

# Onboard training for deck officers

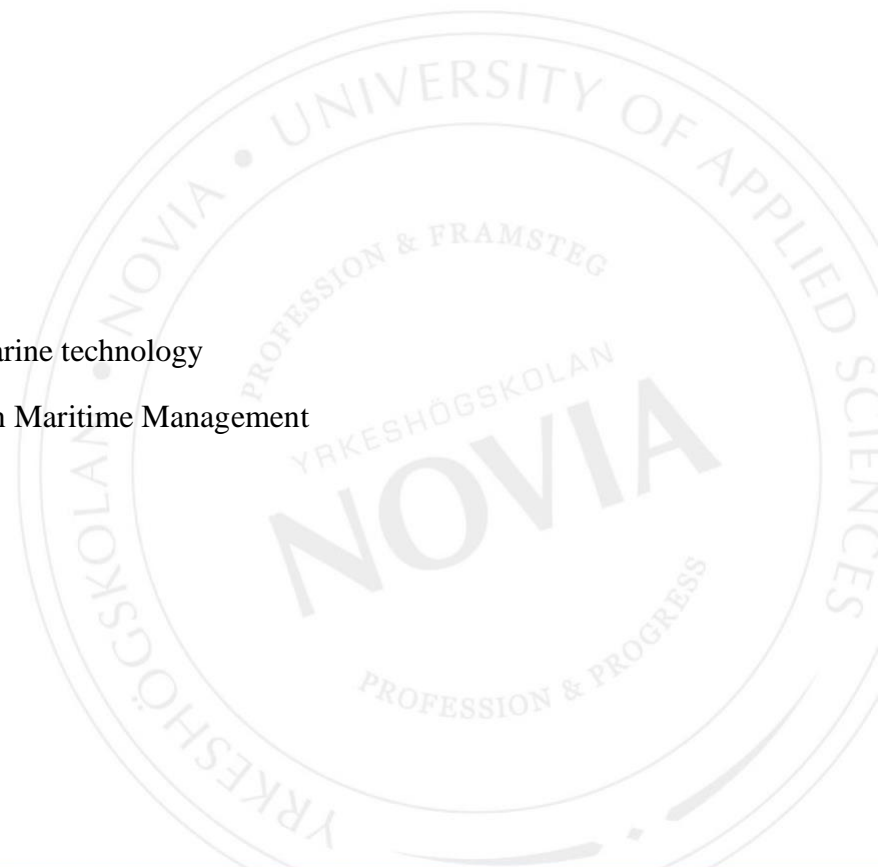
The cadets' perspective

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Thesis for Bachelor of Marine technology

The Degree Programme in Maritime Management

Turku 2020



## **BACHELOR'S THESIS**

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Degree Programme and place: Degree Programme in Maritime Management

Specialization Alternative: Bachelor of Maritime Technology

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**Title: Onboard Training for Deck Officers. The Cadets' Perspective.**

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Date 10.04.2020

Number of pages 27

Appendices 1

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the onboard training for officers in charge of a navigational watch in Finland from the trainees' perspective. This research is based on the assessment of a questionnaire filled by students who have attended at least one onboard training for deck officers.

This research will assess whether the training is conducted as required and advised from the STCW convention and code and whether trainees are satisfied and confident from the onboard training for certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch in Finland.

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Language: English

Key words: Onboard training, Officer cadet, STCW, Seafaring.

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# 1 Introduction

''The mandatory periods of seagoing service are of prime importance in learning the job of being a ship's officer and in achieving the overall standard of competence required. Properly planned and structured, the periods of seagoing service will enable prospective officers to acquire and practice skills and will offer opportunities for competences achieved to be demonstrated and assessed''. (International Maritime Organization, 2017)

I have worked for a year and half in Finland as deck officer on a rotation of five weeks on and five off right after receiving my licence. In such a short period I have witnessed four different fresh graduates deck officers replacing me when I am offboard. I noticed in them a lack of confidence and practical knowledge regarding the duties of a deck officer. The same applies to me when I started. This arose the intention for making this research to assess the onboard training system in Finland from the trainees' perspective since training is vital in learning a job.

## 2 Purpose

This research is entirely based on the trainees' responses to questions that will give an answer whether the onboard training for deck officers in Finland is carried out as the advisory and mandatory recommendations of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) convention and code.

Also, individual feedbacks of the trainees from own-thoughts and ideas of improvement will be collected and studied to see if common notions exist between the respondents and if a poor training will have an effect on freshly graduated deck officers.

### 2.1 Limitations

The questionnaire gathered 48 responses in which 45 came from the same maritime academy. The focus in this research was on the students who have been training on Finnish flagged vessels only. This study is limited to the perspective of these students.

### **3 Onboard training background**

The Finnish shipowner association and the Finnish maritime academies initiated in 2012 the Apprentice Mill which conducts the onboard training in Finland and hands out onboard training places equally to all the maritime academies in Finland and their students onboard Finnish merchant vessels. (Finnish Shipowners' Association)

The onboard training is divided into two phases and goes conjointly with the education. After one year of education the students would embark on the first phase of 60 days of onboard training for ratings forming part of a navigational watch which they can apply afterwards for a Watchkeeping Rating - Deck certificate STCW II/4.

The second phase is 300 days of onboard training for officers in charge of a navigational watch combined with one and a half year of approved education and training which afterwards the candidates can apply for a Deck Officer certificate STCW A-II/1.

Seafarers in Finland are educated in two levels, secondary and polytechnic level. Four polytechnic universities in Finland are conducting the education on a polytechnical level and four vocational schools on a secondary level. Students from all these academies participate in the training provided by Apprentice Mill.

### **4 Standards and requirements**

The international Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978 was acquired in 1978 and put into effect 28 April 1984. The principal goal of the convention is to increase safety of life and property at sea and to protect marine life.

In 2010, the Manila amendments to the STCW Convention and Code were acquired and put into effect in the beginning of 2012 with significant change to the convention and code. The Convention contains the regulations and part A of the Code holds the obligatory standards of training while part B gives assistance and not mandatory guidelines in applying those regulations. (International Maritime Organization, 2017)

## **4.1 STCW Convention Chapter II Regulation II/1**

This part has the mandatory rules concerning the training of officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnage or more. The rules are the following:

- All candidates for the certificate must have at least 360 days of approved onboard training programme meeting the requirements of section A-II/1 of the STCW Code. This should be registered in a recognised training record book. Otherwise at least 1080 days of approved seagoing service.
- They must carry out bridge watchkeeping tasks for at least 6 months supervised by the master or a qualified deck officer.
- An approved education and training complying with the standards mentioned in section A-II/1 of the STCW Code must be completed. (International Maritime Organization, 2017)

## **4.2 STCW Code part A Chapter II Section A-II/1**

The minimum compulsory required competencies for the candidate for certification of officers in navigational watch are listed in this part of the code. The candidate is obliged to give proof of having completed the demanded level of these competencies with different methods in which some are through approved training ship experience.

Mandatory requirements for the onboard training are noted in this section. The approved programme of onboard training shall guarantee that the trainee is given organized practical training in the competencies required, taking into consideration the guidance stated in B II/1 of this code. Qualified officers onboard shall supervise the trainee and sufficiently document the progress in an approved training record book.

The least comprehension and competence requirements for the certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch from Table A-II/1 which are accepted from onboard training are the follow:

- Be able to plan and conduct a passage and determine position.
- Maintain a safe navigational watch.
- Use of ECDIS to maintain the safety of navigation.
- Respond to emergencies.

- Manoeuvre the ship.
- Monitor the loading, stowage, securing, care during the voyage and the unloading of cargoes.
- Inspect and report defect and damage to cargo spaces, hatch covers and ballast tanks.
- Ensure compliance with pollution-prevention requirements.
- Maintain seaworthiness of the ship. (International Maritime Organization, 2017)

### 4.3 STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1

This section of the chapter provides assistance and guidance regarding the whole training process for officers in charge of a navigational watch. A good onboard training system would follow the guidance provided in this section. Therefore, notable instructions from this section were used to create part of the questionnaire.

It is divided into 8 parts with following key points.

**Training.** The obligatory periods of seagoing service are vital for learning the job of a ship's officer. It is very important for the trainee, the supervising officers and the company personnel to know what competences are to be achieved by the end of training. The trainee should be provided with a training record book that gives detailed information about the tasks and duties to be done as this will show distinctive evidence for issuing a certificate once completed. The company where the training takes place must ensure that certain time is set aside to complete this programme of training.

**Roles and responsibilities.** The training officer onboard should organize the training programme and ensure that the training record book is well maintained. Also, he/she should ensure that the time spent onboard for the trainee is as practical as possible in terms of training and experience.

The trainee should keep the record book up to date and make the most of his/her time onboard in or outside working hours regarding opportunities given.

**Induction.** The trainee should be informed at the start of each onboard training how the training will be carried out and structured.

**Shipboard programme of training.** This part states what are the areas that the tasks in the record book should relate to. It also highlights how vital it is for the trainee to be given sufficient opportunity for supervised bridge watchkeeping experience, especially in the later stages of the training programme. It recommends that the record book should be signed by a qualified officer when a satisfactory standard of competency has been achieved by the trainee.

**Monitoring and reviewing.** Here it is mentioned that the record book should be initialled by the master and the training officer at the start, during and at the end of each training, this will ensure that the trainees are aware of the progress they are making.

**Assessment of abilities and skills in navigational watchkeeping.** Here are the tasks related to navigational watchkeeping that a trainee applying for the certification needs to demonstrate for evidence. However, these are also accepted to be demonstrated through a simulator approved programme which most of the trainees in Finland attend at their maritime academies.

**Evaluation of competence.** This part is very important on how competences should be evaluated. Here it is noted that the evaluation is the process of assembling enough reliable evidence about the trainee's knowledge, understanding and skill to complete the tasks listed in table A-II/1.

Different methods can be used to provide evidence about the prospect officer's competence in the tasks such as direct observation, competency tests, proof from previous experience and project and assignments. One or more of these methods should be used when providing evidence of competency.

**Training in celestial navigation.** This part outlines the suggested training in celestial navigation. This is also achieved at the maritime academies. (International Maritime Organization, 2017)

## 5 Previous research

In 2018, a thesis research about the onboard training in Finland from the trainers' perspective was done based on gathering answers from 22 qualified deck officers.

The research concluded the following key points:

- 45% of the respondents did not have a training officer onboard at all;
- the average time a trainee spends on bridge watchkeeping duties is 53% of their time onboard;
- a common challenge for most of the qualified officers who participated in the research was the shortage of time caused by lack of manpower or a busy timetable. This would most likely result in shortage of time for focusing to train the prospective officer or having him work more on deck. (Fabian, 2018)

## 6 Method

This research used a quantitative method to assemble answers from a questionnaire sent to students who have attended at least one training for deck officers on board Finnish flagged vessels. The last question was qualitative where the trainees can give their own thoughts and feedback on the onboard training.

The questions aimed to collect data on how much of the onboard training has the trainee completed and on how many vessels, whether the training was conducted as required from the STCW convention and code and finally if the trainee is generally satisfied from the onboard training system in Finland.

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was open for answers from the 1st to the 31st of March. 48 responses in total were received. It was sent directly to the seafaring students' email at Novia UAS and to the rest of the maritime academies via email to their student affairs office hoping the last-mentioned forwards it to the students. 45 out of 48 of the responses received were from student at Novia.

## 7 Results and analysis

### 7.1 Onboard training completed

Approximately how much of your onboard training for officers have you completed?

48 responses

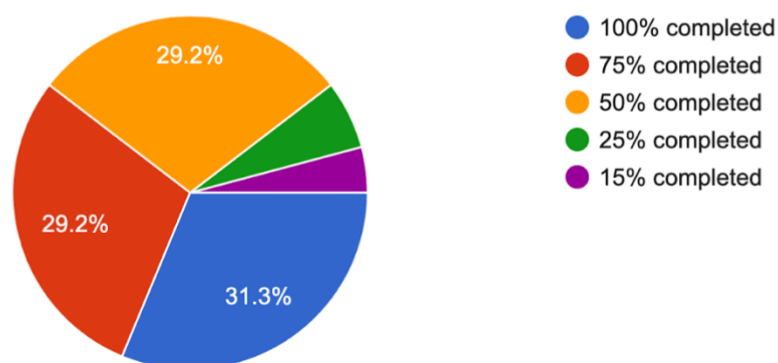


Figure 1. Onboard training completed

This question aims to discover the experience level of the respondents. 15 of the respondents have completed their whole 360 days of onboard training and 14 have completed 75% of it. Total of 43 out of 48 of the trainees who have responded to this survey have completed more than half of their onboard training. This is an advantage for this research as most of the participants should have by then experienced sufficiently how the onboard training in Finland is conducted.

## 7.2 Number of vessels

On how many vessels have you been training?

48 responses

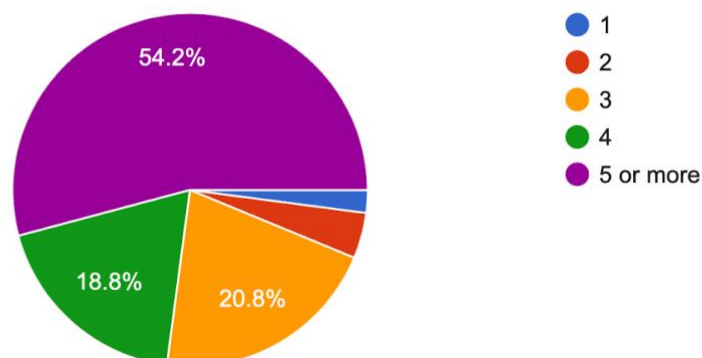


Figure 2. Number of vessels

The main focus of this question is to discover an average of how many vessels a trainee would attend in Finland once the training is completed and the number of vessels each respondent has attended.

More than half of the respondents have been training on five or more vessels and only three on one or two. Most of the respondents to this survey have experiences from 3 or more vessels. This is another advantage for this research.

21 respondents who have completed 75% to 100% of their onboard training have been training on at least five vessels. Therefore, the participants in the onboard training system in Finland will usually have an experience from 5 or more vessels once their training is completed.

### 7.3 Guidance at the start

Were you given full information and guidance at the start of each onboard training on how your training will be organized and what is expected from you?

48 responses

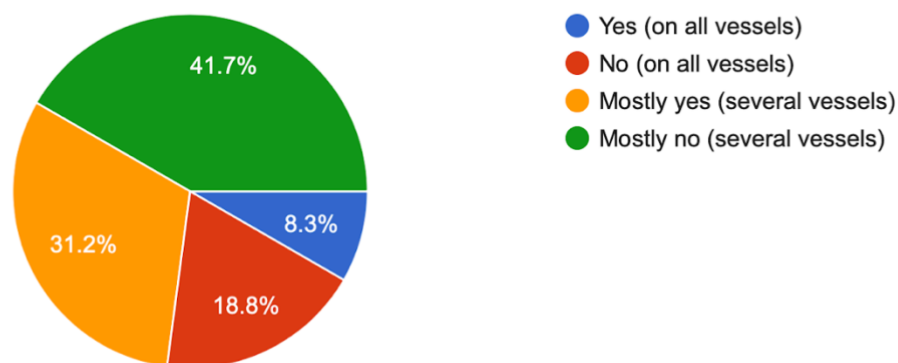


Figure 3. Guidance at the start

As advised in the *“Induction”* part of the STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1, each trainee should be informed at the start of each onboard training how the training will be carried out and structured. 60% of the respondents haven’t or mostly haven’t been informed and 40% have or mostly have been informed.

This guidance and information would brief the trainee about important details of the duties they will be responsible of. More than half of them aren’t aware on what to expect when the training starts regarding how their training will be carried out.

## 7.4 Training officer onboard

Did you have a qualified deck officer acting as your training officer?

48 responses

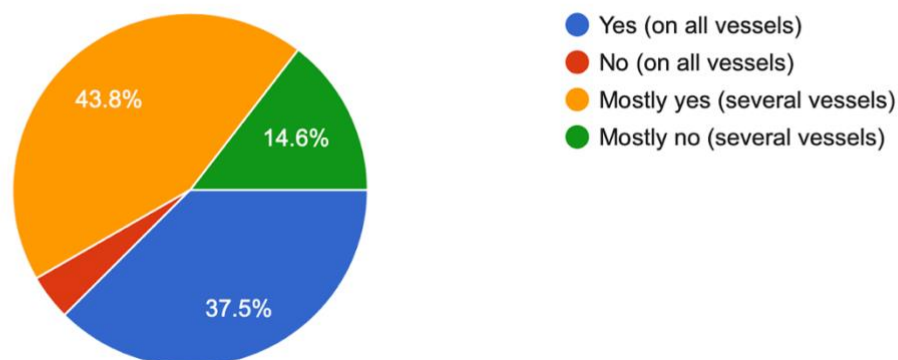


Figure 4. Training officer onboard

As advised in the ‘*Roles and responsibilities*’ and ‘*Shipboard programme of training*’ parts of the STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1, there should be a shipboard training officer responsible for the training of the prospective officer and simultaneously a qualified deck officer who initialises the training record book. The aim of this question is to see whether there was a training officer on board and was he a qualified deck officer.

80% of the trainees had or mostly had a qualified deck officer acting as a training officer and 20% did not. This is good improving result comparing to the research done in 2018 where 45% did not have a training officer onboard.

In the qualitative part of the questionnaire, one of the trainees commented ‘*as a cadet you feel rather as a burden to the ship and an annoying asset of the not often sure training officer. Often, I didn’t even know who was my training officer*’.

## 7.5 Organising and supervising

Did your training officer organise and supervise your training programme on board?

48 responses

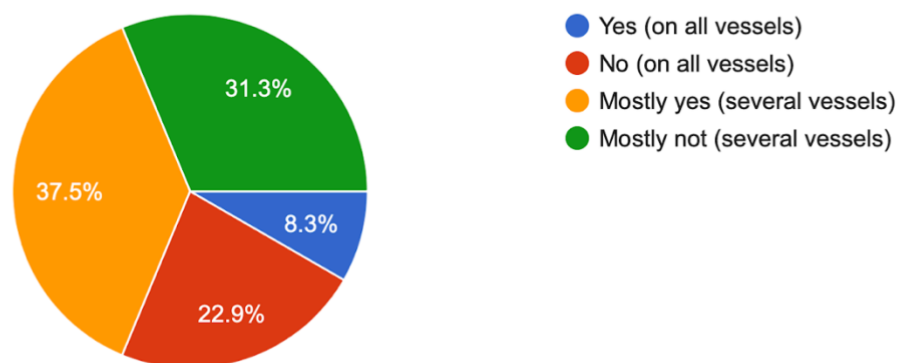


Figure 5. Organising and supervising

As advised in the *“Roles and responsibilities”* part of the STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1, the training officer’s role is to organise and supervise the training programme on board. However, this wasn’t the case of 54% of the respondents. This is a significant result as it is very critical that the prospective officers are supervised, and their training programme is organised by a qualified officer. Training is the key in learning the job of a deck officer.

Some of the trainees commented the following in the open feedback part that can relate to organising and supervising:

*‘It is understandable that with the duties of everyday life onboard the designated training officer doesn't have much time to spare for apprentice and teaching certain things are time taken away from resting hours’.*

*‘As an officer trainee we need to get time to study/do duties of watch officer under supervision of an officer. Training needs to be more supervised and organised’.*

*‘I did all my onboard training on small tonnage vessels and it is easy to say that small crew is not enough to maintain proper training officer for apprentice all the time but on the same time it will give a lot of responsibility for the apprentice which I found useful’.*

*‘Training competency mostly depends on you. Officers are too busy/uninterested to really supervise’.*

*‘In no way chief officers, which are usually in charge of cadet training, are able to track and correct cadet’s progress and to check that all tasks needed in training book are done. CO is overloaded with other, more essential jobs’.*

*‘It is sole cadet’s responsibility to inform officers which skills/tasks he or she wants to practice. And cadets have to be persistent in their pursuit of that knowledge’.*

*‘However, it feels as though wherever I go, I’m the only one driving my training forward and although I believe the trainee should take responsibility for their own learning I feel as though the ones providing the training should be more actively interested and involved. I can think of perhaps one or two training officers who took active interest out of the 15+ I have worked with’.*

Based on these comments, the reason behind not receiving enough supervision could be due to training officers being overloaded with daily work or just have no interest. Also, many respondents had a common thought that the trainees therefore are responsible for learning and pursuing their training.

## 7.6 Opportunity for bridge watchkeeping

Were you given enough time and opportunity for supervised bridge watchkeeping experience?

48 responses

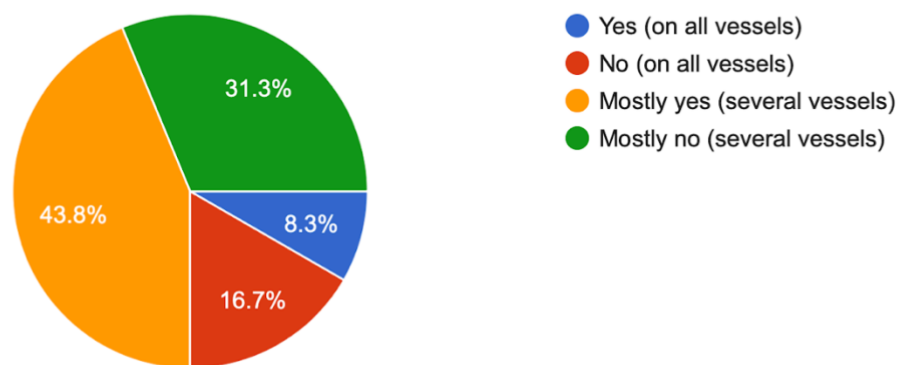


Figure 6. Opportunity for bridge watchkeeping

“*Shipboard programme of training*” part of the STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1The STCW Code emphasizes the extreme importance of bridge watchkeeping experience, especially in the late stages of the training. Watchkeeping is the most task a deck officer would do onboard.

Those who have completed 75% to 100% of their training, 15 were not or mostly not given the opportunity and 14 were or mostly were given the opportunity. At this final stage of the training, all trainees should have enough watchkeeping experience or given the opportunity to do so. However, about 50% of the trainees who are in their final stage of training were still not given enough time and opportunity for supervised bridge watchkeeping experience.

Here are some of the trainees’ comments from the open feedback part that can relate to bridge watchkeeping:

“*Mostly the training is divided 50/50 for deck work and watchkeeping, but nights at watch are lookout duties (to meet the requirements) where it is up to the trainee’s initiative and the individual officer, whether he/she wants to teach you bridge work or not*”.

“*My first officer onboard training was on ship where I visited bridge twice during two weeks, to empty the trash bin*”.

*‘The bridge time I got, was mostly during a night at open sea, and not really learning any routines of deck officer’.*

*‘The focus is on most vessels in working as day labour and the showing the basics of night-time navigation’.*

Based on these comments, for those who were given bridge watchkeeping time, it was done at night. The training seems to be divided in way that daytime is for deck duties and night for watchkeeping. Apparently, these trainees are not supervised or taught much but basics since night-time is used for lookouts.

## 7.7 Six months of bridge watchkeeping duties

Have you performed bridge watchkeeping duties for a period of not less than six months during your whole onboard training (360 days) ?

47 responses

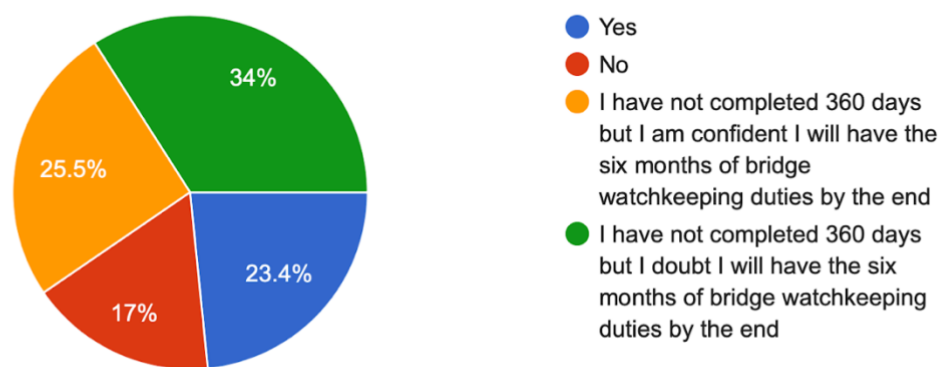


Figure 7. Six months of bridge watchkeeping duties

Referring to the STCW Convention Chapter II Regulation II/1, it is mandatory for all prospective officers to carry out bridge watchkeeping duties for at least 6 months supervised by the master or a qualified deck officer during their 360 days of onboard training.

9 of the 15 respondents who have completed 100% of their training have performed these duties and 6 have not. The rest of the respondents who have not completed their whole onboard training, 57% doubt they will have the six months period and 43% are confident they will.

This is a worrying result as bridge watchkeeping is the most important and frequent task a deck officer carries out at work. This is essential for safety of navigation at sea and most of the trainees in Finland are not receiving that experience. If those six months are done mostly as night lookout as mentioned in the previous comments, the trainees won't then receive much of bridge watchkeeping experience.

## 7.8 Time spent working on deck

Approximately how much time of your on board training would you spend working on deck ?

48 responses

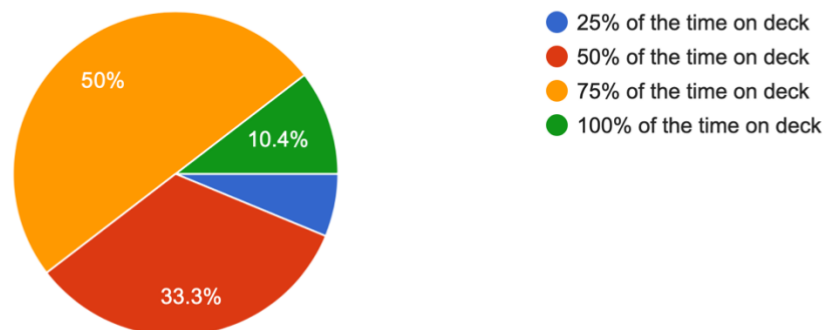


Figure 8. Time spent on deck

Out of the 29 respondents who have completed 75% to 100% of their training, 13 have spent 75% of their training working on deck and 4 have spent 100% of the time working on deck. At this stage of the training, this is a quite much of time spent working on deck as the trainee has to spend half of training doing bridge watchkeeping duties and other officer tasks.

Working on deck is important in the first stages of each training since it will give the trainee a base knowledge of the vessel. Spending more time working on deck will result in less time on watchkeeping duties and learning other deck officer duties.

Comparing with the results of the research done in 2018, there is a huge difference. Here half of the trainees would spend 75% of the time work while there 53% was the average time a trainee would spend on bridge watchkeeping duties.

Regarding the time spent working on deck, many negative comments were received from the trainees in the open question part:

*‘I’ve seen many times an officer trainee driving rust full 2 to 4 weeks we’ve been together on a vessel. This shouldn’t be possible’.*

*‘The shipping companies and the crew on board often expects the officer students/trainees to do "normal maintenance work" on deck with the OS, AB or Bosun and not doing actual "officer duties"’.*

*‘How are you expected to know what to do when you become a deck officer if the only thing you have been doing on your so called "on-board training" is cleaning toilets and cleaning cargo-holds?’.*

*‘Most shipping companies treat apprentices as a cost-free extra labour’.*

*‘I have seen and heard that trainees/cadets are used as a free manpower onboard’.*

*‘Depends much on the vessel but feels often like the company just using the trainees as free labour. To learn how to grind rust, paint and clean doesn't take much time for most of the people, but to become a confident officer it does’.*

*‘Vessels should acknowledge that we are there to learn and not for cheap labour, luckily younger officers know what onboard training should be, so you'll get more opportunities with them’.*

*‘You can’t learn deck officer job by cleaning and painting’.*

*‘‘Most companies take apprentices as free labour’’.*

*‘‘For the companies, deck cadets are mostly extra OS who make dirty deck jobs for food’’.*

Many of the trainees consider that they are onboard as an extra deck worker to do all maintenance jobs such as rust grinding, painting and cleaning. It is quite remarkable how many emphasised the shipping companies of being the one responsible for that. This seems to be the most critical problem regarding the onboard training from the trainees’ perspective based on how many common feedbacks was received about it.

## 7.9 Training record book

Did your training officer ensure that your training record book is maintained properly and that your time onboard is spent as useful as possible in terms of training and experience?

48 responses

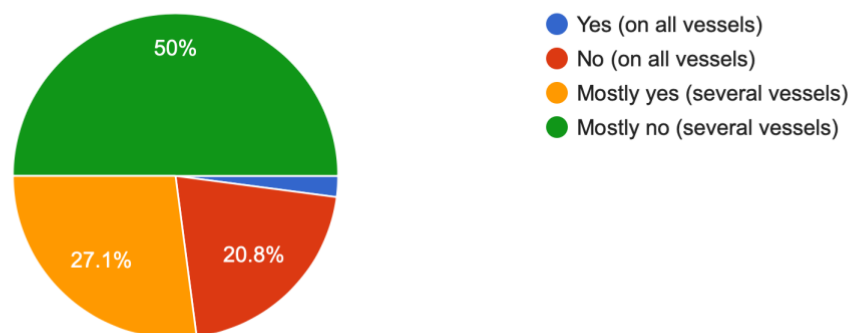


Figure 9. Training record book

As advised in the *‘‘Roles and responsibilities’’* part of the STCW Code part B Chapter II Section B-II/1, the training officer should be responsible for ensuring that the training record book is properly maintained, and the time spent onboard of the trainee is efficient regarding training and experience. However, the training officer in the case of 71% of the respondents did not or mostly did not ensure that. This can mean that these trainees alone are planning their training record book and maintaining it and no supervisors are ensuring that their time onboard is spent useful regarding training.

Some of the respondents commented that the tasks on the record book can't be completed properly since they are considered as free deck workers in the current training system. Others mentioned that training officers just fills in the record book whatsoever so the school can approve it.

## 7.10 Completing the tasks

Were you given appropriate periods to practice and complete the tasks in your onboard training programme ?

48 responses

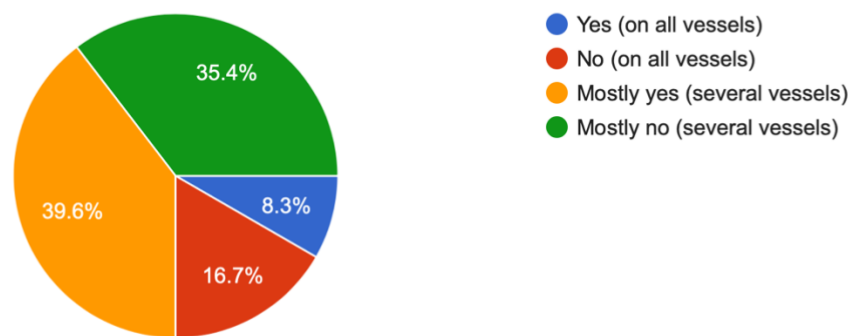


Figure 10. Completing the tasks

The tasks in the training record book once completed and signed, should provide a distinctive evidence that the onboard training programme has been achieved. These tasks are carried out frequently in a deck officer's job. Therefore, it is important they are given enough time to practice and complete. 52% of the trainees were not or mostly not given suitable time to exercise and finish these tasks. This could either result in making the trainees work overtime to practice these tasks or just not practicing at all.

## 7.11 Initialling the training record book

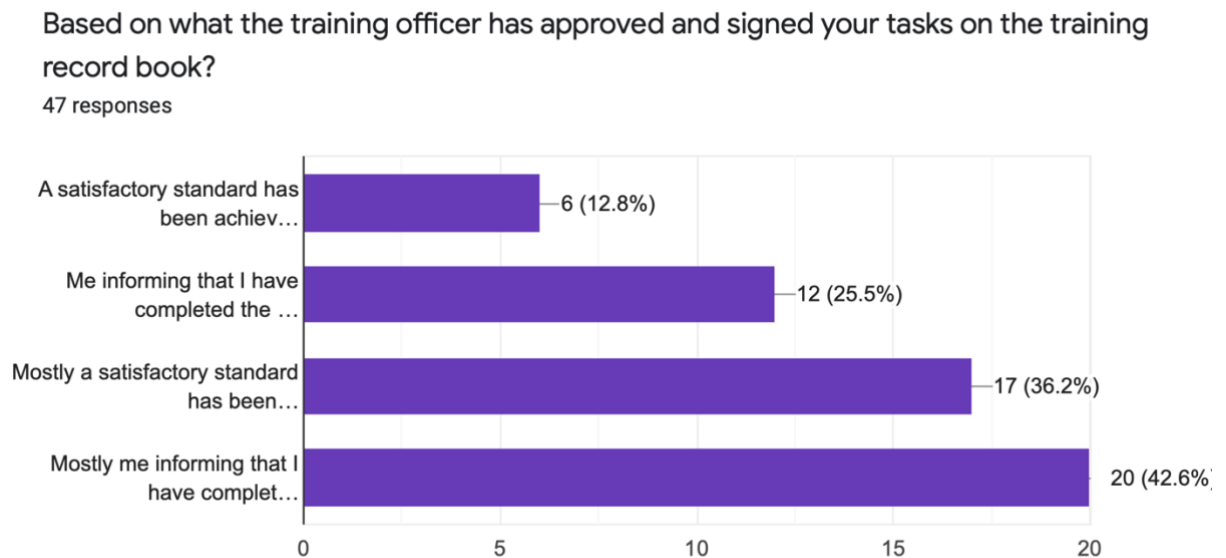


Figure 11. Initialling the training record book.

The training officer should sign and approve the tasks on the training record book if a satisfactory standard has been achieved. The training officer is responsible for determining such and not the trainee. The training officer in the case of 58% of the respondents have or mostly have approved and signed their record book based on them informing that they have completed the task without verifying if such is true nor a sufficient standard been reached. This is another worrying result. As advised from the STCW Code on the importance of properly evaluating competences, it should be based on assembling reliable evidences about the trainee's knowledge.

## 7.12 Competences completed

Which of the following competences have you accomplished during your onboard training:

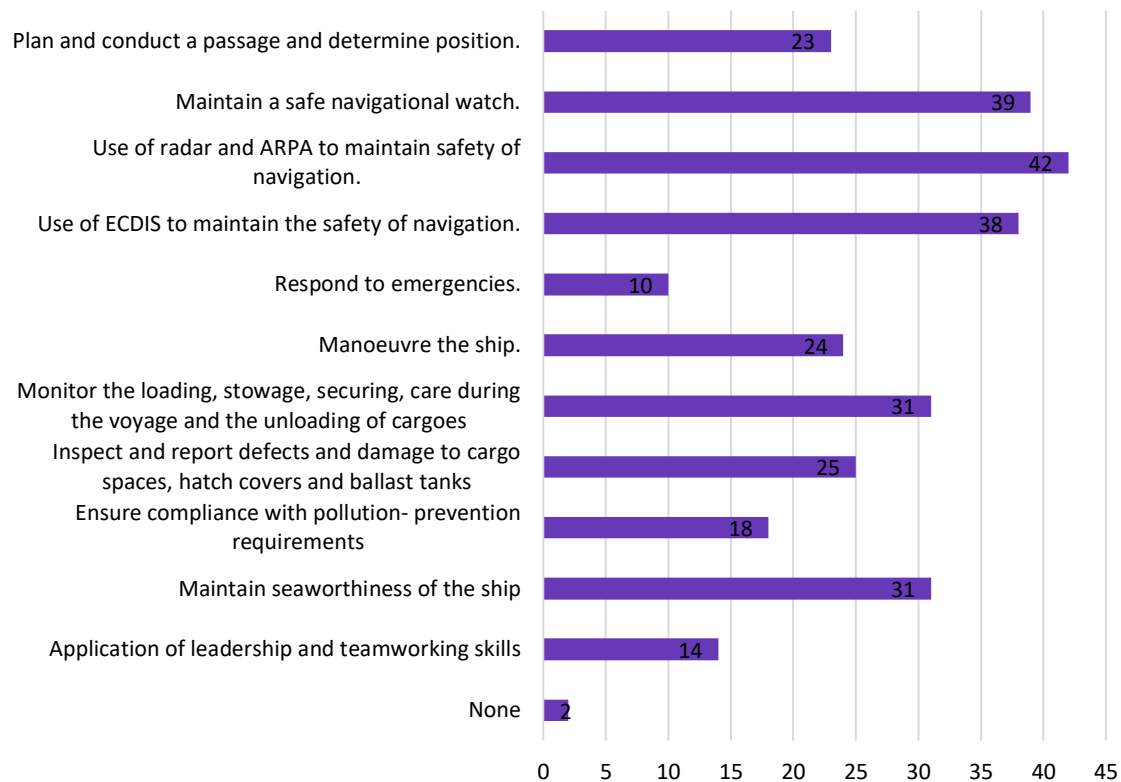


Figure 12. Competences completed

Here are the least comprehension and competence requirements for the certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch from Table A-II/1 of the STCW Code which are accepted from onboard training. The aim here is to focus on those who have completed 100% of their training to see have they completed all these competences. Also, for all the respondents to see the standard accomplished in connection with the next question.

From those who have completed all of their onboard training, two have completed 10 tasks, three have completed 9 tasks, four have completed 8 tasks, one has completed 7 tasks, two have completed 6 tasks, one has completed 4 tasks, one has completed two tasks and one hasn't completed any task. All the candidates for the certification for deck officers must be able to do all these competences listed.

Another conclusion from this graph, navigational duties and ship maintenance are the most completed competences in the training.

### 7.13 Standard achieved

Are you confident in the standard you've accomplished in these competences from your onboard training that you can employ them when you get your first deck officer job ?

48 responses

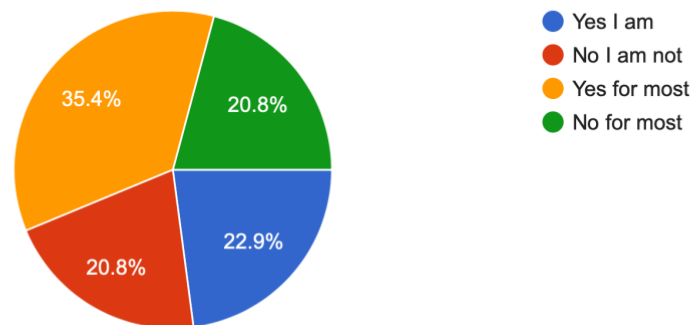


Figure 13. Standard achieved

41% of the respondents are not or mostly not confident from the standard they have accomplished from the previously mentioned competences. This will most likely result in them not being confident in taking their first job as deck officers and carrying out these tasks.

## 7.14 Training as an ordinary seaman

Have you received onboard training days from working as an "Ordinary Seaman" ?  
48 responses

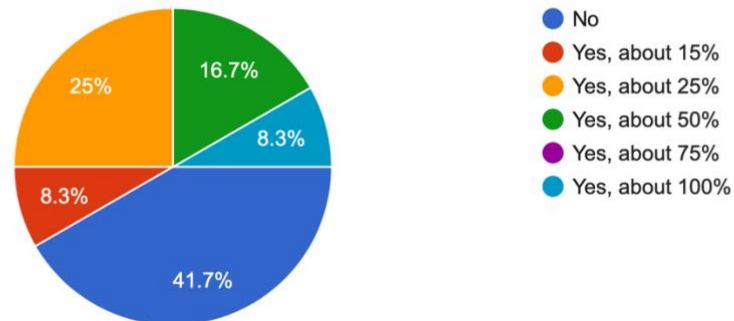


Figure 14. Training as an ordinary seaman

In Finland many students when they receive their Watchkeeping Rating - Deck certificate STCW II/4, they go to work as an Ordinary Seaman (OS) and receive onboard training days from that. This could be wrong as they won't have enough time to practice the tasks required from a deck officer's training beside their daily job. The shipping routes in the Baltic sea where most of the Finnish flagged vessels sail are short and this will result in more working hours for an OS from frequent port visits. Also, the small tonnage fleet in Finland is large and usually there is only one OS onboard and this will also result in more working hours.

8% of the respondents have received most their onboard training days from working as an OS. 41% have not received any days from working as an OS. The rest of the results are not very accurate since the respondents have completed various time of their training but 51% have surely received some training days from working as an OS.

What was surprising from the open question part is that many respondents felt more welcome onboard from the crew when they were onboard as an OS than trainees. They received more help then and were able to learn more compared with when they were training.

## 7.15 Satisfied from the onboard training

In general, are you satisfied from the onboard training for officers system in Finland ?

48 responses

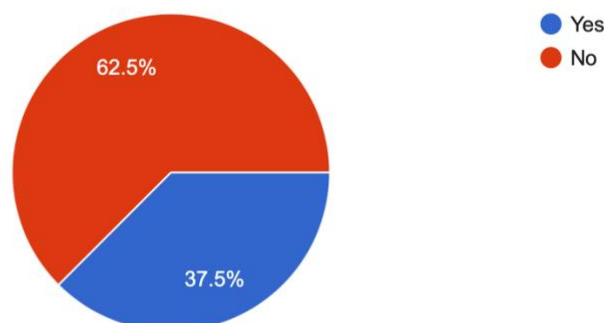


Figure 15. Satisfied from the onboard training

30 out of 48 respondents are not satisfied from the officers' onboard training system of Finland while 18 are. This is a significant negative result.

Only one comment was received from someone who had mostly an enjoyable training experience. Here are few comments from the trainees who were not convinced with the Finnish onboard training system:

*“But as soon-to-be officer I wish there had been more distinct difference between the first 60 days deck practice and officer onboard training. I am not saying that the 50/50 system is bad, but with the expectations and attitudes that come with it, it's certainly not the best in terms of learning and practicing”.*

*“In my opinion, the training culture in Finland needs a change, and the shipping companies needs guidance how to deal with a trainee. Maybe every onboard training should be so called cadet placements, where a trainee would spend a bit longer period onboard with better plans and guidance to actually learn deck officers' duties”.*

*“On-board trainings should be better coordinated in order to ensure competent future officers”.*

*“The program is mostly bad as the task on the record book cannot be achieved properly as you go to work for free and not gaining any practice”.*

*‘‘On board training in Finland is a joke. I joined my first vessel as an officer and everyone with the same experience level knew much more than me’’.*

*‘‘Onboard training system is bad. We need real cadet program. You can’t learn deck officer job by cleaning and painting’’.*

## 7.16 Confident from the onboard training

Are you confident to take your first deck officer job after your onboard training is completed?

48 responses

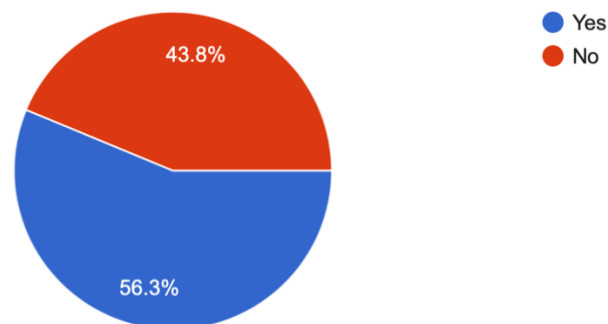


Figure 16. Confident from the onboard training

27 out of 48 respondents are confident to take on their first job as a deck officer after finishing their onboard training while 21 are not. This result is similar to those who are not confident from the standard they accomplished in the competences done in the onboard training.

One respondent commented that when he/she joined the vessel for the first time as an officer, everyone else with same experience level knew much more than him/her. Another one mentioned of being worried about their skills when they receive their first job.

## 7.17 Qualitative part

This was the qualitative part of the questionnaire where the trainees were asked to write own positive-negative thoughts and feedback on the onboard training system for deck officers in Finland or ideas for improvement. 23 responses were received, and the aim was to pick up common thoughts among the respondents. Most of the responses were negative towards the system.

The most common thought was that a trainee is considered as a free labour onboard and mostly paints and cleans only. Secondly the attitude and expectations towards the trainee are very negative in the sense that the crew onboard expects from the trainee to know everything without even teaching them. The bridge watchkeeping time is mostly at night and for look-out duties, therefore the chances are small then to learn bridge work. Many think that the onboard training record book should be cancelled as many of the training officers don't bother to fill in it and don't give time and attention to achieve its tasks. Another interesting part is that some of the trainees felt more welcome onboard while working as an Ordinary Seaman and learnt much more from that than being a trainee. Few of the trainees are also worried about the poor skill level they will have when they receive their first job as an officer.

## 8 Critical examination

The questionnaire was sent directly to the seafaring students' email at Novia UAS and to the rest of the maritime academies via email to their student affairs office hoping the last-mentioned forwards it to the students. The goal was to collect responses from students in all the maritime academies in Finland but out of the 48 responses received, 45 were from students at Novia. There is a strong doubt whether the questionnaire was forwarded at all to the students in the other academies.

Most of the trainees have been training on several vessels. The experience can vary entirely from a ship to another. Therefore, creating only "Yes" or "No" options for answers in the questionnaire wasn't an accurate alternative. "Mostly yes" and "Mostly no" options for answers were added to slightly gather more accurate answers in some questions.

Google Forms did not have an option to display graphically the answers based on the onboard training time completed by the respondent. In some questions I had to read through each individual answer to know what a specific group based on their experience level have answered. The individual responses are not displayed in this survey.

## **9 Conclusion and future recommendations**

### **9.1 Conclusion**

I consider this survey as a successful one. There was a reasonable number of respondents of which most have knowledge from at least three vessels and enough experience in the Finnish onboard training system. I was able to make an assessment based on the trainees' perspective if the STCW convention and code was correctly followed in their training. Many of the respondents had also in common mutual thoughts regarding the training system.

Regarding the STCW convention and code, it can be concluded that the onboard training system in Finland is poor and requires a lot of improvement based on this research due to:

- lack of briefing and guidance to trainees from the crew.
- lack of supervising and organising of the training programme onboard from the training officer.
- lack of supervised bridge watchkeeping experience from training and not fulfilling the mandatory regulation of having performed at least six month of bridge watchkeeping duties during the 360days of onboard training.
- more time working on deck that practicing officer duties.
- training officers being careless about the training record book and training the tasks involved in it.
- poor standard accomplished in the least comprehension and competence requirements for the certification of officers in charge of a navigational watch.

Most of the feedback received in the qualitative part of the research was negative and more than 62% of the respondents are not generally satisfied from the onboard training system in Finland. This concludes that most of the trainees want a significant improvement regarding this matter.

What can also be learnt from this research is that bad supervising and short time practicing the duties of an officer in an onboard training will have a direct effect on the confidence and the knowledge level of new deck officers. Those who have responded of neither being properly supervised nor allowed time to practice the tasks in the onboard training programme, were the ones who were not confident on taking their first job as a deck officer.

## 9.2 Future recommendations

Since this research was based mostly on the responses of students from Novia UAS, a further research concerning students from all maritime academies would be recommended. That would give a more accurate result on the onboard training system in Finland.

My first job as deck officer was under the junior officer contract which was introduced in 2018 in Finland. I was a second officer and the only deck officer beside the chief officer. I still was considered as a trainee although the training phase was already done, and I think that was the case for all junior officers onboard Finnish flagged vessels. This could be due to the training system in Finland. Therefore, a further investigation in that matter would be recommended for a future research.

Shipping companies in Finland should concentrate more on the trainees onboard as they are the ones who will work one day as officers. It is clear that for most of the trainees, the STCW recommendations are not followed in their training onboard. The crew should be more educated about the convention and code to know their roles and responsibilities regarding the training of prospective officers.

## 10 Bibliography

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Finnish Shipowners' Association. *Apprentice Mill*. Retrieved 10.4.2020 from <https://shipowners.fi/en/labor-market-and-competence/apprentice-mill/>

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# Appendices

## Questionnaire

### **Survey – On Board Training for Officers in Charge of a Navigational Watch.**

This is a questionnaire to evaluate the onboard training for Officers in Finland from the trainee's perspective.

**\*Approximately how much of your on board training for officers have you completed?**

- 100% completed
- 75% completed
- 50% completed
- 25% completed
- 15% completed

**\*On how many vessels have you been training?**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

**\*Were you given full information and guidance at the start of each onboard training on how your training will be organized and what is expected from you?**

- Yes (on all vessels)
- No (on all vessels)
- Mostly yes (several vessels)
- Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Did you have a qualified deck officer acting as your training officer?**

- Yes (on all vessels)
- No (on all vessels)
- Mostly yes (several vessels)
- Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Did your training officer organise and supervise your training programme onboard?**

- Yes (on all vessels)
- No (on all vessels)
- Mostly yes (several vessels)
- Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Were you given enough time and opportunity for supervised bridge watchkeeping experience?**

- Yes (on all vessels)
- No (on all vessels)
- Mostly yes (several vessels)
- Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Have you performed bridge watchkeeping duties for a period of not less than six months during your whole onboard training (360 days) ?**

-Yes

-No

-I have not completed 360 days but I am confident I will have the six months of bridge watchkeeping duties by the end

-I have not completed 360 days but I doubt I will have the six months of bridge watchkeeping duties by the end

**\*Approximately how much time of your onboard training would you spend working on deck ?**

-25% of the time on deck

-50% of the time on deck

-75% of the time on deck

-100% of the time on deck

**\*Did your training officer ensure that your training record book is maintained properly and that your time onboard is spent as useful as possible in terms of training and experience?**

-Yes (on all vessels)

-No (on all vessels)

-Mostly yes (several vessels)

-Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Were you given appropriate periods to practice and complete the tasks in your onboard training programme ?**

-Yes (on all vessels)

-No (on all vessels)

-Mostly yes (several vessels)

-Mostly no (several vessels)

**\*Based on what the training officer has approved and signed your tasks on the training record book?**

-A satisfactory standard has been achieved and demonstrated (on all vessels)

-Me informing that I have completed the tasks (on all vessels)

-Mostly a satisfactory standard has been achieved and demonstrated (several vessels)

-Mostly me informing that I have completed the tasks (several vessels)

**\*Which of the following competences have you accomplished during your onboard training:**

-Plan and conduct a passage and determine position.

-Maintain a safe navigational watch.

-Use of radar and ARPA to maintain safety of navigation.

-Use of ECDIS to maintain the safety of navigation.

-Respond to emergencies.

-Manoeuvre the ship.

-Monitor the loading, stowage, securing, care during the voyage and the unloading of cargoes

-Inspect and report defects and damage to cargo spaces, hatch covers and ballast tanks

-Ensure compliance with pollution- prevention requirements

-Maintain seaworthiness of the ship

- Application of leadership and teamworking skills
- None

**\*Are you confident in the standard you've accomplished in these competences from your onboard training that you can employ them when you get your first deck officer job ?**

- Yes I am
- No I am not

**\*Have you received on board training days from working as an "Ordinary Seaman" ?**

- No
- Yes, about 15%
- Yes, about 25%
- Yes, about 50%
- Yes, about 75%
- Yes, about 100%

**\*In general, are you satisfied from the onboard training for officers system in Finland ?**

- Yes
- No

**\*Are you confident to take your first deck officer job after your onboard training is completed?**

- Yes
- No