct at time of publishing.

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