

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use. For high-quality copies or electronic reprints for distribution to colleagues or customers, please call UK support at +44 (0)20 3377 3996 / APAC support at +65 6508 2430

Printed By

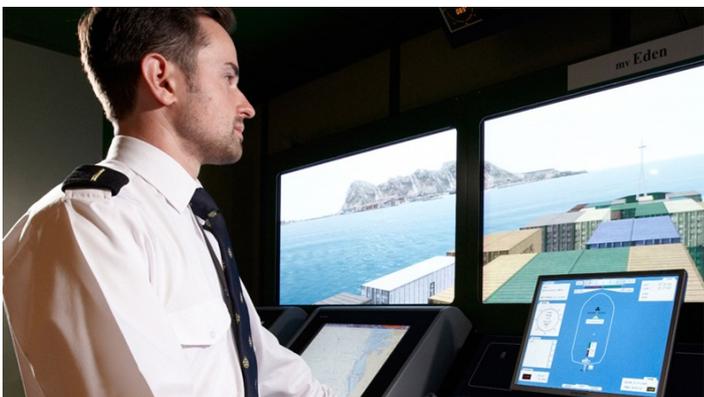
Maritime universities' survey reveals long-term impact of coronavirus

A study carried out by the International Association of Maritime Universities discloses concerns ranging from students' current inability to complete practical training to future inability to pay tuition fees

05 Jun 2020 | **NEWS**

by Richard Clayton | @rjbclayton | richard.clayton@informa.com

IAMU member universities believe teaching restrictions imposed to counter the coronavirus pandemic will have far-reaching implications. The shipping industry could suffer in the long run



IT IS DIFFICULT FOR STUDENTS TO GAIN SEA-TIME AS MOST OPPORTUNITIES HAVE BEEN POSTPONED, ACCORDING TO ONE UNIVERSITY.

THE current pandemic is expected to have long-term implications for students hoping to be taken on by shipping companies and by maritime universities themselves, according to a new survey.

The study found that the coronavirus has significantly reduced activities at nine out of 10 universities, with almost 10% offering no activities at all in May. The majority of universities had shifted teaching from classrooms to online in a short period of time.

While some responses showed the transition had been smooth, others observed concerns about student assessment and practical exercises including first aid, safety at sea, and fire fighting. Comments revealed

that internet connectivity is inconsistent, electricity supply is not always adequate, the necessary software is not always available and teachers are sometimes uncomfortable using the software.

The survey of 67 member universities from 35 countries was conducted last month by the International Association of Maritime Universities.

Of the responses from 55 members, two-thirds said they had cancelled practical training, although some training was continuing with health safeguards in place.

One comment said: "We are currently unable to get our senior students on campus to complete their required practical training to graduate from their programmes and enter into the workforce."

Another said that although theoretical training had been completed, practical lectures were the main concern of that university.

The greatest impact of the virus seems to have involved onboard training.

Travel restrictions and inability to conduct crew changes had led to onboard training being suspended (19% of respondents) or postponed (21%). Among a range of concerns uncovered by the survey were student safety, reduction in budget for training, fewer students available for training, and no instructions from supporting organisations.

In a warning to the industry more broadly, a responding university noted their long-term concerns were focused on the difficulty of students gaining sea-time as most opportunities had been postponed, with positions and space on board severely limited.

The university added that the shipping industry might also suffer in the long term by "a reduced ability to attract young people to a maritime career".

Respondents seemed to agree it was too early to say how coronavirus would affect university operations, however the delay for students in gaining their degrees would have implications for jobs. "Shipping companies will be unable to visit the campuses to select students for placement," said one university, while another cautioned that "the challenge is in carrying out seagoing practice for deck officers because many companies have terminated contracts with the students."

There is also likely to be a revenue concern for the universities themselves, an expectation that worried many respondents.

"The effect of reductions in student recruitment will have a major impact on revenue," said one university. Another suggested that the long-term effect of the outbreak would be a financial crisis in that country "which will affect students' ability to pay tuition fees. The university will have to switch to a new reality and new regulations which are still in the process of development by regulatory bodies".

In the final question of the survey, universities were asked about the main sources of information about the pandemic, upon which they had based their institutional response. The overwhelming source was information provided by their national governments (98%), with the World Health Organization (53%), local media (45%), international media (38%) and social media (24%) falling far behind.

The IAMU celebrated its 20th Annual General Assembly in Tokyo, Japan in October 2019. It has grown from an original seven members to 67 in two decades and, notes Chairman Glen Blackwood, is regarded as "the voice of leading maritime universities throughout the world".

Its mission is to ensure that a high level of education, training and research is provided to their graduates to benefit the maritime sector globally.