

NAUTILUS
INTERNATIONAL

Report

Cadet Survey 2010



Nautilus International

Foreword



Mark Dickinson
General Secretary

Education and training is the lifeblood of the shipping industry. Our merchant fleet and the wide range of maritime services and industries ashore could not survive without a fresh intake of new seafarers each year, so it is essential that companies – and governments – invest in training.

It is also vital that a cadetship is a good experience for each trainee, so that those recruited into the industry complete their training and are inspired to build a long-term seafaring career.

At Nautilus International, we regularly gather feedback from our cadet members and take action to address their concerns – at company level, with colleges and in our work with national and international policy-makers.

Our 2010 survey of UK cadets followed on from a similar exercise in 2004 which provided valuable information to the Union's Council and has helped to shape our activities in the last six years. This new report, based on the 2010 survey, aims to update our understanding of the British officer training experience and ensure that Nautilus is committed to the actions that best serve cadet members' needs.

We would like to thank those who took part in this survey during the 2010 International Year of the Seafarer. Your contribution in this important year will help Nautilus in its endeavours to leave a substantial legacy of improvements to UK officer training schemes for decades to come.

Introduction

Nautilus International is committed to ensuring that its cadet members are well-treated onboard ship and at college, and that they receive the best possible education and training. The Union sits on the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB), which has responsibility for setting and approving the education and training frameworks for new entrants into the British Merchant Navy. Nautilus also has a working relationship with the companies which sponsor cadet training, and is in close contact with all the major UK nautical colleges. These receive regular visits from the membership and recruitment team, and an industrial official is assigned to each institution to support cadet members who study there.

Back in 2004, the Union carried out a survey of UK officer trainees, with the aim of gathering information – and opinions – about their pay and conditions. The results of this survey have underpinned Union policy in the years since; leading, for example, to the creation of the Model Cadet Framework Agreement, which set the best practice standards for officer trainees' pay and conditions.

Nautilus has also used the 2004 survey results to inform its policy-development work with the UK government, and with international bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF). Nautilus has been taking a major role in the ETF project to develop detailed and practical proposals for EU seafarer employment and training as part of the European Commission's programme to develop a comprehensive and strategic long-term EU Maritime Policy.

In 2010, Nautilus marked the International Year of the Seafarer by establishing a range of projects to investigate the state of the industry and find out what it means to be a seafarer today. As one of these projects, a new survey of UK cadet members was organised, to look into whether conditions for these trainees had changed since the 2004 survey and gather the most up-to-date information about cadets' concerns.

Some of the questions in the 2010 survey were close equivalents of those asked in 2004, but there were also new questions with a broader focus – going beyond pay and conditions to find out more about the training experience at college and at sea.

The survey was carried out online during the summer of 2010 via www.nautilusint.org. 254 cadets took part, which is around 14% of all UK trainee officers. All the maritime colleges in the British Isles were represented among the participants, with most of the cadets reporting that they were studying at one of the UK 'big four': Glasgow College of Nautical Studies; Fleetwood Nautical Campus (Blackpool and the Fylde College); South Tyneside College and Warsash Maritime Academy (Southampton Solent University).

The participants were employed by a wide range of sponsoring organisations, with some having joined training schemes run by individual operators such as BP, Carnival UK and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), and others serving on a range of vessel-types through an agency scheme run by SSTG or Clyde Marine.

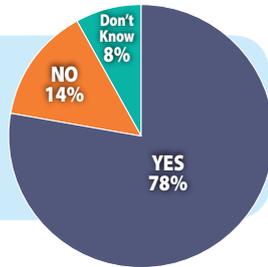
Statistical data was collected on whether or not the participants were in favour of particular measures. The survey also gave the participants

an opportunity to write more about their views on any aspect of their training experience. All of the information supplied has been collated and analysed for this report, and following the conclusions, there is an explanation of the action Nautilus International is taking in response to the survey results.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, most references to particular companies or colleges have been removed from the comments published here. However, where problematic issues relating to a particular organisation were reported, Nautilus will take these concerns to the organisation in question on a confidential basis.

Pay and leave

Do you think cadets should be paid in line with National Minimum Wage for the work they carry out onboard?



A large majority of cadets (78%) said that they should be paid in line with National Minimum Wage. The comments section indicates that many trainees struggle to cover the basic costs of living on the pay they currently receive — with a few even taking second jobs:

‘Costs are high in relation to wages.’

‘[We endure] poor rates of pay.’

‘Cadets on vessels in dry dock essentially work as additional ABs and in some cases in place of officers. Should the rate of pay not reflect this?’

‘[I have to] work over 10 hours a week to supplement my trainee allowance as I wouldn’t be able to survive otherwise. This causes me to take valuable time away from my study schedule.’

‘Getting paid less at sea than at college is ridiculous considering we are working just as much as other crew members.’

‘[I receive] a meagre wage.’

‘[The pay] we get in relation to accommodation charges and the cost of living is not suitable.’

‘I know of several people who have been put off a cadetship due to the low income making it totally impractical.’

‘Of my £680 monthly wage, £358 goes immediately to the college for halls of residence, leaving me only £322 for food, daily expenses and cost of living.’

‘Due to low wages it is impossible to get somewhere to live outside of college and sea time. ... I have to stay on a mixture of sofas and spare rooms. ... The hardest part of my training is my leave — it is demoralising being homeless.’

‘I have to have a part time job to survive, which takes me away from studying.’

‘While on ship I earned £2,000 for four months’ work and I could easily have earned double that working in a burger bar.’

‘I am very grateful [for my sponsorship] but money is very tight. This can cause a distraction from college work and is a constant cause of worry.’

‘Despite enjoying every minute of my sea time I was frustrated at the small amount of money that I managed to earn and how thinly it spread when I got back to uni.’

‘I think companies seriously need to look at the pay structure for cadets in relation to the cost of accommodation and living.’

However, a few are satisfied with their earnings:

‘Overall I am happy with my rate of pay’

‘People complain about low pay but considering I am being paid to train it is infinitely better value than university. ... The pay is good if you can manage your finances.’

‘I agree about most of the payment things raised here but it is important to remember we are still just cadets. We shouldn’t be entitled to all the seagoing benefits.’

The difference in cadets’ pay among sponsoring companies is of widespread concern (as it was in the 2004 survey):

‘[Cadets with my company] were told we aren’t paid as much as other cadets as we get a guaranteed two year job at the end of the cadetship. This no longer applies, but still no raise [and we are among] the worst paid in the class.’

‘Cadets should be paid a flat rate throughout companies. I know cadets who earn over £1,000 a month and some who earn less than £650 a month.’

‘[There should be] a standard cadet wage. As it is now, cadets in the same class and, in some rare cases, the same ship are getting drastically different wages for doing the same job.’

‘I get the smallest wage in my class. ... [It is] difficult as I have to rent a house with [cadets from another company] who have more to live off.’

‘There seems to be a huge difference [in cadets’ pay] between different training providers. This creates a tier system amongst cadets and puts the poorer ones at a disadvantage as they have to fit in other jobs to earn extra money just to survive.’

‘In terms of pay and expenses I find my employer to be very reasonable, especially when compared to other cadets’ experiences in this regard.’

'I think [cadets' pay] should be standardised across the board for all merchant companies. ... Some of my colleagues are in my opinion seriously underpaid, earning around £170 a week, from which they must also pay rent and food allowances.'

'People in the same classes can have massive differences in the money they receive. ... This can be demoralising, especially when you are doing better on the course than people getting more money than you.'

'I feel that all cadets should be paid the same rate and this should not be reduced when we are at sea.'

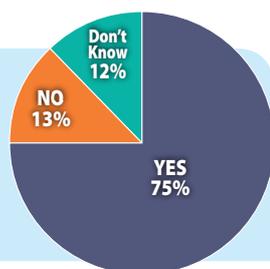
'Currently my pay is adequate ... [but I disagree with] the vast differences between cadets' wages.'

'My pay is one of the lowest among my colleagues. ... It just seems unfair that I am working just as hard but I can't afford to unwind at the end of the week or go home regularly.'

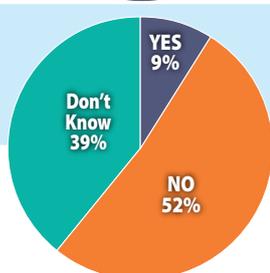
In addition, one cadet points out that answering 'no' to the National Minimum Wage question does not necessarily indicate a belief that it is acceptable to pay trainees less than NMW — there are other issues to take into account:

'I disagree with being paid the minimum wage when working onboard; this is because there are different rates for different ages and I don't think it would do well on board for cadets to be paid differently. I know some cadets do get paid differing amounts due to company, but the difference is nowhere near as marked as the £3.57 an hour for 16 to 17 year olds and £5.80 for 22 year olds and over.'

Do you think cadets' salaries should be linked to increases awarded to other officers employed by the company?



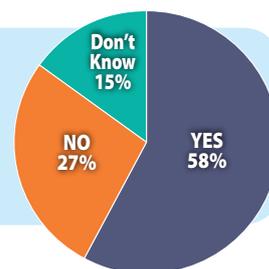
Does your company provide such a link?



As in the 2004 survey, a high percentage of respondents think there should be a link between increases in officers' and cadets' salaries (75% now; 78% then). However, only 52% of cadets say their company is providing such a link. One respondent points out:

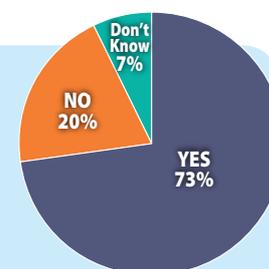
'Most cadets are not paid a wage but rather "sponsorship". Many of us have no contact with our actual sponsoring company so our wages cannot reflect the changes made to officers' wages.'

Do you think that seniority bonuses paid to officers should also be reflected in cadets' salaries?

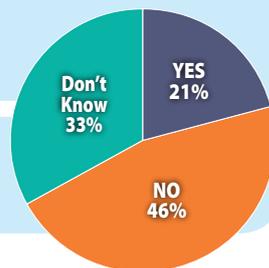


There is still a slight majority in favour of a link to seniority bonuses (58% today; 60% in 2004), but this seems less of a pressing matter than other pay issues. In the comments section, one respondent suggests that it would be a good idea for cadets' pay to increase with each training phase completed.

Do you think that all cadets should earn leave at a rate of no less than eight days per month including time at college?



In addition, should four weeks' paid annual leave be payable to all cadets?



Does your company provide anything similar?

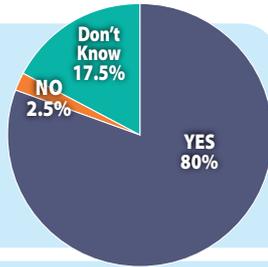
The statistics for these two questions show that the reality of leave arrangements does not live up to cadets' expectations. 73% agreed with the proposal that cadets should earn at least eight days' leave a month and four weeks' paid annual leave, but only 21% said that their company provided arrangements like these. Comments about leave included the following:

'Cadets should be granted a reasonable period of leave after leaving college and before rejoining [their vessel]. Is less than four days really enough before beginning a six-month sea phase?'

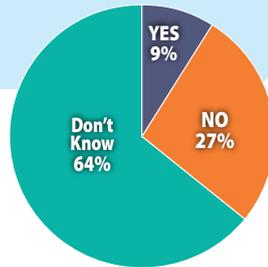
'[Paid leave] is irrelevant to most cadets as all are receiving a bursary/scholarship month-in, month-out, whether at home or at sea.'

Survey findings

Do you think that cadets should benefit from the same warlike operations area provisions as other officers?

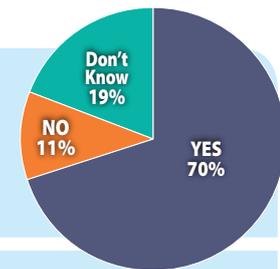


Does your company provide anything similar?

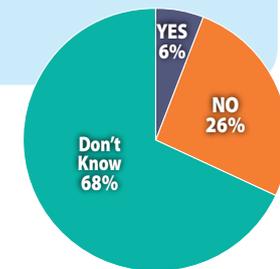


It is perhaps unsurprising that a relatively large percentage of cadets are unaware of the finer points of their contractual position regarding warlike operations areas. However, more sea areas than ever are being designated as warlike/high risk due to the intensity of the global piracy problem, and trainees would do well to inform themselves of their rights on this matter when embarking on a deepsea phase.

Do you think that cadets should have the same company severance provisions as other officers?

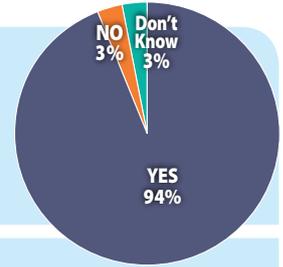


Does your company provide anything similar?

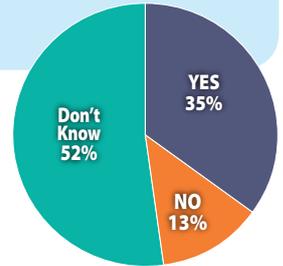


Again, cadets are advised to be aware of their contractual position in the event that their post with a company is at risk — particularly in the current economic climate.

Do you think cadets should be allowed paid leave for a family problem or a medical problem?



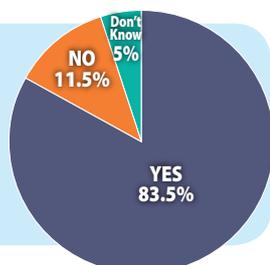
Does your company provide anything similar?



The overwhelming majority (94%) of respondents in favour of paid leave for family or medical problems suggests that this kind of security is important to trainees and could be a factor in recruitment and retention.

Financial support at college

Do you think that whilst at college cadets should be provided with accommodation of a good standard at no charge?



In 2004, 75% of cadets answered 'yes' to this question, and in this year's survey that figure had increased to 84%. The comments section indicates that both the standard of accommodation and the issue of 'no charge' are of concern to trainees.

On the issue of accommodation standards, cadets studying throughout the UK complained of old-fashioned halls of residence at nautical colleges, low-quality college food and the poor deal they were getting in return for their accommodation fees. The most positive comments were only at the level of 'acceptable' and 'reasonable':

'The halls are at very poor standards over here.'

'Standards are pretty low. I have no access to a proper kitchen, thereby forcing me to eat substandard food which I have to pay for. At about £400 a month for a shared room I expected better.'

'The accommodation, while acceptable, is very dated (1960s) and needs updating.'

'The food can be somewhat up and down in terms of quality [but] I think it is reasonable value.'

'I would never wish the misfortune of staying in [this college's] halls of residence upon anyone.'

'Halls and the food provided should be kept to a better standard for cadets.'

'I have recently qualified. My main problem during my cadetship was substandard provisions for accommodation at [my college].'

'Accommodation at [my college] is very poor value for money.'

'I think the price for the college halls is much more expensive than it is worth; some cooking facilities would be nice as it would give you the option of having a healthier meal than is provided by the college canteen.'

'The rooms/facilities are a disgrace and too expensive!'

'The food at the college was poor and expensive.'

'The food at our college is below the standard of what we would expect for what we pay.'

'College accommodation is expensive and of a relatively low standard, especially compared with shipboard conditions.'

'Only ever stay in [this college's] halls of residence if all of your shots are up to date.'

'The accommodation is limited, dated and extremely expensive. That is why I have opted to rent locally.'

Some cadets also feel that leisure facilities should be better at their colleges:

'Although we have a large swimming pool, it is only available for our use twice a week due to the difficulty of getting a suitable lifeguard as the pool is very deep. This is ... a massive waste of a resource.'

'There is an old all-weather pitch in the grounds that is completely neglected. Considering the amount of money the college must make off both cadets and the other people attending various offshore courses run here this is also unacceptable.'

'I am ... informed that the college has been prevented from extending its footprint although it has ample grounds because the local council does not like the college being here. Therefore we are shortly going to have to lose our much loved and used sports hall to make way for extra classrooms.'

The other matter in question was whether college accommodation should be provided at no charge to the cadet. In the comments section, several respondents point out that this issue is closely related to pay levels. The inequalities in pay that trainees observe among their peers would not appear so great if all sponsoring companies/training providers agreed to pay college accommodation costs:

'There is a large gap in pay between cadets at college, with some lucky cadets getting accommodation paid for and still earning a larger monthly wage than others.'

'At our college there are two training providers, and [cadets with one of these] have to pay for the accommodation provided by the college and for food, whereas to my knowledge cadets [with the other company] have everything paid for. I'm just a bit confused as to how our pay is so different.'

'Cadets' pay [should be] more similar. ... [My housemates from a different company] get more money as a basic salary than us and get an extra lump sum for housing each month that is more than my pay when I am at sea!'

'I get nothing towards accommodation costs, whereas other companies help.'

Survey findings

'[My company] should pay accommodation costs.'

'[There is] inequality inherent in the system whereby cadet A earns maybe £400-£500 per month more than cadet B simply because company A pays for accommodation whereas company B doesn't.'

'My wage is a lot less than other students in my class and having an extra accommodation allowance would be a great help to many students.'

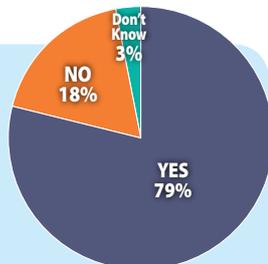
'I believe a cadet should receive an accommodation allowance – a mirror of the college's halls of residence fees.'

'Pay and conditions vary wildly in my class alone. The biggest difference is in accommodation fees for college phases. I strongly believe that inclusion of these as an allowance should be the crux of any campaign over cadets' conditions.'

'I agree that accommodation should be provided if sponsorship is low; however, if someone is receiving £1,000 a month they should be able to organise their own accommodation out of this!'

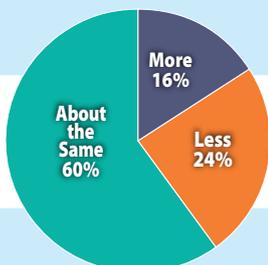
The following questions all deal with the provision of specific allowances related to college expenses. It should be noted that there was a strong response in favour of each allowance proposed, and that, for those allowances also proposed in the 2004 survey, the percentage of respondents in favour rose in each case.

Do you think that whilst attending college cadets should be paid a daily subsistence allowance to cover food and incidental expenditure of at least £25 per day?

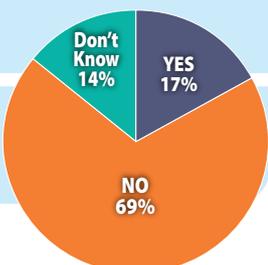


Between the 2004 and 2010 surveys, the percentage answering 'yes' to this rose from 60% to 79%.

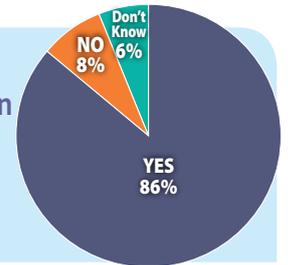
Do you think this (allowance) should be: more than £25, less, about the same?



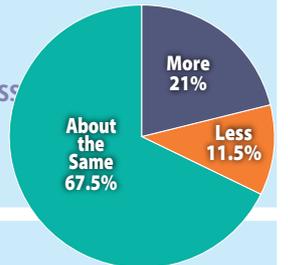
Does your company provide anything similar?



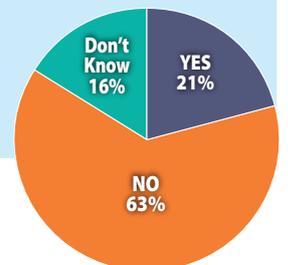
Do you think that cadets not provided with accommodation should receive an additional weekly allowance of at least £115?



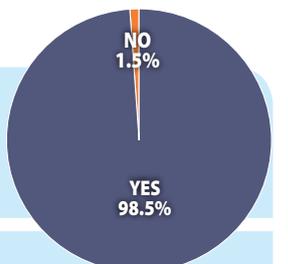
Do you think this (allowance) should be: more than £115, less, about the same?



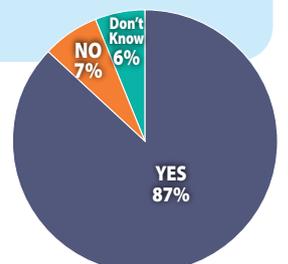
Does your company provide anything similar?



Do you think that college and exam fees should be paid by the company?

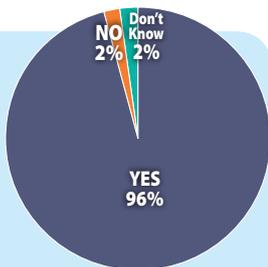


Does your company provide anything similar?



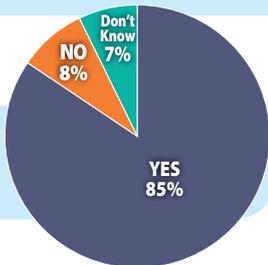
In 2004 the proportion of trainees in favour of company funding of college and exam fees was 94%; the response in favour this time is also very strong. In the comments section, some trainees also say that the exam re-sit fees charged by some colleges are unreasonably high.

Do you think that the company should reimburse all travel costs to and from college at the start and end of each college term and/or semester?

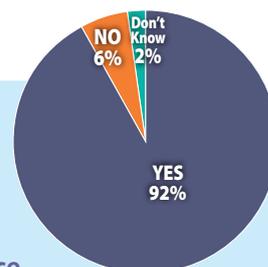


The 'yes' response for this was 92% in 2004, and is now 96%.

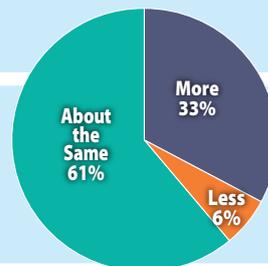
Are such provisions currently provided by your employer?



Do you think the company should either provide cadets with the relevant books and study materials or provide them with a one-off allowance of no less than £175?



Do you think this (allowance) should be: (more than £175, less, about the same)



Does your company provide anything similar?

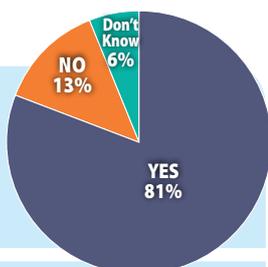


On the subject of book allowances, one cadet comments:

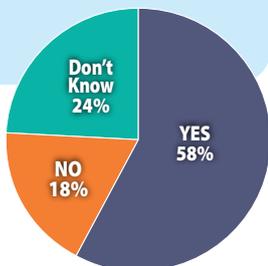
'If companies do not want to cover all the costs of the books (as then cadets might start to buy loads and loads of books) they should at least contribute towards them and e.g. pay back 50%. The same should be done in regards to any conferences. I went to the NAV08 conference and had to pay from my own pocket £100 for the entry.'

Other financial support

Do you think cadets should receive reasonable expenses incurred for attending interviews?

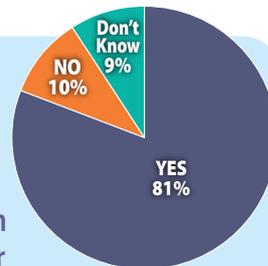


Does your company provide anything similar?

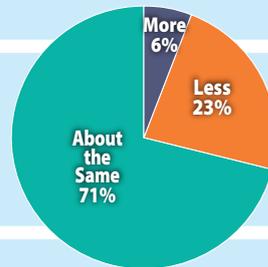


It appears that the payment of expenses for interviews is fairly common practice in the industry, with nearly two-thirds of cadets reporting that their own firm offers this. The percentage of respondents who think cadets should receive expenses (81%) is similar to the percentage in the 2004 survey (88%).

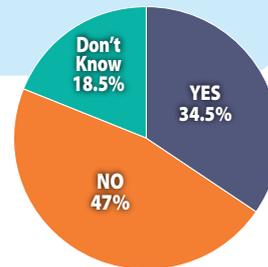
Do you think that at college or onboard ship a uniform allowance should be provided by the company of no less than £500 per annum initially and at least £250 per annum for upkeep?



Do you think this (allowance) should be: (more than £500/250, less, about the same)



Does your company provide anything similar?



There is strong support (81%) for the concept of a uniform allowance. However, only 35% of respondents say that their company provides this. The comments show that many cadets feel it is unreasonable to be obliged to pay for their own uniforms, given the modest wages they earn:

Survey findings

'We have to provide our own uniform [at sea], which isn't really fair.'

'Regarding Uniform allowances, I myself do not require this as I only wear uniform at college, which consists of black trousers, white shirt, company tie and epaulettes (the last two provided by the company) as my company does not require uniforms at sea. However those cadets serving aboard cruise liners would probably require larger allowances due to the need for several uniforms.'

'[Female cadets should have] correct female uniform, not just male standard that has to be refitted, purchased for us instead of us having to buy it ourselves.'

'Costs [including] buying uniform eat up the majority of savings made at sea.'

'The company provides uniform at the beginning but they don't provide a new uniform each year which is what I think they should do.'

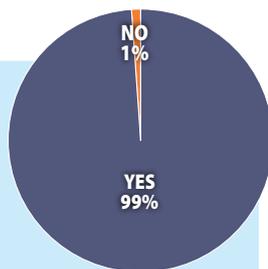
However, other comments point out that a uniform allowance as such is not always necessary because some firms offer a satisfactory alternative:

'We are not paid a uniform allowance as all uniform is provided at the start of training and replaced mid-course – all training providers should do this.'

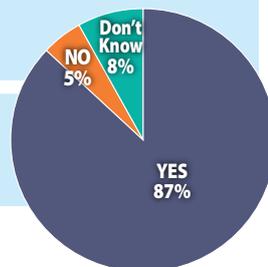
'Our uniform is requested from the company and you are allowed so many of each item per year. As for college uniform, I've bought new shirts from my training allowance and I'm not too fussed. It's not too expensive.'

'Uniform is included within the training allowance [at my company].'

Do you think the company should cover the cost of all medicals, eyesight tests, discharge books, identity cards and any certificates required by non-UK flag states' authorities?

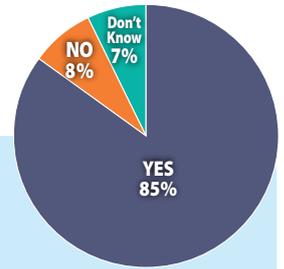


Does your company provide anything similar?

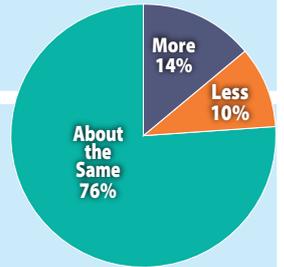


Almost all trainees (99%) feel that work-related expenses such as medicals and discharge books should be covered by the employing company, and the response to the second question (87% 'yes') shows that this is common practice in the industry (although not quite a universal standard yet).

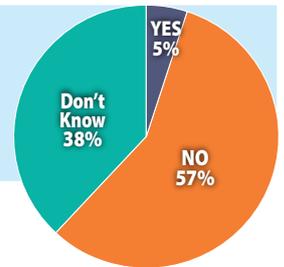
Do you think that all cadets shall be provided with personal effects insurance valid at sea and at college up to a maximum of £2,500?



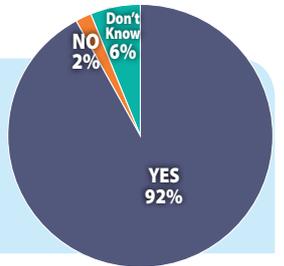
Do you think this should be: (more than £2500, less, about the same)



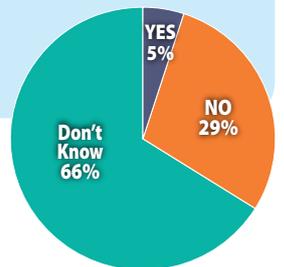
Does your company provide anything similar?



Do you think that cadets should be covered by the same insurance provided to other officers?



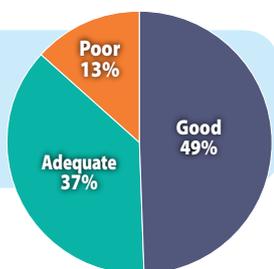
Does your company provide anything similar?



As with other questions related to allowances, the strong response in favour of employer-provided insurance appears to be linked to cadets' pay levels. One trainee points out that, with a monthly wage of £680, 'being able to insure my property ... is currently a fantasy'.

Education, training and career prospects

How do you rate the quality of your training so far at college?



With over half of the respondents rating their college training as merely 'adequate' or even 'poor', there are clearly some issues for the UK maritime academies to address. However, 49% did describe their college training as 'good', and it may be that, for some of the others, a low opinion of their training has been coloured by a difficult overall experience of college life (many of the comments about college training are intertwined with reports of financial problems and complaints about food, accommodation and student facilities — see page 7). Those comments that do relate specifically to teaching or academic support include several appealing for greater emphasis on practical training and preparation for sea phases:

'[My college] offers very poor training on [deck] courses which I feel doesn't prepare cadets for oral examinations and becoming a responsible and well-equipped officer.'

'Training at [my college] is awful. ... Core skills are very weak, e.g. Colregs barely discussed, almost no practical training or problem solving. Teaching methods involve sitting captive in a room and listening to some lecturers read out the notes.'

'HND route cadets are not sent out with sufficient knowledge of the work that goes on at sea before the first and second sea phases.'

'More computer MS program training [should] be given to cadets/officers in college.'

'[My college] has brilliant facilities but more practical training needs to be done with the students.'

'We are really short-changed on our education, and training as such is non-existent. We pass exams and have little confidence in our abilities afterwards. When we go to ship incapable of carrying out simple practical tasks yet are fully conversant with ISM codes officers treat us with further suspicion.'

'[We need] more practical training at college and more "pure" marine based subjects rather than a ridiculous amount of maths based subjects.'

Other comments about college training often relate to the structure and organisation of the course, and there is both praise and condemnation of overall standards:

'I have found training at college to be of a very high standard and have really enjoyed my time there.'

'The course and training at college is very good.'

'Although the quality of the teaching is very good ... there are a number of minor problems with the college. There appears to be very little cover available for when a teacher is off sick etc.'

'Parts of [my college] are fist class and other parts disappoint.'

'The staff at the college, although knowledgeable in their own areas, seem to be unsure as to what they are teaching due to the restructuring of the course.'

'Although eventually all the material was covered, I have had a lot of time wasted by the college.'

'I think that more time and personal training should be given to cadets as in college you [have to] keep up with the best student.'

'Further study materials from the college were pitched at the wrong level and were poor in quality with regard to working towards exams.'

'[We should] have a slightly better-structured timetable in college due to the fact of study periods constantly. It might start to make some cadets lose interest.'

'College workshop is pretty poor, [with] outdated equipment etc.'

'[I have had] poor education and learning, incompetent teachers ... and above all a syllabus that would have been outdated 15 years ago.'

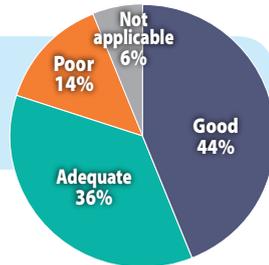
'I think my training would benefit from my employer being a bit more involved in my college training.'

'The standard of teaching at [my college] was very low.'

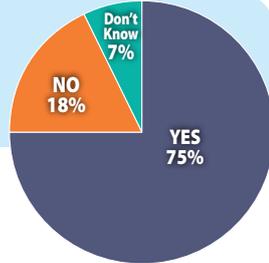
'The country is squandering its maritime heritage by allowing standards to slip so far. The maritime nation of the future will undoubtedly be the Philippines if this is allowed to continue.'

Survey findings

How do you rate the quality of your training so far at sea?



Are you optimistic about your future career and employment prospects?



These two questions together prompted the largest number of comments of any topic in the survey. Many of the responses give an insight into the impact of the UK tonnage tax scheme — which gives tax breaks to companies providing training berths to British cadets but does not require these firms to take on qualified British officers. ‘I am aware that I am only really onboard for “tax reasons” and unlikely to be offered a job [when I qualify] — it’s a little bit of a morale killer,’ says one trainee. Another cadet is even more despondent: ‘My company is only a private finance group and they don’t care about me when I qualify. [I’m] only in place so they don’t have to pay tax.’

The lack of British officers onboard many tonnage tax ships is not just a worry for future employment prospects; it can also affect a cadet’s training experience today. The first trainee above explains: ‘I am the only “native” English speaker onboard and this can at times be a little frustrating and lonely – this is not a reflection on the crew but it does seem a little strange that companies are allowed to take on cadets under these circumstances.’ Of course, multinational crews are a reality in today’s shipping industry, and cadets need to get used to working with colleagues from other countries, but communication problems can seem particularly acute when a person is new to the environment and expecting guidance and instruction. Further comments on this include:

‘British cadets should be placed on ships with British officers to aid learning. Foreign officers and ratings often have language difficulties communicating with cadets and the cadets end up socially isolated from the rest of the crew. Also on that point, why should the tax benefits ... be awarded when [the ships] are not British crewed?’

‘Major difficulties onboard ships with foreign crew ... their interest in English cadets was non-existent.’

‘The main problems I have found at sea are the lack of very basic English with most but not all crew.’

‘Cadets are generally ignored by the majority of the foreign officers although there are some exceptions.’

‘Many fellow cadets [and I] are hampered by officers largely of other nationalities who are reluctant to spend the time or effort on cadets that we would like ... I have yet to come upon an officer within my company who will deign to read [my training portfolio] before signing where I indicate.’

‘Language barriers onboard prevent communications between cadets and crew.’

‘I find it very difficult to follow Bulgarian or Ukrainian officers’ advice and training, that is if we even get any.’

‘I feel that all British cadets should be placed onboard ships with British officers with good spoken English. As this is an important time in the foundation of skills, ... proper communication of correct procedures is essential in providing a high standard of training.’

‘I was given menial jobs for around three months and had communication problems with the engineering officers who were all Filipinos. ... My company does not employ British officers, so I’m guessing that’s why they did not care about my training.’

‘I wish the MCA, the colleges and employers would get their act together, but being a realist it’s all about tonnage tax and cheap labour.’

Many respondents simply want to see industry best practice applied consistently throughout their sea phases, and would like their shipboard mentors to follow a structured programme, monitored by the relevant authorities. They also have strong ideas on other improvements that could be made:

‘It is my full hearted belief that cadets’ sea phases should be more guided and the relevant regulating bodies should do more to police these to ensure the standards of onboard training.’

‘Training should be standardised between companies.’

‘My training at sea was adequate. Most of the officers spoke good English, but compared to some of the training my friends got onboard I don’t think mine was of such a high standard.’

‘Yes I need to learn gangway watches (for example), but for the entire 12 months?’

‘There should be documentation that gives clear and structured guidelines on the duties of cadets. This should be included in [a] company’s administration manuals, [to] prevent “going back to square one” each time a cadet joins a new ship. Will give cadets better understanding of duties as in my personal experience it changes from ship to ship and is also dependent on the chief officer.’

‘I feel there should be more done to ensure that cadets get their minimum sea time in the allotted times; some of my phases are short by a week or two.’

'Training companies should make the onboard training officer aware of the level of college training received before the cadet arrives. This is not always the case.'

'There should be a set routine for cadets on sea phases that encourages the completion of their NVQ portfolios rather than have cadets just chipping and painting'

'Cadets should be given adequate time during normal working hours to understudy officers. It should not be limited to deck work and gangway watch. The duties of the officer should not only be learned during the handover.'

'The training of cadets should be included in all officers' job descriptions.'

'The lack of knowledge from the officers about the foundation degree route is frustrating and slows down training.'

'Difficulties about training at sea include being told conflicting information by different officers and officers not being familiar with the training portfolio or how best to make use of cadets' time at sea — although, if I tell them areas I want to concentrate on they are generally happy to help.'

'There seems to be no control over the standard of training that cadets receive at sea. Standards can vary from good to very poor. Considering shipping companies are getting reduced tax, they should be made to have a certain standard of training and they should be inspected by an independent body to make sure they are reaching the appropriate standard required.'

And despite the complaints, there is a sense that most of the cadets are making their comments because they care about their training and are feel that there is something special about the seafaring profession which is worth fighting for. The most important change that should be made to the training programme, according to some respondents, is to get trainees out to sea as soon as possible and see what they're made of:

'Initial college phase is far too long. Seetime experience is essential in deciding if a career at sea is right for you; therefore it would be better for cadets to have even a few weeks' seetime experience before wasting months at college.'

'[Trainees should have] a shorter initial spell at college followed by a short sea phase. This means that those who find themselves unsuited to the career can change and don't waste so much time or the money of their training provider.'

'I feel each cadet should have the ability to take a trip onboard a ship shortly after starting their first phase at college. [This] would enable cadets to have a better understanding of all basic subjects taught in classes.'

Overall, 44% of respondents rated their onboard training as 'good', and the statistics also show that 75% have a positive view of the future. The training on P&O Ferries is singled out for praise, with the comment that 'the majority [of officers] are keen to pass on their knowledge and experience'. There are also positive mentions of the RFA ('a good employer'), Wilhelmsen ('sea training is good') and BP ('a caring company to work for'). And one trainee is surely not alone in taking a philosophical view, remarking: 'Like most cadets I've had both "good" and "bad" ships,' and concluding, 'There's no other job in the world I'd rather be doing — it's been fantastic so far.'

Any other business

In the comments section at the end of the survey, some issues were raised which did not relate directly to the questions asked. These are as follows

Taxes and benefits

It appears that confusion over whether an officer trainee is a student or a worker is exacerbating financial difficulties for some:

'During my first sea phase I kept my rented flat on and as a student I was entitled to council tax exemption. While at sea the council would not accept I was a student — the college maritime department would not confirm I was a student as they did not consider me a student while at sea either. I physically didn't earn enough to pay both rent/bills and council tax and had to get legal aid involved through my mother as I came close to having my bank account seized by debt collectors — and all because I needed a form signed saying I was a student by the college. I got it sorted out in the end with the help of the student association in the college. This doesn't affect many cadets as they live with parents/halls of residence. It would be nice to see cadets given the same 'automatic' exemption as student nurses who also do 'work experience' in regards to council tax. I would not like to see this happen to anyone else, especially while at sea where there is not much you can do and phone calls home become stressful.'

'I have spoken to various local government agencies about any benefits available to myself but they seem to make out that even though I will earn under £7000 this year no state benefits are available to me apart from a reduction in Council Tax. They also state that tax credits are available to persons earning under £190 per week but I do not qualify as I am a student. As a result of this I cannot see myself being able to complete my course without incurring massive debts and with no guaranteed employment at the completion of studies then it looks like a bleak future.'

'There is a difficulty in assessing if you are student or an employee of a company. Given that there is no guarantee of a job it may be more useful to look at cadets as students and make sure that we have access to relevant benefits such as council tax relief for the whole course and clarification on what funding is available from student award agencies.'

Provision for female cadets

In the section on uniform, one cadet pointed out that employers still sometimes expect female cadets to adjust male uniforms to fit. One respondent also calls for the following:

'Female products e.g. tampons, pads etc. [should be] stocked onboard instead of having to take 6 months' supplies onboard.'

Cadet Survey 2010 conclusions

There was a strong response to this survey, which was notable for the large number of comments by respondents. While it is perhaps only to be expected that the statistics would show a majority in favour of high standards at work and college, it is through the comments that we can see the trainees' thoughtful reasoning and their appreciation of the state of the industry. Conclusions – and the follow-up measures to be taken by Nautilus International – are grouped into two main categories below.

Pay and conditions

There is some good news. The majority of companies already seem to be providing certain financial or leave allowances that cadets wish to see in their sponsorship packages. The areas in which practice broadly seems to match expectations are:

- **payment of college and exam fees**
- **reimbursement of travel costs to and from college at the start and end of term**
- **payment of expenses for attending interviews**
- **covering the cost of medicals, discharge books etc.**

However, in other cases, the majority of respondents report that their employer is not providing a particular allowance that they would like to see as part of their sponsorship package. The areas where company practice does not live up to cadets' expectations are:

- **linking cadets' salaries to increases in officers' salaries**
- **monthly and annual leave allowances**
- **warlike operations area provisions equivalent to those of officers**
- **company severance procedures equivalent to those of officers**
- **leave for a family/medical problem**
- **accommodation and subsistence allowances for college training**
- **allowances for books and study materials**

- **uniform allowances**
- **personal effects insurance**

Follow-up to the survey

Nautilus considers it best practice for companies to provide all the above financial and leave allowances in their officer trainee sponsorship packages. These measures form the greater part of the terms and conditions of the Model Cadet Framework Agreement drafted by the Union in 2004. Given the strong support for this Agreement implied by the 2010 survey responses, Nautilus will be redoubling efforts to make it the industry standard – negotiating and lobbying both at company and government levels.

Nautilus will also be looking into the possibility of introducing the UK National Minimum Wage to the Agreement, as cadets showed support for this in the survey – but the Union will also investigate whether another way of defining minimum salary expectations would actually be more beneficial for trainees.

Education and training

The other main set of conclusions to be drawn from the survey concern trainees' experience of their training schemes and life at college. Trainees' opinions on these issues emerged very strongly from the comments section, and there appears to be a worrying level of dissatisfaction.

Many respondents stated boldly and eloquently that they wished to see a higher standard of college accommodation (particularly in terms of more up-to-date buildings and better food). A substantial number also called for a review of teaching standards, with better day-to-day organisation at the nautical colleges and more emphasis on practical training which will be of use during sea phases.

Perhaps most striking is the number of respondents wishing to see a review of at-sea training procedures, with better information and training to be provided for shipboard mentors and closer monitoring of shipboard

training by the nautical colleges and maritime authorities. It is also widely felt that the question should be addressed of whether it is truly possible to provide adequate shipboard training when no-one else onboard a vessel is a native speaker of the cadet's own language or has a familiarity with UK training systems and requirements. This issue was mentioned several times by respondents in connection with the training provided under the UK tonnage tax scheme, but it is something of importance to the industry as a whole.

Follow-up to the survey

It seems that the UK nautical colleges are overdue for investment in their staffing and facilities. Nautilus will be taking up this issue with individual colleges, with the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and with other relevant organisations and authorities. Cadets' comments about the balance between theory and practical training will be provided to the MNTB to feed into its regular curriculum reviews.

The issue of improving at-sea training procedures will also be tackled on a number of fronts by the Union, with the aim of delivering more structured and harmonised requirements for cadet training programmes, to give officer trainees an improved understanding of their duties and responsibilities, and to provide better information and training for shipboard mentors and closer monitoring of shipboard training by the nautical colleges and maritime authorities.

Nautilus will be initiating a debate in the industry about the 'native speaker' language question raised by trainees in the survey. The survey responses will also feed into the Union's ongoing campaign for the government to introduce a 'jobs link' to the UK tonnage tax scheme – i.e. an obligation for companies benefiting from the scheme to employ newly-qualified British officers in addition to training cadets. As well as addressing the known shortage of posts for UK junior officers, the jobs link would have the effect of increasing the number of British officers available as mentors on ships where British cadets are being trained.



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