

European maritime Post Graduate Programmes for former seafarers

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Abstract

While today many national maritime education and training systems offer opportunities for students to also qualify for a career in the maritime sector ashore, following their sea experience, there is a need for furthering this trend and organising it at a European level. It is believed that such a move would also help to promote the seafaring profession and maritime education. Under the European Commission Sixth Framework Programme, Maritime Transportation Coordination Platform, a study was commissioned in 2004 to survey Master's Level Post Graduate Programmes that are currently available to former seafarers leading to increased employment opportunities in the maritime sector ashore. In addition, the study proposed a common framework for a flexible European Masters Programme leading to the main sectors of the maritime industry.

This paper discusses the findings of this study that include an examination of ship to shore career paths and the current maritime job market ashore. In examining the currently available MSc programmes, criteria are discussed for the inclusion of programmes in a proposed European Commission website that would serve as an online catalogue to make the information more readily available to seafarers. Finally, the common framework for a new European MSc Programme is detailed including programme structure, mode of delivery, subject content and quality standards.

Keywords: European Commission, seafarer, Master's Programme, maritime jobs ashore.

1 Introduction

In response to the Communication of the European Commission on the training and recruitment of seafarers [1], the Council of Ministers adopted specific

conclusions, on 5 June 2003, on improving the image of Community shipping and attracting young people to the seafaring profession. In this context, it invited the Commission to consider a European-level campaign for promoting the seafaring profession and maritime education.

In the above mentioned Communication, the Commission deemed that one of the ways to promote the profession and attract more European officers to it, would be to enhance the quality of maritime studies while securing post sea job possibilities for former seafarers in the maritime cluster.

While today many national maritime education and training systems offer opportunities for students to qualify also for a career in the maritime sector ashore, following their sea experience, there is a need for furthering this trend and organising it at the European level. It is worth noting that the METNET research programme [2] also made proposals in this direction.

The European Commission, under the Sixth Framework Programme, Maritime Transportation Coordination Platform (MTCP), commissioned a “Study on European Maritime Graduate and Post Graduate Programmes for Former Seafarers” [3] with the overall goals of the study to pave the way to: Bring in more people to the seafaring profession and keep them in the maritime cluster by offering them the possibility for post sea careers in the shipping industry ashore or other maritime related activities.

- Improve the employability and professional mobility of Maritime Education and Training graduates.
- Promote the quality of maritime education and training and consider upgrading study programmes and widen specialization of former deck and engineer officers.

To support these goals, the study focused on three primary objectives:

- An examination of Ship to Shore Career Paths.
- Assessment of existing Post Graduate Programmes within the European Union, relevant to former seafarers.
- Proposal for a common framework for a EU Post Graduate MSc Programme for former seafarers.

2 Examination of ship to shore career paths

2.1 Transitional education

Master Mariners, Chief Engineers and other seafarers seeking employment ashore have traditionally been tapped for a host of maritime sector jobs. The European Commission Maritime Transport Website [4] identifies the following three categories of available fields:

- Maritime related Administrations and Authorities (*Port authorities (pilotage services, towage services, harbour masters' departments etc); Port State control; Regional and national administrations (ship management, vessel traffic services, ship survey etc), International organisations*).

- Maritime industry (*Shipping Companies; Manning companies; Offshore Industry; Marine insurance Companies; Classification societies; Maritime legal and financial services;*).
- Maritime Education and Training Institutions.

Advances in maritime and related industry technology combined with increasing international regulations and corresponding domestic legislation demand mariners greatly expand their knowledge base to take up employment ashore. Lloyd’s List recently noted, “Shore side management requires different skills to those involved in a running of a ship at sea, and it is idle to pretend otherwise. So there is a demand for the right kind of ‘conversion’ courses” [5].

The key to a successful career shift ashore focuses on obtaining the right transitional education. Depending on the type of job the mariner is pursuing, this will require either specialized training or an advanced degree such as a Master of Science. For example, on the job training provided by the employer is often the case for a Chief Engineer who becomes a Marine Superintendent or a Master Mariner who takes on the role as the Designated Person Ashore. A short course or diploma, potentially accomplished through distance learning, is typical for a Ship Surveyor, Port State Control Inspector or Ship’s Agent. An advanced degree is an essential element for those seeking employment in the Maritime Law, Logistics, Naval Architecture or Trade and Finance sectors.

In considering the development of a European Masters programme for former seafarers, the study noted that those seeking employment in the areas where an advanced degree is not required would potentially find their opportunities for advancement or sector mobility increased if they did possess a degree. As will be discussed later, a EU MSc programme development should concentrate on incorporating a variety of common elements from a number of maritime sector jobs to offer the graduate the broadest range of employment and advancement opportunities. Figure 1 illustrates this concept.

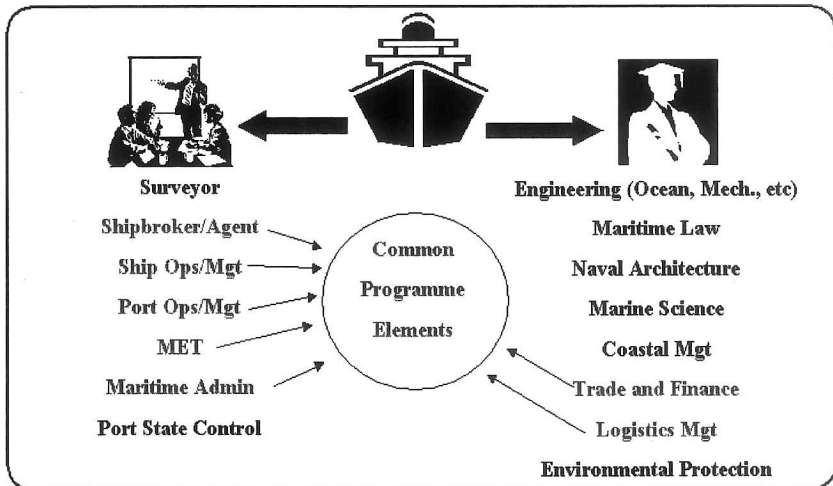


Figure 1.

2.2 The job market

The previous section identifies various fields and associated job opportunities that are well suited for former seafarers. In this context it should also be noted that seafarers' industry, technical and managerial experience make them not only well suited for a range of shore side maritime sector jobs, but in many cases this experience is a prerequisite. In particular, such jobs include Marine and Technical Superintendents, Ship Surveyors, Fleet Managers and Training Managers. Other jobs that greatly benefit from having incumbents with previous sea experience include Harbour Masters, MET Lecturers, and editors of nautical publications such as sailing directions. The seafarer's experience, especially that of top rank officers like Masters and Chief Engineers, would, at the very least, enhance most other maritime sector jobs as well.

3 Existing Post Graduate Programmes

3.1 Scope and methodology

The primary aim of the study was to evolve a flexible European postgraduate programme leading to the main sectors of the maritime industry. In undertaking the task of cataloguing existing PG programmes, the study established the following criteria:

- Programmes were selected that target seafarers and are geared specifically toward the maritime industry (many of these programmes also target/accept non-seafarers).
- Highly specialised programmes such as Maritime Law, Naval Architecture and Marine Science were typically excluded because they generally focus on a limited industry sector. Exceptions to this include several programmes from institutions that are centred on the maritime industry vice institutions that provide a maritime related programme as merely one of a host of varied specialisations within a specific discipline.
- PhD and similar level programmes were not considered as falling within the scope of this study.
- Programmes were only considered if they were taught in an international environment. This generally means that the programme is offered in English and open to international students.

Prospective programmes were identified by a review of professional maritime publications such as Lloyd's List, by consulting with maritime education and industry professionals, and by Internet search.

Many of the potential programmes had all the required information on their institution's web site. An attempt was also made to contact all the programme directors to obtain any information not available on their web site as well as to obtain data on demand for their respective programmes.

3.2 Review of existing programmes within the EU

EU PG programmes meeting the above criteria were catalogued, including extended contact information and correspondence received from various the programme directors as well as hyperlinks to the institutions' websites and a collection of electronic prospectus and course information where available. The following is an overview of common attributes identified in the various programs:

- **Structure:** All of the programmes identified are taught, with resident requirements and many are completed within one year. A few of the programmes, such as the Master of Arts programmes at Greenwich and the Master of Maritime Affairs programme at the World Maritime University span two years [6]. The MBA in Shipping and Logistics offered by the Copenhagen Business School is established as a two-year part time program. The MSc in Maritime Economics and Logistics at Erasmus University in Rotterdam is a one-year full time programme but offers an option of completing the program in 2-3 years as a part time student.
- **Subject Content:** The subject content varies by specific programme. However, elements common to a majority of the programmes that are shipping business and management related and even in a number of other programmes include courses in Maritime Law, Logistics, economics and finance.
- **Quality Standards:** All programmes maintain at least a European recognized accreditation and include internal quality monitoring programmes.
- **Mode of Delivery:** Courses are generally taught in a lecture format. Additionally, field studies are a key element of many of the programmes. Given the nature of shipping related activities, these field studies appear to be particularly important to give students first hand exposure to the industry and to exchange ideas with those already in the field. Most of the programmes also require a research project or dissertation as a final requirement for graduation.
- **Course Demand:** Although requests were sent to all the identified institutions, only a few replied with data on actual applications and acceptances for their respective programmes. For those institutions supplying this information, it can be seen that in general, applications were 2-3 times that of actual acceptances. Course acceptance/enrolment ranged from 7 for the University of Plymouth's Coastal and Ocean Policy MSc to 105 for the World Maritime University MSc in Maritime Affairs. Specific data on how many of the students were seafarers was generally hard to obtain except for WMU who reported 41 of their recent class were former seafarers.

At this point, the study strongly recommended to the European Commission that they publish an online catalogue, similar to the one produced for the study. The study noted that the extent of information contained in this catalogue is not

easily available to EU seafarers. An online catalogue would not only provide convenient access to the identified programs but also serve as a career development tool by showing the seafarer what types of programmes and related jobs are available in the maritime industry. In addition to static information, the catalogue could be interactive and have a means for other potential institutions to apply to have their programmes listed as well as for those already on the site, to update their information.

After review of this recommendation in April 2005, the European Commission, Directorate General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN) began an initiative to design and place this type of catalogue on their Maritime Careers Website [7]. In addition to listing EU Programmes meeting the criteria identified above, the Commission also hopes to have a section where similar National Programmes might be listed. When completed, the Commission plans advertise its existence in industry websites and publications such as Lloyd's List and others to ensure the widest possible dissemination to seafarers.

4 Post Graduate Programme common framework

4.1 Programme structure and mode of delivery

A flexible programme structure will be critical in order to attract and benefit the greatest number of students as well as foster the interest and support of the industry. As we have seen, the preferred structure of currently available programmes is that of a full time resident programme for typically one year. The second alternative currently available would be part time students in the same programmes but taking 2-3 years to complete, noting that the part time student would still have residency requirements during the individual courses. A third option is that of a complete distance-learning programme that could be completed via the Internet. At the Master's Level, The Open University [8] in the UK is presently doing this successfully (although they do not offer any maritime sector specific programmes). Within the European maritime sector, quality distance-learning programmes abound for certificate and diploma award. These include courses and programmes offered by Lloyd's Maritime Academy, The Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, the Nautical Institute, DNV and other classification societies.

In considering which of the above structures, or mix of structures, is best suited for a European postgraduate programme, the study identified a number of factors:

- **Coalition Concept:** The proposal is for the programme to be implemented by a coalition of 5 EU Universities, with the potential for other Universities or Colleges to join the coalition in the future. In this light, will the programme be administered in its entirety from each member Institution? Is there a possibility that certain courses and related activities be conducted at individual locations and others possibly combined? Might some institutions specialize in and thus coordinate certain programme elements?

- **Mode of Delivery:** The mode of delivery is an extremely important factor. The modern maritime industry is both global and dynamic. As has been seen, programs currently offered within the EU use a combination of classroom lecture, field study and research. The highly interactive nature of these modes of delivery is essential to enable the student to get the most out of many of the courses that are envisioned for this programme. Classroom lectures expose the students to contemporary issues and afford them the opportunity to draw on the experience and knowledge of not only the lecturer, but fellow students as well. The field study allows the student to gain first hand knowledge and insight from various leaders in the industry. Research affords the student the opportunity to demonstrate independent thought and understanding as well as serve as a basis for future analytical thinking that may be required during employment. These modes of delivery are considered particularly important for seafarers who are seeking employment ashore for possibly the first time. Senior Officers like Masters and Chief Engineers bring a tremendous amount of practical, technical and general managerial experience to the shore side industry. However, the world of a ship is an isolated one and officers may have had little opportunity to practice sound management, business and interpersonal skills on a corporate level. In order for this programme to be competitive within Europe and Internationally, these three primary modes of delivery should be incorporated where appropriate. That being said, it is also very possible to have some individual courses within the programme adequately covered through distance learning.
- **Student IT Requirements:** Computer and other IT requirements of the student need to be considered in the development of residence course work and especially any distance learning modules. Many advanced software programs and associated hardware exist to facilitate distance learning including provisions for live, interactive audio and visual lectures conducted over the Internet. While this holds great potential for advanced learning, it may also require serious additional investment by many seafarers as well as by coalition institutions to participate. Although the details of this type of delivery will be worked out and agreed upon by the coalition, it is expected that the initial programme will have only basic IT requirements such as a standard computer with Internet connection, email and word processing and spreadsheet software.
- **Student Time Requirements:** It is foreseen that a part time programme of study would afford students an opportunity to potentially begin their studies prior to completely leaving the sea. In addition, those seafarers already employed ashore would be able to participate in the programme without leaving their current jobs. This in turn might foster sources of funding for the programmes from either employers or seafarers themselves if the study being done is alternating with periods of paid and productive employment.

- **Programme Funding:** The coalition of Universities involved in this programme will be tasked with identifying its actual funding source(s). This being said, the programme should operate in a manner similar to other currently available programmes. These consist of three main sources; students personally securing tuition costs, corporate/industry sponsorship of employees, or Foundation grants for particular groups of individuals [9]. This funding strategy will provide a level of transparency and competitive quality for the programme. Additionally, industry participation is essential to provide relevant input into programme development and revision, as well as serving as a channel through which graduates can seek employment.

With the above in mind, the study suggests that a flexible and competitive EU MSc programme structure would be a part time program that runs over two years. Based upon the current standards and practices of the academic community and the industry, the primary mode of delivery would be via classroom lecture supplemented by field study and research assignments. Some modules or courses would certainly lend themselves to distance learning, which would reduce residence periods at the University. One option for this delivery method would be a course in which a student obtains study material and works through it individually. Assessment would then be completed by the submission of assignments submitted by mail or electronically, or an exam administered at the respective University on a testing day. In this sense, several exams for different courses could be given over the course of a week. This method is typical maritime industry practice for the award of certificates and diplomas. A second option would be similar in that study material would be given to the student who would work through the material independently. At some point, an actual residence period would be scheduled and the knowledge gained by the student would be expanded through, for example, a week of formal lecture followed by an assignment or exam. The advantage here is that lecture and class interaction are not forsaken even though the bulk of the actual studying could be done in a non-resident status. This later method could be applied to more courses than the former because the key academic elements would be preserved. In fact, this method is presently used in the two year *MBA in Shipping and Logistics*, offered by the Copenhagen Business School.

4.2 Subject content

The study recommended that the content of a EU MSc programme should focus around *Maritime Management and Safety*. Maritime Management is an element common to a majority of the currently available postgraduate programmes. Maritime Safety is an important area presently lacking in many of the available programs. Combined, these elements are consistent with providing the graduate with the broadest range of employment opportunities. Within this general content it was also suggested that elective courses be offered to allow a student to further focus in the shipping, port or government sectors or others as may be decided upon by the University coalition in communication with the maritime industry.

Within this broad framework, the following specific elements were recommended as potential core courses of the programme:

- **Maritime Law and Conventions:** In order to be a player in the global shipping and maritime cluster, it is imperative to be conversant with the complex body of maritime law and maritime conventions.
- **Maritime Economics:** Given the global nature of the maritime industry, a thorough understanding of maritime economics is essential for those seeking management level positions in this sector.
- **Logistics and Supply Chain Management:** The total cost and efficiency for transportation and delivery of goods from place of manufacture to final consumer is the keystone of almost every aspect of modern transportation. In today's global economy, this is combined with the idea of goods being manufactured from components that may originate in many different areas of the world.
- **Maritime Finance:** A solid grasp of financial and risk concepts is fundamental to almost any managerial position. This element will seek to supply students with a solid practical understanding of accounting principles, budgeting, investment analysis, and performance measures.
- **Maritime Safety:** Dealing with operational maritime safety is a key competence of every seafarer. It is therefore desirable to strengthen and widen this expertise through providing further safety related education. The focus hereby is on the management aspect of safety.

Other required and elective courses would follow that might include topics such as ship (or port) operations and management, Maritime Security, Ship Brokering and Chartering, Contemporary Maritime Issues, and Maritime technology, just to name a few.

4.3 Quality standards

One of the specified mandates in developing a EU postgraduate program was to consider the Bologna Declaration [10]. A goal identified in the Declaration that is particularly relevant here is “the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European System of higher education”. In this sense, the proposed programme should not only be competitive with other European programmes, but also be recognized (and even eventually admired) Worldwide. The study urged the implementing coalition to insure the programme has the highest quality standards including appropriate transparency, accreditation, and internal and external quality assessment. This ideal is also in direct support of the Bologna Declaration objective to promote “European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.”

5 Conclusions

The Initial coalition of five universities for development of the programme was formed during the first quarter of 2005 and includes Gdynia Maritime University, Technical University of Catalonia (Spain), Norwegian University of

Science and Technology, Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde and the World Maritime University.

As discussed earlier in this paper at the end of Section 2, a EU Social Fund sponsored programme on Career Mapping for the Maritime Industries, led by Southampton Institute and NUMAST, is currently underway. The results of this study will be crucial in providing justification for the EU MSc Programme development initiative. In addition, as also discussed, this study will provide additional insight for curriculum development.

The Commission and the coalition are optimistic that this will begin soon after the completion of the EU Social Fund Career Mapping Study, sometime toward the end of 2005 with the actual programme implementation as early as 2007. Once the initial programme is established, guidelines will be established to permit other universities to join the coalition as well.

The development of an EU MSc Programme, tailored specifically for former seafarers to assist them in a transition toward employment in the maritime sector, certainly holds promise to promote the seafaring profession within Europe. In this light, it may also inspire those contemplating a seafaring career to plan on a career that does not just stop with the ship. They may now envision a career that includes postgraduate education and secure and rewarding employment prospects ashore afterwards.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are the personal views of the authors and not necessarily those of the employer of the authors.

References

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- [4] European Commission (2005), *Career Prospects Ashore*, retrieved 19 January 2005 from http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/maritime/careers/prospects_en.htm.
- [5] Lloyd's List (2005, 5 January) *Ageing Supermen*.
- [6] A 9 month accelerated programme is also available at WMU for students with advance standing.
- [7] See: http://europa.eu.int/comm/transport/maritime/careers/prospects_en.htm.
- [8] See www.open.ac.uk.
- [9] Examples include Copenhagen Business School students who are mainly sponsored by their employers and WMU students, most of who receive scholarships from participating foundations.
- [10] The European Higher Education Area, Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education, Convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999.