

OPENING DOORS FOR MORE SHIP'S OFFICERS

Vinnuháskúlin

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The Centre of Maritime Studies & Engineering (Vinnuháskúlin) is the Faroe Islands' official maritime school. We offer government-approved training programs including:

- Skipper
- Master of Navigation
- Engineer 2999 KW
- Engineer Unlimited

We also offer a growing range of shorter courses for maritime professionals.

Vinnuháskúlin fulfils the STCW requirements. Our courses are internationally recognized and provide career opportunities worldwide.

Our laboratories are equipped with the latest technology including state-of-the-art bridge simulators.

New students are accepted in August and December. For the August course the closing date for applications is June 1st. For the January course the closing date for applications is December 1st.



Adjustments are underway for the Faroese nautical school to streamline the existing ship's officer trainee system and reduce seafaring experience requirements, meanwhile adding more oil and gas related courses.

LIMITED ACCESS for young people seeking a career as navigation deck officer has long been a subject of concern in the seafaring nation of the Faroe Islands, as well as in many other countries for that matter. Whereas often the problem is finding a shipping company that is able and willing to cooperate in the process of building seafaring experience for young cadets, in the Faroe Islands people have so far generally had little problem persuading skippers to take them on board. Problem is, the old Faroese trainee system for navigators is fast getting out of step with today's need for time efficiency—it requires an excessive 36 months of seafaring experience to be combined with nautical school to complete the training.

So how about reducing that requirement to, say 12 months instead—more systematically coordinated experience, that is, as opposed to the more generic 'catch-all' variable of seafaring?

According to Wilhelm E. Petersen, managing director of the Centre of Maritime Studies & Engineering (Vinnuháskúlin), this is exactly what has been discussed lately in the Faroe Islands, with a definite outcome.

"There is a general consensus in the Maritime Training Council as well as in the shipping industry that we should act now and bring this system into alignment with today's realities," Mr. Petersen said. "Fortunately we have a program in place now that is ready for implementation."

The change will greatly enhance career opportunities, not least because of the sig-



MARIA OLSEN

nificantly reduced amount of seafaring experience required for trainees.

"In essence," Mr. Petersen said, "we have streamlined the system according to international standards, in particular in line with the official Danish maritime training programs. This means navigation deck officers will now be required to undergo 12 months of seafaring experience as part of their curriculum—rather than 36 months, which has traditionally been the requirement."

"In the case of marine engineers," Mr. Petersen said, "the current requirement of six months of seafaring experience to go along with engineering school remains in place. However, other adjustments and updates are being considered."

The change in the requirements on seafaring experience for navigation training, meanwhile, could prove highly significant from several perspectives, including socio-economically.

TIME FACTOR

"Overall this change will make our courses more accessible for more people and, as such, will open up new international career opportunities. Another aspect of interest is that the reduced time requirement for seafaring experience will likely attract more female trainees into the world of marine navigation. The impression is that with the old system, many people could not undergo the trainee program because the 36-month experience requirement has more and more come to be seen as an entry barrier. In effect, as a resource, time has become scarcer in modern life and careers have become much more fleeting; you cannot expect people to be willing to commit to very large amounts of time before making important career choices. So by reducing that requirement we believe we will make this career path more gener-

ally accessible in the belief that once people have completed the training, it will be somewhat easier for them to make a conscious choice for a seafaring career."

To enable such a change without reducing the quality of training programs, special coordination between the schools and those who provide the seafaring experience have been necessary.

"This is very much about making good use of time," Mr. Petersen said. "The old approach went along the lines of, make sure the person gets a large amount of experience at sea and so all the necessary learning will inevitably be covered during that time. Now that approach may have worked for many years but it wasn't very time efficient because there was no real coordination with the training program—it was generic experience, which is all well and good, except for the fact that nowadays you need to

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Many Faroese ship's officers work on merchant vessels (opposite).

be selective and conscious about how much time you spend on the various aspects of your career. So the solution here was introducing specific and well organized coordination of all elements of the training programs in question. We believe many people will appreciate this adjustment."

OFFSHORE INDUSTRY

Other changes in the business environment are reflected in the fact that today's Faroese pool of up to 2,000 ship's officers are no longer merely following the tradition of working, primarily, on fishing vessels and, secondarily, on merchant vessels such as container ships, tankers and ferries—the growing proportion of the officers now in the merchant fleets are to an increasing extent working on support vessels serving the offshore oil and gas industry.

"The offshore energy business is fast becoming a sizable part of the Faroese economy as witnessed in the demand for training related to, for example, HSE [health, safety, environment]," Mr. Petersen said.

Courses in Dynamic Positioning navigation is another example of the same trend—the general direction toward the offshore energy industry. In late April, the Centre of Maritime Studies & Engineering received approval from London's Nautical Institute as an accredited provider of DP courses in accordance with industry standards.

"This is an important step and we are very pleased with being Nautical Institute accredited to offer certificate courses in DP," Mr. Petersen said. "These courses are being offered to meet the increasing demand in particular from the offshore industry."