

**Consultation on a foundation
degree for the Maritime Sector**

A final report

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The Mackinnon Partnership

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2005 The Mackinnon Partnership was commissioned by the Maritime Skills Alliance to survey the level of interest in a foundation degree for the maritime sector.
- 1.2 According to the DfES¹, “*Foundation Degrees are innovative degrees, designed and delivered in partnership with employers to equip people with the relevant knowledge and skills for business.*” Therefore, the research was primarily designed to determine the potential demand from **employers** for a new foundation degree for the maritime sector. The survey was also designed to elicit views on possible content and delivery mechanisms for a foundation degree.
- 1.3 In conducting this research, we took account of related developments. The Merchant Navy Training Board recently consulted on a foundation degree framework for seafarers in the Merchant Navy. The subsequent framework was launched in October 2005. In addition, Port Skills and Safety is currently consulting on a framework for Ports and Harbours. The development of foundation degree frameworks for seafarers in the Merchant Navy and for Ports and Harbours has caused some confusion amongst employers. It also means that the scope for a new foundation degree for the maritime sector is somewhat restricted.
- 1.4 There are also a number of related foundation degrees and honours degrees that are already in existence. For example, there are foundation degrees in Marine Engineering, Marine Leisure Management, Marine Operations, and Ship Technology and Naval Architecture. There are also a number of honours degrees including Maritime Business, Shipping Operations, Marine Studies (Navigation) and Marine Studies (Merchant Shipping).
- 1.5 During the course of this research, a number of other consultations have taken place, such as consultation on the Maritime Studies Certificate, workshops on Sector Qualification Strategies, and consultation on revisions to National Occupational Standards. The amount of consultation that has taken place across the maritime sector has meant that there is “consultation fatigue” in the sector.

¹ www.foundationdegree.org.uk

2. Methodology

Stage 1 – Develop the questionnaire and plan the survey

- 2.1 The first step involved determining what issues the questionnaires should cover. We agreed with the Maritime Skills Alliance that the questionnaires should focus on determining:
- the major workforce issues in the sector;
 - preferred delivery methods and possible content and structure for a foundation degree;
 - occupational roles that could benefit from a foundation degree, including whether the focus should be on new entrants, the existing workforce or both;
 - other qualification and training provision;
 - the level of interest in a foundation degree for the Maritime Sector;
 - issues or barriers to the take-up for a foundation degree.
- 2.2 Therefore the questionnaires explore issues that a foundation degree could potentially address, such as the concern that not enough young people of the required calibre are entering the Maritime Sector and also the need for increasingly sophisticated management skills.
- 2.3 The following documents were produced:
- one introductory letter and questionnaire for the web-based survey of employers (see appendix A);
 - one introductory letter, script and questionnaire for telephone interviews with industry/sector bodies;
 - one slightly different version of the introductory letter, script and questionnaire for telephone interviews with employers.
- 2.4 We piloted the questionnaire for the web-based survey of employers with two different employers. Based on the feedback received, minor revisions were made to the questionnaire. The letter and questionnaire sent out to employers by the Merchant Navy Training Board was slightly different to the letter sent out by other organisations. The Merchant Navy Training Board has developed a foundation degree framework for seafarers, and it was important that the letter made it clear that the intention was not to develop another foundation degree for seafarers.
- 2.5 The scripts for the telephone interviews outlined the purpose of the project and explained what was meant by the term “foundation degree”. The introductory letter to employers also explained the potential positive benefits of a foundation degree. The documents were designed to have a communication and marketing function, and not just a research function.

Stage 2 – Undertaking the surveys

- 2.6 We originally anticipated undertaking a postal survey and had planned to send the questionnaire to a list of employers expressing an initial interest in having a foundation degree for the Maritime Sector. However, it was subsequently decided that the industry/sector bodies should send out the questionnaire to employers in their sector, as it was felt that a more targeted approach would elicit a greater number of responses.
- 2.7 The following organisations were provided with a copy of the questionnaire for sending to employers:
- British Marine Federation;
 - Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers;
 - Maritime London;
 - Merchant Navy Training Board;
 - Ports Skills and Safety;
 - Sea Fish Industry Authority (catching sector only).
- 2.8 Unfortunately the British Marine Federation was unable to forward the questionnaire to employers within the desired timescale. As an alternative, we were provided with a small number of marine leisure employer contacts for the telephone interviews. Furthermore, midway through our research, the fish catching sector decided that a foundation degree would not be appropriate for the sector. Therefore, the Sea Fish Industry Authority and employers in the sector withdrew from participating in this research.
- 2.9 In most cases the questionnaire was placed on one or more websites, rather than emailed directly to employers. As a consequence, we did not have control of the process and were unable to chase up responses, which is what we had initially intended.
- 2.10 We undertook telephone interviews with industry/sector bodies in order to inform the telephone interviews with employers and to place the research in the context of wider related developments. We then carried out telephone interviews with a small number of employers. These employers differed from the respondents of the web-based survey. The telephone interviews allowed for more in-depth coverage of the content of the questionnaires, and made it easier to follow-up on specific issues.
- 2.11 The Maritime Skills Alliance provided us with a brief list of employers to contact for the telephone interviews. In most cases it was very difficult to arrange telephone interviews with employers. The employers had not been forewarned that we would be contacting them, so in effect we were “cold calling” and this made it very difficult to get employers to speak to us.

3. Findings

3.1 Our report summarises the findings of the web-based survey of 28 different employers in the maritime sector. It is supplemented by telephone interviews with six employers and six industry bodies. An informal telephone discussion also took place with one Trade Union. A list of respondents can be found in Appendix B.

Telephone Interviews with Employers

What knowledge and skills does your business need and do you think they should be included in a foundation degree?

3.2 The following skills/knowledge areas were rated as **most important** to employers, when considering current and future business needs (starting with the most important):

- [Understanding of the maritime sector/commercial awareness](#);
- [Communication skills](#);
- IT and numerate skills;
- [Problem solving and critical thinking](#);
- People management.

3.3 The following skills/knowledge areas were rated **most highly** as being possible elements of a foundation degree (starting with the most important):

- [Understanding of the maritime sector/commercial awareness](#);
- [Communication skills](#);
- Health and safety;
- Ship management;
- [Problem solving and critical thinking](#).

3.4 The following skills/knowledge areas were rated as of **less importance** to employers, when considering current and future business needs (starting with the least important):

- [Navigation](#);
- [Meteorology](#);
- [Oceanography](#);
- Vessel movement and management;
- [Electronics](#).

3.5 The following skills/knowledge areas were rated as of **less importance** to employers as being possible elements of a foundation degree (starting with the least important):

- Navigation;
- Meteorology;
- Oceanography;
- Electronics;
- IT systems.

Are there any other areas (general or technical/specialist) that could be included in a foundation degree?

3.6 The most common suggestions (with little variation in number of responses) were:

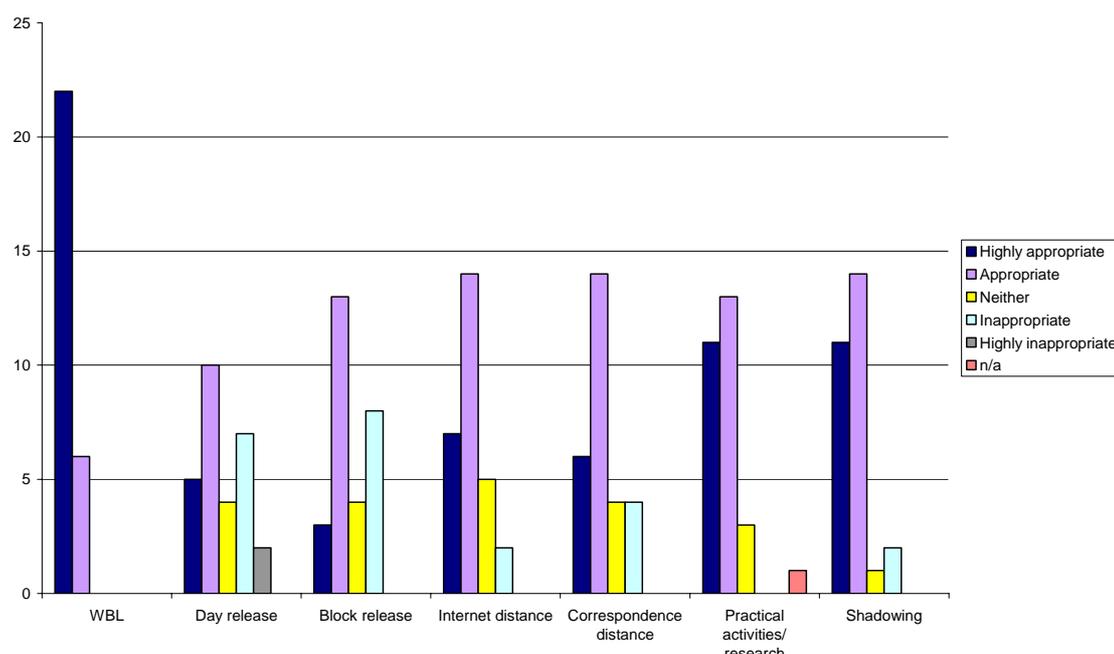
- Maritime law;
- Maritime insurance;
- Ship handling/experience of vessels;
- Safety requirements;
- Environmental.

Thinking particularly of your company, what are the five most important areas that a foundation degree should cover?

3.7 The five most common responses were (starting with the most popular):

- Health and safety;
- Ship management;
- IT skills;
- Understanding of the maritime sector;
- Communications skills.

Preferred delivery methods for a foundation degree



What effects do you think the introduction of a relevant foundation degree would have for your industry/sector?

3.8 The most common responses were:

- It would improve the quality of new entrants;
- It would improve the image of the industry.

Are there any other effects you think a foundation degree would have either on the industry or on your firm?

3.9 In terms of effects on the industry and on individual companies, there were a wide range of views. Seven respondents thought that a foundation degree could help to fast track graduates and improve career patterns in the industry. Four respondents thought that it would affect existing training. One respondent thought that although a foundation degree would provide basic training to new starts in the industry, it would not replace recruitment of experienced sea staff into middle management positions. However, another respondent thought that it would improve the status of non-specialist staff. Linked to this point, some respondents did think that a foundation degree would help to improve the image of the sector and could increase recruitment and retention in the industry.

Within your company, what occupational roles do you think would benefit from employing people with a relevant foundation degree?

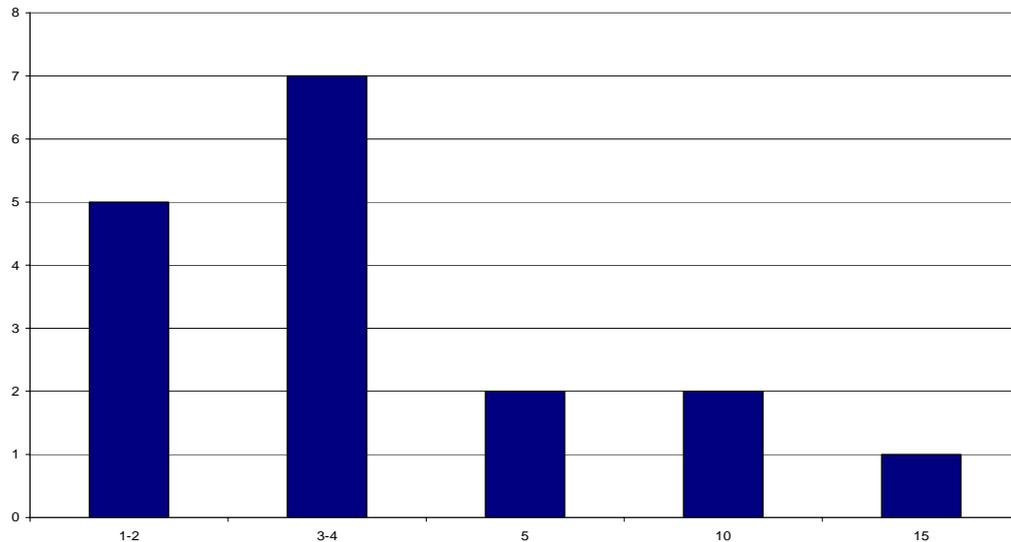
3.10 There were no dominant responses, but replies included:

- Fleet management positions;

- Officers (deck, engineer, senior marine);
- Technical Superintendents;
- Harbour Masters;
- Ratings;
- Support roles (including purchasing, finance, administration and personnel);
- Management positions (trainees and ex-seafarers).

Do you think any of your existing staff would be interested in pursuing a foundation degree on a part-time basis? If so, how many?

3.11 19 respondents (68 percent) think that some of their staff would be interested in pursuing a foundation degree. Of these, they estimated the numbers of staff at the company who would be interested. The results are shown below.



Are there any particular issues that the introduction of an appropriate foundation degree could help to address?

3.12 The most common response was:

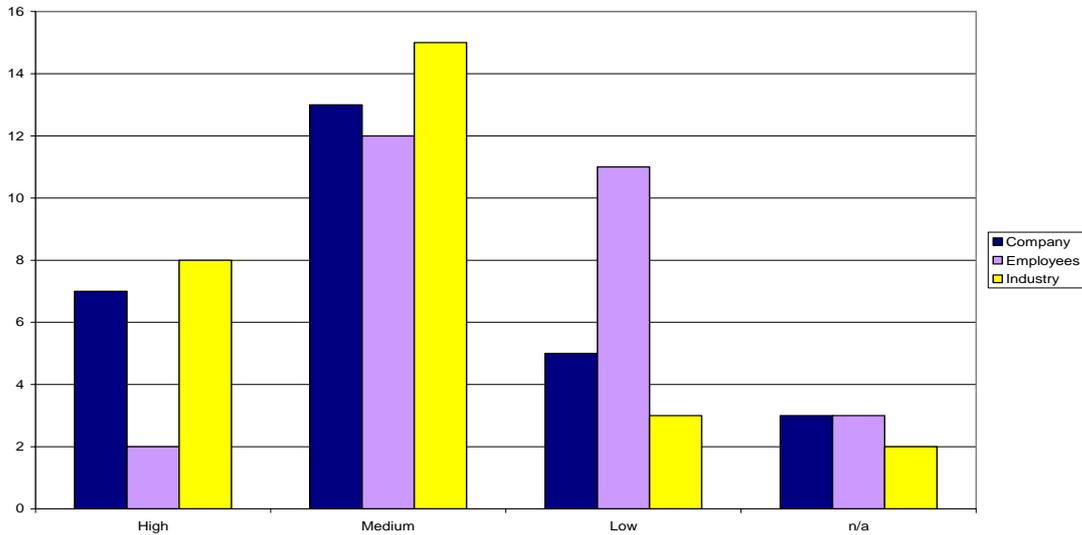
- Better understanding of industry (for new entrants, support staff, those who haven't been to sea, junior staff).

3.13 Other responses were:

- Break down "oil on water";
- Management trainee scheme;
- Solve projected manning crisis;
- Help with long-term competency issues;

- Raise the profile of the ports industry;
- ISM and safety management systems.

What is the level of interest in developing a foundation degree amongst your company, your employees and your industry?



Are there any particular barriers that would need to be overcome for a successful introduction of an appropriate foundation degree?

3.14 The most common responses are listed in the table below.

Issue	No. of responses
Study time/balancing work and study	7
Demonstrating its value/credibility to the industry	6
Cost of training and cover	5
Support within the company	2
How it fits with existing training	2

3.15 Other specific responses were:

- “Finding an appropriate delivery method”.
- “Finding "good quality" lecturers/content advisors”.
- “Finding good quality candidates who wish to develop a career at sea”.
- “I do not see any particular barriers. What I would say is part of the degree should include an experience of sea time”.
- “To understand "on board" culture and the particular pressures that life at sea imposes on the individual and working environment”.

Any other comments?

3.16 All of the comments received are included below.

- “The towage industry has a satisfactory uptake of VQs, a foundation degree is of relevance to a small number of staff, as a fast-track option to more management based roles”.
- “It is anticipated that the foundation degree will attract more young new recruits to the shipping industry”.
- “Safety awareness is an important issue in the shipping industry, and the foundation degree would have to address this”.
- “The entry requirements for a foundation degree would be higher than those for a HND course. It might pose a problem to recruit candidates with higher academic qualifications eg A Levels. The foundation degree would need to possibly lead to a BA/BSc qualification to attract those with higher academic qualifications”.
- “Employers must promote the idea of the foundation degree leading to career progression and possibly as a core competency for promotion. Linking the degree to membership of a professional body might make it more appealing to potential candidates”.
- “Difficult to define requirements of a foundation degree, as it will depend on the role of each individual for example whether they work in a more technical or marine and safety role, skills and knowledge required will differ”.

Telephone Interviews with Industry/Sector bodies

Workforce issues and skills

- 3.17 Respondents felt that lack of qualified seafarers for shore based positions might pose a problem in the future. Shore-based employers do look to employ individuals with maritime experience. However, those without seafaring experience are now being considered for jobs that have historically been for seafarers. Other workforce issues mentioned included low wages impacting on recruitment, and the poor basic skills of school leavers.
- 3.18 Other than the skills gaps in terms of lack of ex-seafarers, the only other skills gap that was mentioned was health and safety.
- 3.19 Respondents thought that a foundation degree could help to overcome these issues, as long as it was of relevance to the sector. It would have to be part of a series of initiatives to encourage young people to consider a maritime career. The cruise industry (hospitality) and ship broking industry were cited as potential areas where a foundation degree could be useful. There are instances where secondary employers in the maritime industry are now contributing to the cost of training seafarers.
- 3.20 There was a view that although more employees without seafaring experience are being

recruited, a foundation degree should not act as a substitute to seafaring experience for shore-based employees. If this happened, employees would have knowledge gaps.

Demand for a foundation degree

- 3.21 Due to the diversity of employers, respondents found it difficult to generalise as to whether employers would be interested in a foundation degree. One view was that a foundation degree must be relevant to the shipping industry, although it could possibly be “above and beyond what is needed”, especially in sectors where young recruits are employed.
- 3.22 The general view of respondents was that a widely recognised qualification is very important to employers, as it “allows transferability within the sector and also to other maritime sectors”, and provides a benchmark.

Other initiatives and barriers

- 3.23 Some respondents thought that other foundation degrees, such as the Merchant Navy foundation degree, could conflict with a more generic shore-based maritime foundation degree. There was also concern about how a new foundation degree would fit in with cadet training schemes. Most respondents thought that there are already well-established courses and qualifications in place for most areas of the industry, such as the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers Professional Qualifying Examinations.
- 3.24 A lack of knowledge and understanding about foundation degrees was seen as one of the main barriers to uptake of a foundation degree. To countenance this, it was felt that a foundation degree would need to include work experience so that it was seen as being relevant to the sector. Other major barriers that were identified by respondents include the cost implications and the requirement to justify to employers the need for, and value of, a foundation degree.

Next steps and future developments

- 3.25 For a successful foundation degree to be designed, implemented and undertaken in sufficient number, respondents stressed that consultation and discussion would be needed with employers. This would help to gain the support of employers, through being able to discuss and explain the potential benefits and affordability. It could also help to assure employers that the foundation degree is designed to meet their needs.
- 3.26 Skills gaps and recruitment difficulties could make the foundation degree be seen as useful by employers, especially if employers believe that a foundation degree could provide wider knowledge of the maritime sector for non seafarers.
- 3.27 If further work is undertaken on the development of a foundation degree, respondents thought that a wide variety of key partners would need to be involved, including Southampton Solent University, Marine Leisure Association, Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, Maritime and Coastguard Agency, International Association of Maritime Institutions, Sea Cadets, Sea Scouts, and London Nautical School.

- 3.28 One respondent suggested that if a foundation degree was officially endorsed (and possibly branded) by key strategic organisations in each of the sub-sectors, this could raise the profile of the qualification and improve how it would be perceived by employers.

Telephone Interviews with Employers

Skills gaps and focus of a foundation degree

- 3.29 The main workforce issue for employers appears to be in relation to the shortage of skilled labour with relevant qualifications and high quality experience in the maritime sector, especially ex-seafarers. Retention of good employees is not seen as a major problem at present. However, it was thought by one employer that there could be retention problems in the future as the increase in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market takes hold.
- 3.30 Some employers thought that the current skills gaps for engineers and other shore-based positions with seafaring experience are likely to increase in the future. One of the employers recruits foreign nationals to address this issue but thinks that more UK nationals need to be trained in the long term. Although employers thought that a foundation degree might be able to attract new young recruits, the difficulty would always be their lack of seafaring work experience. Employers also thought that some sectors are too small and specialised to make a foundation degree feasible. There was a consensus of opinion that a foundation degree should address both generic and specialist skills.

Demand for qualifications

- 3.31 A widely recognised qualification and accreditation is important to employers, coupled with the appropriate experience. Respondents were not aware of any major gaps in qualification or training provision. Some employees are currently undertaking qualifications directly relevant to their jobs, such as specialised degrees and RYA qualifications.
- 3.32 Employers utilise both internal and external training courses for their staff. The larger employers often run in-house courses, especially if there is a lack of external availability. They do not see this as being problematic, as in-house courses enable them to directly tailor the provision to meet business needs, and the needs of employees. The only difficulty mentioned by one employer, was the geographical spread of some training, and that this added to the cost of the training.

Next steps and future developments

- 3.33 The main barriers to the uptake of a foundation degree are seen as being the presence of more specific specialised qualifications, the low volumes of suitable candidates in some sectors, and also time and cost restraints.
- 3.34 Some employers thought that a foundation degree would possibly only be required in the future if there is a major crisis in recruiting suitably qualified staff. Most employers thought that if a new foundation degree was developed, more promotion would be needed to raise awareness of foundation degrees and to gain endorsement from the sector.

4. Conclusions

4.1 We draw the following conclusions from the research:

1. there is a mixed picture in terms of level of interest in a new foundation degree for the maritime sector:
 - although a small number of questionnaires were completed, the majority of respondents expressed some interest in a foundation degree;
 - industry/sector bodies are supportive in principle of a new foundation degree;
 - there is no clear indication of any major gap in current or future qualification and training provision;
 - the main skills gap is in relation to the lack of high-quality seafaring experience of potential employees;
2. the skills and knowledge areas where there is interest in a foundation degree may not be compatible with how a foundation degree would be implemented and operated:
 - respondents indicated a clear need for employees to have knowledge and understanding of the maritime sector, but this could just as easily be covered by existing qualifications and/or by a new training course/short qualification;
 - there is interest in a foundation degree for the ship management sector, but it is not clear if the potential target market would be sufficient, nor how this would fit in with plans for a foundation degree framework for the Ports and Harbours sector;
 - respondents indicated that the key workforce issue is in relation to the shortage of ex-seafarers for shore-based positions, and this is not an obvious area that a foundation degree could address;
 - areas of interest for coverage by a new foundation degree are primarily in relation to knowledge and understanding of the maritime sector, and ship management.
3. there is limited scope for a new foundation degree:
 - there could be the potential to cover shore-based ship management and knowledge of the maritime sector by adapting the Merchant Navy and Ports and Harbours foundation degree frameworks rather than create a further framework;
 - the fish catching sector has decided that a foundation degree would not currently meet the needs of the sector;
 - there are a number of current (and planned) maritime-related foundation degrees, honours degrees and specialised qualifications already available.

Appendix A: Survey documentation

Appendix B: List of respondents

Email survey of employers: list of respondents

Name	Position	Organisation
Laraine Poole	Group HR Manager	Andrew Weir and Co Ltd
Jerry Wisnieuski	Crew Manager	ASP Ship Management
Chris Winlott	Director	BD&M Group Ltd
Graeme Thomson	Marine Personnel Offices	British Antarctic Survey
Ross Jolliffe	Company Secretary	Cefas
Captain Houghton Boreham	Fleet Nautical Superintendent	CP Ships (UK) Ltd
F Davies	Managing Director	Euroship Services Limited
David Warren	HE Co-ordinator	Falmouth Marine School
Bob Speedie	Managing Director	GBLT Ship Management (UK) Ltd
Captain K F Lin	D.J.V President	Hatsu Marine Ltd
Desmond Howell	Director	Isle of Man Marine Administration
Stuart Garrett	HR Director	Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Ltd
J A Kennish	Personnel Officer	Isle of Man Steam Packet Company Ltd
T Graves	Director	Maersk Marine Services Ltd
Kevin Slade	Personnel Director	Marine industry
Eddie Baldwin	Partner	MCC Stenson Boatbuilders
Alistair Evitt	Managing Director	Meridian Marine Management Ltd
Captain Nigel Mills	Exec/Ops Director	Orkney Ferries
David Precious	Director	Precious Associates Ltd
Richard Craig	General Manager	RMAS
??	Projects Co-ordinator	Shell Ship Management Ltd
Lydia Ross	HR Manager	Smit International (Scotland) Ltd
Philip Parry	Chairman	Spinnaker Consulting Ltd
Alistair Macleod	Group Manager Ship Ops	Stolt Offshore
L R Farmer	HR Manager	Svitzer Marine
Don Cockrill	MCA/DfT/Liaison Officer	UK Maritime Pilots Association
Tim Gibbs	Fleet Manager	United Marine Dredging Ltd
John Bazley	PL (T&L)	Warsash Maritime Centre

Telephone survey of employers: list of respondents

Name	Position	Organisation
John Percival	Principal	Hoylake Sailing School
Ken Gordon	HRD Consultant (Survey)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Roger Bennett	Principal	Rainbow Sailing School
Jackie Reid	Personnel Manager	Royal Yachting Association
Andy Pope	Deputy Manager-Fleet Manning	Shell Ship Management Ltd
Martin Burley	Group Training and Planning Manager	V Ships UK Ltd

Telephone survey of industry organisations: list of respondents

Name	Position	Organisation
Sarah Dhanda	Director of Training Services	British Marine Federation
Edmund Brookes	Deputy Director-General	Chamber of Shipping
Colin Middlemiss	Clerk	Company of Watermen and Lightermen
Doug Barrow	Chief Executive	Maritime London
Glenys Jackson	Education, Careers and Training Manager	Merchant Navy Training Board
Dick James	Chief Executive	Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation

Additional telephone discussions: list of respondents

Name	Position	Organisation
Allan Graveson	Senior National Secretary	NUMAST