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### **Consultation Paper: new qualifications for tidal Inland Waterways**

We have been developing a new set of qualifications for tidal Inland Waterways which offer more steps towards BML Tier 1 Level 2 certification, and a higher qualification beyond it. We will not introduce these new qualifications unless operators want them, so we want to know your views.

#### **Why has this come up?**

Some time ago the MSA created a Diploma within our Maritime Studies Qualification suite which provides a structured route, approved by the MCA, for anyone who wants to gain the underpinning knowledge they need for BML Tier 1 Level 2 certification. The Diploma also forms the basis of the Government-funded apprenticeship. (The existing, experience-based, route to MCA certification remains; the Diploma route is an alternative).

More recently our BML Working Group has been considering two things:

- interest from operators on the tidal Thames in having a series of steps up towards full Boatmaster certification (Tier 1 Level 2), so that people on the lower rungs have something to aim for (and some recognition for their achievements) in place of the all-or-nothing Diploma;
- a worry that the Diploma is 'only' a Level 2 qualification. Though employer practice varies, that licence formally permits someone who holds it to be Master of a substantial passenger vessel, ie to have a position of real authority on the back of a Level 2 qualification.

The Working Group has debated various options and recommended to the MSA Board that there should be four qualifications available for inland waterways crew, as follows:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| A. Level 2 Award in Maritime Studies:       | Watch Rating                       |
| B. Level 2 Certificate in Maritime Studies: | Seamanship                         |
| C. Level 2 Certificate in Maritime Studies: | Boatmaster, Tidal Inland Waterways |
| D. Level 3 Diploma in Maritime Studies:     | Boatmaster, Tidal Inland Waterways |

(The terms Award / Certificate / Diploma indicate the size of the qualification – how fat it is – not how difficult it is).

Drafts of all four qualifications, and the existing Diploma, are [here](#) on the MSA website.

These four qualifications would form a hierarchy, with no overlap. If someone wanted to do all of the underpinning knowledge for the Boatmaster Tier 1 Level 2 certificate they would study the first three qualifications, which cover exactly the same ground as the existing Diploma. (With one exception: at the request primarily of the MCA we would replace the navigation unit in the current Diploma with the more demanding Unit 12: Vessel Watchkeeping).

By contrast, someone who wants to take things a step at a time could get started with the first qualification, the Award in Maritime Studies: Watch Rating, which would cover what they need to be safe and of some use on board. It exactly matches the requirements of – ie has the same Units as – the equivalent qualification used in the Merchant Navy for Watch Ratings. (In many companies possession of a Navigational Watch Rating certificate will mean that someone can be added to the Safe Manning Document and a company can start to use them for proper work; the first step from being a cost to being an asset).

The only difference from the existing Award used by the Merchant Navy is that there are two fire units (one STCW, one not), and candidates would pick one of them. The STCW Unit is longer (ie more expensive) than the other, and requires use of breathing apparatus which most boats on the Thames at least do not carry.

An amendment to the existing qualification to provide the two fire units as options would mean that we can use a single qualification for both the Merchant Navy and inland waterways.

The Certificate in Maritime Studies: Seamanship also aims to cover the same ground as the existing Certificate in Maritime Studies: Able Seafarer (Deck). The need for differentiation in this case lies with Unit 29 in the qualification used by the Merchant Navy (including in the deck rating apprenticeship) because that covers the requirements of the full PSC&RB course (Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats), not needed on inland waterways.

Helpfully, the MCA is in the course of agreeing with the superyacht industry an equivalent “PSCR&B (Restricted)” for those on yachts not equipped with davit-launched lifeboats. (It will be an updated version of the current “advanced sea survival for yachtsmen” course). The Working Group therefore thought we could have options in this qualification, requiring people to choose either Unit 29 / PSC&RB or a new Unit based on the new ‘PSC&RB (Restricted)’.

The title - Certificate in Maritime Studies: Seamanship - would be a change. We were looking for a title which would cover candidates in both Merchant Navy and inland waterways settings<sup>1</sup>.

Designing the qualifications as a hierarchy with no overlaps between them has the happy result that the qualification which supports Tier 1 Level 2 is now not as big as the one it will replace, and drops from ‘Diploma’ to ‘Certificate’. (It is no easier, of course; it is slimmer simply because the hierarchy assumes that other Units have been covered at an earlier stage). The new Level 3, however, is comfortably fat enough to be a Diploma. The labels are purely descriptive, but the grander-sounding title (Diploma) for the topmost qualification will probably be helpful in positioning it as an aspiration.

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<sup>1</sup> Having ‘man’ in the title is not ideal; suggestions welcome

The big innovation comes at Level 3. This Diploma would be wholly new, and voluntary – ie it would go beyond the MCA’s requirements for a Boatmaster Tier 1 Level 2 licence. Its purpose would be to recognise that there are more demanding requirements for those who are Masters of (particularly) vessels with many hundreds of passengers. It therefore has a number of further units at Level 3 which cover the higher levels of responsibility involved with such vessels.

The design of the Level 3 qualification is consequently more open (we can change what’s in the draft), and there is much more scope to move Units between the mandatory and optional sections. For example, the Group had some discussion on whether the MSQ Unit covering use of radar should be mandatory; we heard that a number of vessels do not carry radar, so making the Unit mandatory might well restrict take up.

The MCA has made it very clear that it has no intention of increasing the requirements of the Boatmaster licence, but equally no objection if individual employers, local regulators e.g. the Port of London Authority, or major infrastructure contractors, wish to adopt, even insist on, higher standards.

Note that for these last two qualifications the Group prefers the title “Boatmaster: Tidal Inland Waterways” in preference to the much more cumbersome, though strictly accurate, formulation we have for the current Diploma: “Rivers, Inland Waterways and Limited Distances to Sea”. We will need to make clear in supporting materials exactly what MCA certification these qualifications support, and therefore spell out the ‘limited distances to sea’ aspects.

The Group was also clear that the difference between these qualifications and MCA certification (both inland waterways and STCW) would need to be clearly set out, so there is no misunderstanding.

The Board of the Maritime Skills Alliance accepted the recommendations of our BML Working Group, including its advice that we should ask employers across the industry what you think. That is the purpose of this short paper. We are circulating it through the Thames Skills Academy, the Company of Watermen and Lightermen, the Passenger Boat Association and wider British Marine interests, the National Workboat Association, and others.

### **What do you think?**

We would be grateful for your responses to three questions:

1. Do you agree that we should replace the existing Diploma with qualifications A, B & C set out above?
2. Do you agree that we should create the proposed new Level 3 Diploma (possibly with different content from that in the draft)?
3. If you said ‘yes’ to Question 2, would your company use that qualification?

Please e-mail your response to either Iain Mackinnon at the MSA ([iain@maritimeskills.org](mailto:iain@maritimeskills.org)) or whoever sent this consultation paper to you. Please respond by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> March.