



Department
for Transport

The Seafarers' Charter: Detailed Requirements

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1. The Seafarers' Charter: Detailed Requirements

1.1 National Minimum Wage equivalent (NMWe)

1.1.1 Employers must pay at least the National Minimum Wage equivalent to eligible seafarers.

Guidance

1.1.2 Employers will demonstrate that they are paying seafarers as per the conditions set out in the Seafarers' Wages Act, including any subsequent secondary legislation.¹

1.2 Overtime Pay

1.2.1 Employers must pay seafarers for overtime at a rate of at least 1.25 times the basic hourly rate set out in a seafarer's employment agreement.

Guidance

1.2.2 Operators will list basic hours in a seafarer's contract. Basic hours shall not exceed 48 hours.

1.2.3 Operators will set out basic hours in a seafarer's employment agreement. Any payments beyond basic hours, including overtime, will be uprated in line with the NMWe in the UK and in other countries covered by any associated bilateral agreements.

1.3 Maritime Skills and Professional Development

1.3.1 Employers must ensure all seafarers, including cadets and trainee ratings, are provided with adequate training and development.

Guidance

1.3.2 The UK government supports a range of recognised maritime training schemes.

¹ [Seafarers' Wages Act: Parliamentary Progress](#)

- 1.3.3 The UK government Support for Maritime Training² (SMarT) scheme supports courses approved by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the Merchant Navy Training Board for the training of officers, officer cadets and ratings.
- 1.3.4 UK government funding is also available to support the training of apprentices.³
- 1.3.5 The Maritime Skills Alliance also maintains a list of maritime apprenticeships.⁴

1.4 Contracts of Employment

1.4.1 Employers must ensure seafarers have a contract of employment that:

- a) Does not constitute a voyage contract except in exceptional circumstances⁵
- b) Ensures adequate rest between engagements on different vessels
- c) Does not charge seafarers for, or make deductions for, accommodation⁶

Guidance

- 1.4.2 This is an addition to the requirement to comply with the standards of the Seafarers Employment Agreement (SEA) set out in the Maritime Labour Convention 2006.⁷

1.5 Social Welfare Standards

1.5.1 Employers must ensure provisions are in place to allow seafarers to receive the provisions outlined below, and to at least the standards required by the Maritime Labour Convention 2006⁸

- **Medical Care**
- **Sickness Benefit**
- **Old Age Benefit⁹**
- **Employment Injury Benefit**

² [Support for maritime training \(SMarT\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/support-for-maritime-training)

³ [Employing an apprentice: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/employment-an-apprentice-overview)

⁴ <https://www.maritimeskills.org/Apprenticeships>

⁵ **Voyage Contract:** *Where an SEA (Seafarers Employment Agreement) has been agreed for a particular voyage, the destination port and the period following arrival after which the agreement terminates.*

⁶ [Preparatory Tripartite MLC, 2006 Committee, Final report Geneva, 20–22 September 2010](#) (Paragraphs 99-101)

⁷ [Maritime Labour Convention, 2006: Seafarers' Employment Agreements](#)

⁸ [Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, Health Protection, Medical Care, Welfare and Social Security Protection](#)

⁹ Old Age Benefits: *For more detail, please see pensions section in Q&A*

- **Family Benefit**
- **Invalidity Benefit**
- **Survivors Benefit**
- **Maternity Benefit**

1.5.2 Employer's policies must make suitable provision for maternity, paternity, and adoption.

1.5.3 Consistent with MLC regulation 4.4¹⁰, Seafarers should have access to shore-based welfare facilities.

Guidance

1.5.4 Where a seafarer is covered by a UK or European Economic Area (EEA) social security scheme, then the employer should pay the necessary contributions unless the scheme requires contributions from the seafarer in which case contributions should be paid as per the scheme's legislation. If the employer is permitted to administer the contributions on behalf of the seafarer, then they could do so.

1.5.5 The employer must ensure that provision is made for all their seafarers for each of the areas listed at 5.1 and 5.2. Where a seafarer is not eligible for such provision through a state-based scheme, the employer should ensure suitable provision is in place.

1.5.6 A seafarer may, if permitted by other applicable legislation (such as that of the labour supply state), opt out of any pension or old age benefit scheme if they choose to do so.

1.6 Tours of Duty

1.6.1 Operators must adopt roster patterns that take into account route intensity, fatigue, mental health, safety, welfare, and operational manning.

Guidance

1.6.2 Employers must submit a risk assessment regarding roster patterns operated to the Department for Transport, alongside other evidence of compliance with the Seafarers' Charter. Risk assessments should take into consideration optimal, usual and sub-optimal conditions and circumstances.

1.6.3 Employers should provide shore leave to seafarers between their roster patterns or at any point in which a vessel is docked at a port and where seafarers are not on duty.

¹⁰ [MLC Convention \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org)

- 1.6.4 The Department for Transport are commissioning independent research on roster patterns, fatigue, safety, and seafarer welfare. Standards relating to roster patterns can be refined based on research findings.
- 1.6.5 Roster patterns should be detailed in the evidence provided to DfT. Until such time as sufficient further evidence is available through the relevant research, the baseline for roster patterns for high intensity routes are 2 weeks on followed by 2 weeks off, or an alternative roster pattern that has been agreed with the appropriate engagement of local worker representatives and employer representatives.

1.7 Rest

- 1.7.1 Employers must ensure all seafarers have adequate rest periods between shifts and between rosters to ensure that they can work safely and effectively without harm to their physical and mental health.**

Guidance

- 1.7.2 Operators will provide each seafarer with the details of hours of work and hours of rest, in accordance with the provision of Standard A2.3 of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006.¹¹
- 1.7.3 Operators will meet the requirements set out in the Merchant Navy Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers.¹²
- 1.7.4 Account should also be taken of the latest version of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers published by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and the Code of Conduct for the Merchant Navy.¹³
- 1.7.5 Minimum rest periods and maximum hours of work identified in Standard A2.3 of the Maritime Labour Convention must be adhered to as a minimum standard from which operators can demonstrate progress. Operators must consider the factors noted at 6.1.

1.8 Familiarisation Training

- 1.8.1 Operators must ensure crew have received adequate familiarisation training on the vessel in which they are working.**

Guidance

- 1.8.2 Familiarisation training will comply with the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention.¹⁴

¹¹ [Maritime Labour Convention, as amended, 2006: Standard A2.3](#)

¹² [Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers](#)

¹³ [Code of Conduct for the Merchant Navy | Chamber of Shipping \(ukchamberofshipping.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [STCW 1978 \(imo.org\)](#)

- 1.8.3 All seafarers must have sufficient health and safety training to perform their duties, as set out in the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 standard A4.3.¹⁵
- 1.8.4 Safety familiarisation training or instruction shall be carried out by a suitably competent person such as a safety officer.
- 1.8.5 Operators must evidence effective record keeping of seafarer familiarisation training.
- 1.8.6 In instances where a port or flag state find deficiencies, these will be rectified in a timely manner in accordance with any instructions provided in order to remain aligned with the requirements of the Seafarers' Charter.

1.9 Drugs and Alcohol

- 1.9.1 **Operators must carry out drug and alcohol testing at regular and random intervals of no longer than 12 months.**

Guidance

- 1.9.2 This must be carried out as per company policy and procedure.
- 1.9.3 Operators should provide support programmes for seafarers who may have alcohol or drug dependencies.

¹⁵ [Maritime Labour Convention, as amended, 2006: Standard A4.3](#)