



International  
Chamber of Shipping



## Virtual Dialogue on the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Maritime Education and Training

9 September 2020

### SUMMARY

#### Introduction

Mr. Glenn Blackwood (Chair of IAMU, Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland) delivered opening remarks on behalf of IAMU:

- Maritime universities are making significant efforts to maintain their academic programmes introducing various measures and new formats of maritime education and training.
- Maritime universities need to maintain a close relationship with the global shipping industry, particularly in order to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Tjitso Westra (Chair of ICS Manning & Training Sub-Committee) delivered opening remarks on behalf of ICS:

- Shipping industry had been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and whilst the biggest challenge is seen to be crew changes, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on maritime education and training and the supply of qualified and certificated seafarers is a growing area of concern for the industry.
- Shipowners and operators need to pursue a close relationship with maritime education and training (MET) institutions, and this would also be crucial when working towards the next comprehensive revision of the STCW Convention and Code.

#### Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on academic schedules of MET

VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos (ret) (Maritime Academy of Asia & the Pacific) delivered a brief presentation outlining the impacts on the academic schedule.  
(see **attachment 1**)

The ensuing discussion identified the following *impacts* and *challenges*:

- Interruption and disruption of the 2019/2020 academic year.
- Delays to students completing the onboard training component of their MET.
- Difficulties for students to get to maritime universities due to movement and travel restrictions.

The ensuing discussion identified the following *measures* and *approaches*:

- Adjust schedules for the planned start and graduation of students several years into the future to ensure that quality of MET can be maintained.
- Delay the start of the next semester/term of current students to continue their MET.
- Postpone the planned start date of future intakes of students to commence MET.
- Reduce class sizes to ensure that the academic schedule can be completed as planned and required, including required use of simulators and workshops etc.
- Exert efforts to be flexible in order to accommodate any changes in schedules as may be requested by shipping company.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery methods of MET**

Prof. Damir Zec (University of Rijeka, Faculty of Maritime Studies) delivered a brief presentation on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on delivery methods of MET. (see **attachment 2**)

The ensuing discussion identified the following *impacts* and *challenges*:

- Physical lectures, workshops, simulators and other practical classes where students and lecturers were required to interact in close proximity and/or students were required to use equipment and machines, were challenging to deliver because requirements for physical distancing often impacted on the numbers of students that could be present at any one time and/or cleaning and disinfection protocols often took time away from time available to use the equipment or machines.
- Distance and remote learning posed new challenges as students and lecturers alike could have problems with internet connectivity, IT devices, familiarization with the online platform, and there were seen to be limits to the number of hours that could be provided online compared to, for example, physical lectures.
- Difficulties holding in-person assessments and exams where students and lecturers are unable to attend the maritime universities due to restrictions or public health measures.

- Difficulties obtaining timely approvals from Administrations to alter courses to meet restrictions and public health measures or to gain permission for online delivery.

The ensuing discussion identified the following *measures* and *approaches*:

- Re-design the structure of MET programmes and schedule to reflect new delivery methods.
- Develop special schedules and rotations to maximize use of classrooms, simulators and workshops within the parameters of public health measures and guidance.
- Select and use an appropriate online platform and system for the hosting online tutorials and lectures.
- Identify and address the different needs of lecturers and students to ensure that they are able to full participate and engage with the changes in the delivery of MET.
- Transition to online teaching and learning as a delivery method of MET where possible and appropriate to the education objectives.
- Develop new procedures and approaches to assessments and exams.
- Re-train or familiarize staff at maritime universities with the changes in delivery methods of MET as necessary.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cadet berths and onboard training**

Ms. Niki Van Ingelgem (Exmar Ship Management) delivered a brief presentation on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on cadet berths and programmes.  
(see **attachment 3**)

Mr. Sofronis Theodosiou & Mr. Athanasios Panoutsopoulos (Bernard Schulte Shipmanagement) delivered a brief presentation on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on cadet berths and programmes.  
(see **attachment 4**)

The ensuing discussion identified the following *impacts* and *challenges*:

- Difficulties for cadets to obtain the requisite visas (especially US visas) due to the closures of embassies and consulates, as well as lengthy processing times.
- Difficulties for cadets to move and travel to join ships due to logistical and planning challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the lack of flights, travel restrictions and other public health measures.
- Difficulties for cadets to join ships due to challenges to conducting timely and predictable crew changes which are necessary to fit in with MET institution schedules and welfare of the cadet.

- Difficulties to maintain cadet berths and programmes due to changes in sailing schedules and trades during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ensuing discussion identified the following *measures* and *approaches*:

- Defer the placement of cadets onboard ships until Q3 and Q4 2020.
- Increase the number of cadet berths onboard ships in Q3 and Q4 2020.
- Place cadets onboard ships that are trading in limited areas where crew changes and other factors, such as possession of appropriate visas, was not a problem.
- Reduce intake of new entrants by the maritime education institutions to ensure that all enrolled cadets can have the opportunity to receive the onboard training and seagoing service experience required to qualify for the issue of their first certificate under the STCW Convention.
- Encourage Administrations to accept approved simulator time in lieu of seagoing service experience or the sitting of exams prior to completion of the seagoing service experience required to qualify for the issue of their first certificate under the STCW Convention.
- Seek recognition from Administrations of seagoing service experience obtained on various vessel types (e.g. harbour tugs) for a portion of the months required to qualify for the issue of their first certificate under the STCW Convention.

## **Conclusion**

### *Observations*

- The COVID-19 pandemic has already had a significant impact on MET in 2020.
- The full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are unlikely to be fully revealed yet, however it is evident that it will have a long-lasting impact making it a growing area of concern that requires urgent attention from the relevant stakeholders.
- The efforts of the relevant stakeholders to react to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on MET to date should be recognized, including the swift transition to online teaching and learning and the re-scheduling of the sea phases of cadets.
- There has been a reduction in the number of cadets onboard ships during the COVID-19 pandemic to date, predominantly due to travel restrictions, difficulties obtaining necessary visas, challenges effecting crew changes, and concerns about the protection of their health.
- Many maritime universities worldwide have had to temporarily close or substantially reduce or change their offer since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, with some academic years entirely cancelled in some cases.

- Many ship operators worldwide had to temporarily defer cadets joining their ships for onboard training and/or reduce the numbers of cadets that they could offer or provide a cadet berth for in 2020 to date.
- There are concerns that the COVID-19 pandemic may have consequences for the number of young persons that choose a seafaring career in the future.
- Article IX on “Equivalents” of the STCW Convention on Equivalency may offer an opportunity to some Administrations that are looking to establish and implement some temporary measures to help address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on MET and certification under the STCW Convention (e.g. recognition of approved simulator time in lieu of seagoing service experience).
- Some of the positives observed by ship operators include increased promotion prospects for their seafarers, reduced attrition and increased retention rates, and efficiencies and flexibilities that have emerged from the availability of more online courses and distance learning.
- Some of the positives observed by maritime universities include the efficiencies and possibilities offered by the development of a distance learning offer, which could reach more students and/or maximize the use of lecturers.

### *Recommendations*

The follow are some recommendations that emerged from the dialogue for further consideration by the relevant technical and policy bodies of ICS and IAMU:

- Shipping industry and MET institutions should closely collaborate and engage at the macro (e.g. ICS & IAMU) and micro (e.g. company & MET institution) levels to identify and address specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on MET.
- A global assessment should be conducted on the impact the COVID-19 pandemic may have (or not) on the attractiveness of seafaring, examining it from the perspective of both recruitment and retention.
- A global assessment should be conducted on the impact over the next five years of the COVID-19 pandemic on the number of students graduating from maritime educational institutions (MEIs) and as such qualifying for the issuance of a first certificate under the STCW Convention.
- Shipping industry and MET institutions should encourage the IMO to develop guidance on some “temporary measures” that could be established and implemented by Administrations to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on MET, such as the need for flexibility regarding the mandatory seagoing service (e.g. different times of ships, recognition of approved simulator time in lieu of seagoing service experience), refresher and updating training, and revalidation requirements under the STCW Convention.

- Shipping industry and MET institutions should encourage the IMO to consider the development of guidance on distance learning and approval of training courses meeting requirements of the STCW Convention delivered online and/or remotely to reflect this is a growing trend and likely to be a new normal during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.