

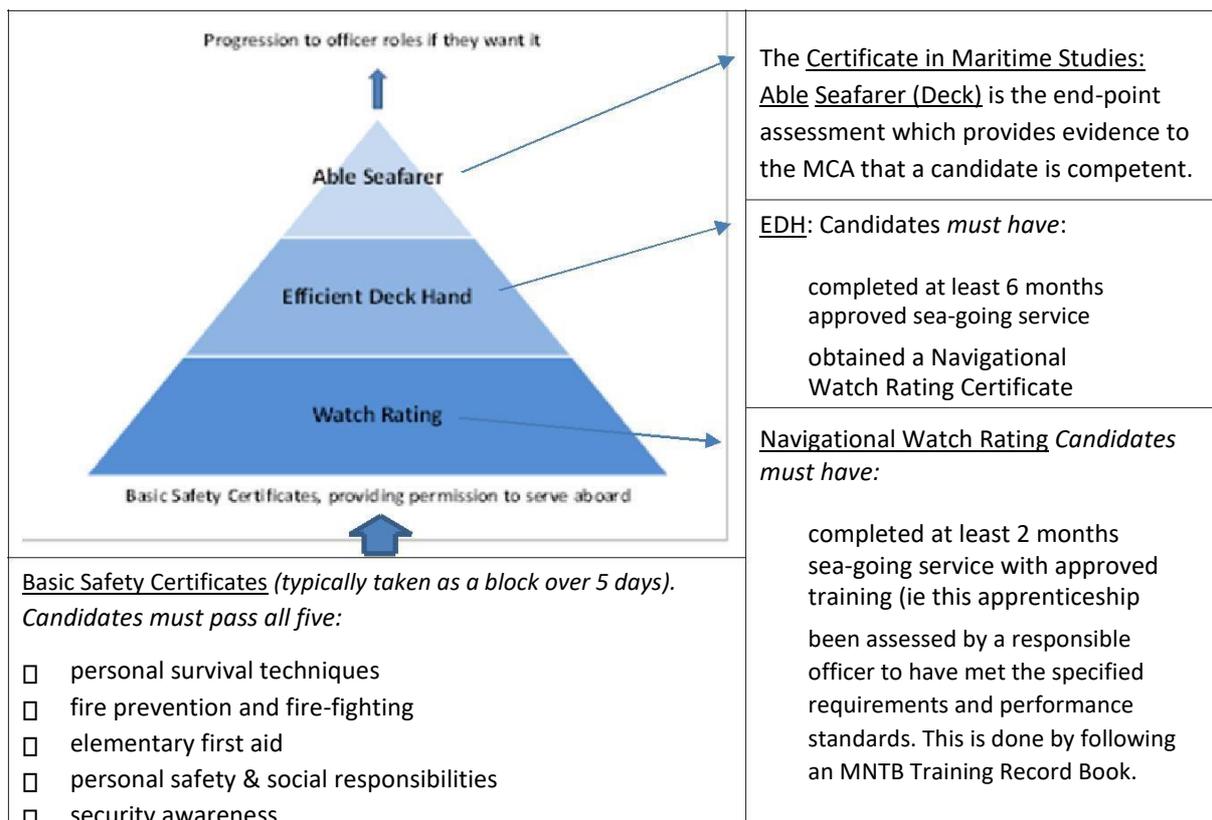
Able Seafarer (Deck) – Assessment Plan

The final decision about whether or not a candidate satisfies all the requirements to be an Able Seafarer (Deck), including competence, lies exclusively with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), the national regulator. The end-point assessment for candidates following the apprenticeship route lies within the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck).

To complete their apprenticeship and to get MCA certification as an Able Seafarer (Deck) candidates need to supply the Maritime and Coastguard Agency with evidence of all of the following: ¹

- proof of age (candidates need to be 18 to apply to be an Able Seafarer)
- a Watch Rating Certificate and EDH certificate
- a Certificate of Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boat
- medical fitness (form ENG1)
- they have completed at least 14 months sea-going service in the deck department, with approved training (i.e. this apprenticeship).
- a completed Merchant Navy Training Board Training Record Book for Able Seafarer (Deck).

To get to that stage, candidates must have completed each of these stages in turn:



¹ The Maritime and Coastguard Agency has just completed a thorough review of its guidance on certification for seafarers, which will result in publication of a series of MSNs (Merchant Shipping Notices) on 9 June 2015. (The consultation draft of the MSN relating to Deck Ratings is [here](#): the final version varies only in small details and makes no direct reference to this apprenticeship as it had not been settled at the time of publication). From the date of publication we will be able to refer all candidates to the new MSN for authoritative guidance on the MCA's requirements for certification.

Introduction

The assessment of apprentices working towards recognition as an Able Seafarer (Deck) follows practice well understood and widely supported by the maritime industry.

Assessment is underpinned by the requirements of the STCW Convention – Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping – as periodically updated and implemented in the UK by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The Convention protects lives at sea by setting high standards. It offers both employers and individual seafarers an assurance that training which follows its requirements is well matched to the broad needs of the industry, rather than to the shorter-term interests of any single employer. Apprentices who become an Able Seafarer (Deck) also secure certification which is recognised across the world. With outcomes of such value it is essential that everyone involved works to, and protects, the high standards enshrined in STCW.

A. Assessment ('What')

On-programme assessment

The diagram on the first page summarises the hierarchy of training, qualifications and certification which applies to apprentices who wish to become Able Seafarers (Deck). To serve aboard candidates must complete the mandatory short courses specified by the MCA on safety grounds. They then complete a series of steps, both at sea and ashore, to ensure that they learn both practical skills and the underpinning knowledge, part of which is underpinned by the Award in Maritime Studies: Deck Rating.

1. Mandatory short courses. In common with every seafarer apprentices must possess the following safety certificates mandated by the MCA before they are allowed to serve at sea:

- personal survival techniques ('PST')
- fire prevention and fire-fighting
- elementary first aid
- personal safety and social responsibilities ('PSSR')
- security awareness.

These are commonly taken in a single week-long block, and assessed at the same time.

In addition apprentices are also required to complete the following three short courses:

- MNTB Entry into Enclosed Spaces certificate.
- MCA Steering Certificate
- STCW Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats Certificate ('PSCRB')

2. Structured off-the-job training. The **Award in Maritime Studies: Deck Rating** is mapped carefully to the requirements of the MCA syllabus, underpinning learning which leads to initial certification as a Navigational Watch Rating. It covers the following 8 Units:

- Maritime Employment, Environmental and Health and Safety Practice
- Survival in the water during maritime emergencies
- Vessel Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting
- Maritime Security
- Emergency First Aid in response to maritime accidents or medical emergency
- Basic Navigational Watchkeeping
- Vessel Ropework, Anchoring and Mooring activities
- Assisting with securing a vessel for passage.

3. Structured on-the-job training, supported by a Training Record Book. At sea apprentices complete a series of tasks defined by the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) to ensure that their training is structured and that they can apply their knowledge and skill in practice. An appropriately experienced seafarer will sign off each task in turn in the apprentice's Training

Record Book (TRB) when they are satisfied that the apprentice has demonstrated competence in the task. TRBs must be presented to the MCA for their approval when applying for Able Seafarer recognition.

End point assessment

The end-point assessment which candidates must pass in order to be recognised as an Able Seafarer centres on the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck). Success in passing that qualification leads to the award of the MCA regulatory certificate, Efficient Deck Hand (EDH), which leads to recognition by the MCA as an Able Seafarer (Deck). (In both cases supplementary evidence is required to show that the MCA's other requirements have been met, particularly for sea time and success in passing the short safety courses, which are a statutory requirement). The final assessment of competence, however, is through the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck) – and final confirmation that an apprentice has met all the requirements to be an Able Seafarer (Deck) is in the hands of the MCA.

In more detail, assessment leading to recognition as an Able Seafarer (Deck) comes through the **Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck)** which covers these 5 mandatory Units:

- Maritime Sector Overview
- Vessel Ropework, Anchoring and mooring operations
- Securing a Vessel for Passage
- Vessel Construction and Stability
- Control Operation of Survival Craft and Rescue Boats.

Assessment for the Certificate covers all the knowledge and competence required by the apprenticeship standard. The next section explains how the assessment works.

B. Assessment ('How')

The **Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck)** covers the most important aspects of what a deck rating needs to know and be able to do to be recognised as an Able Seafarer (Deck).

The ability to *apply* knowledge and skill at sea is at the heart of our approach to assessment: theoretical knowledge alone will not do. Most assessment within the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck) is therefore practical wherever possible, involving an apprentice showing a suitably experienced colleague² at sea how to do something, such as handling ropes to secure a ship. This assessment is personal, one-to-one and never one-to-many, to be sure that each individual is safe and competent. Where practical demonstration is unrealistic an apprentice will be asked to explain what should be done. A small part of the assessment is done through written tests, but they are kept to a minimum because seafaring for ratings is primarily about practical ability.

Because the job is a very practical one, assessment for it is also very practical:

Through practical tasks on board, during live working wherever possible: i.e. with a senior colleague watching a candidate undertake the range of tasks specified in the Training Record Book and signing them off when he or she is satisfied that the apprentice is competent, particularly:

- mooring the vessel
- securing the vessel for its journey, including safe stowage of cargo
- casting off
- maintaining deck equipment and the physical structure of the vessel, including tasks requiring a 'permit to work', and working aloft
- making routine and non-routine inspections of fittings and the structure of the vessel, and appropriate planning for such tasks making safety and security checks
- making weather observations while on watch
- anchoring

Through practical demonstration of core skills which can be assessed outside the working environment, e.g. tying a range of knots and explaining the use of each of them;

Through oral questioning about their understanding of the vessel on which the rating is serving and its key features, particularly in terms of safety and stability;

Through short written tests about understanding of the Merchant Navy and the wider maritime sector.

The Theory covers:

Nautical Knowledge (e.g. nautical terms, knowledge of the compass card, understanding orders, watch procedures, knowledge of use of fire-fighting and lifesaving equipment);

COSWP: the Code of Safe Practice for Merchant Seamen, 1998, which covers 20 defined duties and responsibilities, (e.g. 'permit to work', working aloft, boarding arrangements, lifting equipment, enclosed spaces and personal safety equipment);

² The MCA defines suitability.

- Shipboard Maintenance: practical knowledge of general maintenance, e.g. use of painting and cleaning materials, preparation techniques, use of power tools, safe disposal of waste;
- Prevention of pollution: basic knowledge of marine environmental issues, precautions to be used, use and operation of anti-pollution equipment, approved methods for disposal of marine pollutants.

Practical work, to be tested as far as possible by practical demonstration, covers:

- Common knots, bends and hitches;
- Splicing and whipping;
- Rope work and rigging;
- Mooring;
- Anchoring;
- Cargo work.

Final judgements

Candidates for Able Seafarer (Deck) must present the following evidence in person at one of the MCA's Marine Offices:

- proof that they have reached the age of 18
- a Watch Rating Certificate
- an Efficient Deck Hand (EDH) certificate
- a Certificate of Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boat
- a medical fitness form (ENG1)
- proof that they have completed at least 12 months sea-service in the deck department with approved training.
- a completed MNTB Training Record Book.

MCA specifies exact requirements in its 'M' Notices, for example detailing what sea services counts and what does not.

There is no weighting in the final approval by the MCA: all requirements must be met.

Grading

The Able Seafarer (Deck) apprenticeship is not graded, either overall or in part: it is assessed on a pass/fail basis.

There is no provision in the STCW Convention for grading the certification for Able Seafarers or any of the intermediary steps towards Able Seafarer status. The Maritime Trailblazer Group has agreed with BIS that the status quo is right for the maritime sector. Safety is paramount: we must keep seafarers alive in an inherently risky working environment. It is literally vital that everyone on board a ship should know that all their colleagues have been assessed to rigorous international standards as being competent to work at sea in the different roles allocated to them. The clarity of pass/fail sends a powerful signal to everyone concerned and any compromise on that, even in search of excellence, risks losing far more than we might gain.

C. Assessment ('Who')

The final assessment through the Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck) is in the hands of two groups of people:

- training provider staff, as approved by the MCA, for college-based assessment, notably of the initial safety courses and of the EDH certificate;
- employers' on-board staff, designated for the role according to practices approved for each employer by the MCA, who manage training at sea and sign off individual tasks when they consider apprentices to be competent (knowing that the Training Record Books will be checked by both college staff and the MCA).

Independence is assured by the fact that the final decision about a candidate's competence, and ability to satisfy the full requirements to be an Able Seafarer (Deck) is made by the staff of the MCA, who are wholly independent of both employers and training providers, and who are working to standards set through the international STCW Convention.

D. Quality Assurance

All parties have some responsibility for maintaining and protecting the quality of the training arrangements established for ratings: employers, colleges, Ofqual, the MCA, and individual apprentices themselves.

Responsibility for quality assuring the overall training regime rests with the MCA, through its processes for designing and maintaining an appropriate system, and for approving and inspecting training providers and employers and their staff. The MCA itself is required to undertake an audit every five years for the International Maritime Organisation and for the European Commission of how well the UK adheres to the STCW regime.

The MCA has built into the system a number of checks:

every college which runs the courses listed above has to be approved by the MCA to do so. Each must satisfy the MCA that it meets its requirements for syllabus, staff, facilities and procedures, providing written evidence of the following:

- course title
- lesson plan
- course duration
- facilities, teaching aids, and equipment
- staff qualifications and experience
- examination and assessment procedures
- monitoring of entry requirements
- issue control, authentication and recording of certification
- quality management systems and procedures.

Approved centres are subject to periodic audit by the MCA, which uses a risk-based procedure and audits every centre every 3-4 years. The requirements are provided on request to centres seeking approval. Colleges awarding EDH certificates must use assessors who have been personally licensed by the MCA. Every employer which issues a Watch Rating Certificate has also been licensed to do so by the MCA. The MCA's guidelines say that "In their application, companies must demonstrate that they have adequate arrangements for training and assessing watchkeeping ratings and an acceptable quality control system". Companies, too, are subject to periodic review and re-assessment.

In addition colleges must satisfy the quality assurance regime of the Awarding Body they work with. In keeping with the requirements of Ofqual and its counterparts in the rest of the UK, recognised Awarding Bodies set requirements to approve centres and individual staff, and manages a process of internal and external verification, and periodic review.

Colleges also have their own quality assurance regimes, drawing on the requirements of Ofsted and different funders (notably the Skills Funding Agency in England).

E. Plans for delivery

The assessment processes set out here are familiar to the employers and colleges involved, and no new training is required for them.

Costs

The costs associated with assessment - which are primarily staff time at sea and in college, plus the modest cost of a TRB, paid by employers to the MNTB - are built into existing arrangements. Assessment at sea in particular is done by serving seafarers alongside their other duties, sometimes when opportunity permits. And beyond the small cost of the Training Record Book, there is no cash cost to the final assessment. We estimate that the costs of assessment will amount to perhaps 10% of the total costs of the apprenticeship.

Standardisation

The backbone of the assessment for this apprenticeship is that it meets the requirements of STCW for Able Seafarer certification. Standardisation is managed through the processes outlined above for MCA approval and re-approval, and in practice also through widespread understanding of and commitment to the standards enshrined in STCW.

Our expectation is that for the foreseeable future take-up of this apprenticeship in England is likely to remain under 100 a year (though it will be marketed energetically to the sector) - a level which will not put any significant additional pressure on either participating colleges or employers. We will keep the situation under review.

External Quality Assurance

External Quality Assurance for the Able Seafarer Deck Hand Apprenticeship will be provided by the Institute for Apprenticeships.