

Cadet Survey 2019



Nautilus seeks to set 'best practice' standards for officer trainees' pay and conditions



Nautilus regularly undertakes a survey of cadet members to gather their views and learn about their experiences

Welcome

Nautilus has always placed training at the heart of its campaign activity. Every industry needs a healthy supply of new entrants if it is to survive and prosper, but British shipping has struggled for some time to invest sufficiently to recruit the numbers it needs for the future.

The Union has successfully fought to secure government support for maritime training (SMarT) and worked closely with the UK Chamber of Shipping to get agreement for the SMarT Plus scheme, which seeks to ensure that the annual intake of officer trainees reaches – or even exceeds – the 1,200 target that we are all keen to deliver.

However, recruitment is only part of the equation. The industry also needs to retain the bright, talented and committed personnel once they embark on their training courses.

To that end, Nautilus has regularly undertaken a survey of cadet members to gather their views and learn about their experiences. Companies cannot afford to lose high quality recruits by failing to meet their expectations or treating them poorly. Maritime employers need to involve cadets more, take account of their hopes and concerns and respect them as the young maritime professionals that they are.

I would like to thank all the young members who took part in this survey and shared their experiences with us. Nautilus will work hard to ensure that their voice is heard and that appropriate actions are taken to make sure that investment in the future of British maritime skills pays off for all concerned.



Mark Dickinson
General Secretary
Nautilus International

Contents



Introduction



Participants



Training, accommodation
pay & expenditure



Conclusions
& recommendations



Shetland cadets

‘the government’s own statistics suggest that officer numbers could decline by around one-third over the next decade unless recruitment rates increase.’



WMA officer cadet maritime safety training

Introduction

People are at the heart of any industry and shipping is no different – it needs a steady flow of new entrants to ensure not only safe and efficient operations at sea, but also for the continued sustainability of the shore-based maritime cluster of services and industries that rely on seagoing skills and experience.

In the UK, the need to increase cadet numbers has been highlighted in a succession of reports that identify the demographic challenge posed by the current British seafarer population. On current trends, the government’s own statistics suggest that officer numbers could decline by around one-third over the next decade unless recruitment rates increase.

Nautilus has therefore worked hard to lobby the government for improvements to the Support for Maritime Training (SMaT) scheme to assist owners with the cost of cadets. The Union continues to seek improvements to the tonnage tax regime, to strengthen the training and employment requirements for companies benefiting from the scheme.

Nautilus continues to work closely with shipping companies to encourage cadet training and to emphasise the benefits of investing in a new generation of maritime professionals.

Studies show that there are clear commercial benefits to be gained from officer training programmes – it is less costly to recruit and train young officers over the longer term than to recruit experienced officers, and staff turnover tends to be lower as people who have trained with a business are more likely to stay with that business if given the opportunity to do so. Cadet training schemes can boost performance and productivity, with companies being able to ensure their young officers are imbued with good work practices and that potential high-fliers are identified at an early stage.

Sadly, for several decades now, the annual UK cadet intake has fallen well below the levels that have been identified as necessary for the future sustainability of the UK maritime cluster.

It should therefore make sense for companies to nurture cadets in a way that encourages their retention and progression to officer status and beyond.

Nautilus seeks to ensure that its cadet members receive the training and treatment they deserve as the maritime professionals of the future.

The Union is a core constituent part of the Merchant Navy Training Board, which has the responsibility for setting and approving the education and training frameworks for new entrants and also works closely with the companies that do sponsor cadets. Nautilus has an excellent working relationship with the UK nautical training colleges and undertakes regular visits to members attending maritime education and training facilities.

As part of our work to support UK cadet training, Nautilus undertakes a regular survey of officer trainees. Reports based on the findings of past surveys, in 2004 and 2010, have underpinned the Union’s policies and have led to such initiatives as the creation of the Nautilus Young Maritime Professionals’ Forum and a Model Cadet Framework Agreement, which set ‘best practice’ standards for officer trainees’ pay and conditions.

UK cadet intake has fallen well below the levels that have been identified as necessary for the future sustainability of the UK maritime cluster

In the latter part of 2018 and the first month of 2019, Nautilus conducted the third in this series of surveys. The results enable us to track the views and experiences of cadet members over time and to identify particular problems or trends.

The core questions in the survey have remained constant, to enable valid comparisons to be made, but others have been expanded or added to gather a deeper understanding of some of the factors which affect cadets’ perceptions of their career choice and, in turn, influence retention rates.

As with previous surveys, this latest exercise sought to gather cadets’ opinions on particular issues or measures which might affect their training. It also gave participants the opportunity to write more about their views on any aspect of their training experience.

To protect the anonymity of the participants, most references to particular companies or colleges have been removed from the comments published in this report. However, where problematic issues relating to certain organisations or companies were reported, Nautilus will raise the concerns directly with those bodies.

Participants



A total of **250 cadets** took part in the **2018-2019 survey, compared with 254 in the 2010 survey, and which represents around 14% of those currently in training. All phases of the cadet training programmes were included within the responses.**

Participants were studying at all the main maritime colleges in the British Isles, with an unsurprising concentration among the 'big four' of Blackpool & the Fylde College (Fleetwood Nautical Campus), City of Glasgow College, Tyne Coast College (South Shields Marine School) and Southampton Solent University (Warsash Maritime Academy) and also included the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI), Plymouth University and John Moores University in Liverpool.

Cadets were engaged with a wide range of training providers, including schemes run by individual operators such as Maersk, Shell, BP Maritime Services, Carnival UK/Princess Cruises, James Fisher, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Carisbrooke, Vroon Offshore, Boston Putford, Pritchard-Gordon Tankers, and North Star Shipping. Others were training through programmes organised by industry bodies such as Trinity House and the Maritime Education Foundation, or agencies such as Anglo-Eastern UK, Clyde Marine, Chiltern, V.Ships, Viking Recruitment or SSTG.

The cadets reported a remarkably diverse range of employing/sponsoring companies which included Carnival UK, Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Zodiac Maritime, Bibby, BP, Britannia Aggregates, Chevron Shipping, OOCL, P&O Ferries, Northern Marine, the RFA, Maersk Line, Disney Cruises, Seatruck Ferries, Global Marine Systems, GulfMark UK, Solstad/Farstad, Wilhelmsen/Royal Caribbean, Serco/PNTL, Serco/Northlink Ferries, Subsea 7, Norbulk Shipping, Evergreen Marine UK, Lomar Shipping, Eastern Pacific Shipping (UK), Cosco UK, Gardline, RB Shipping, Euro Maritime Chartering and Union Maritime.

Cadets ranged in age from 17 to 53, with the overwhelming majority aged between 19 and 23. A significant number had worked in other jobs before taking up their cadetship, with previous employment including accountancy, avionics, banking, catering, commodity trading, project engineering, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, electrical engineering, plumbing, telecommunications,

leisure management, retail/sales, the armed forces, the police, construction and offshore geophysics. A considerable number had previous maritime experience, including work as a rating, onboard catering, watersports, workboats, port services, sailing and superyacht crewing, and in various roles working on ferries and cruiseships, including as a photographer, entertainer, steward and nursing officer.

Why had they chosen a seagoing career?

A total of **241 participants** answered the question and the most common responses were:

- ▶ Travel/seeing the world
- ▶ Structured career path/career progression opportunities
- ▶ Friends/family at sea
- ▶ Variety of work: not a 9-to-5 desk job
- ▶ Good pay/tax-free salaries
- ▶ Love of the sea/engineering
- ▶ No tuition fees
- ▶ Leave periods
- ▶ Challenging/interesting work
- ▶ Quality of training
- ▶ Engineering experience

Are you pleased with your choice?



Behind the yes/no answers, many cadets offered additional observations.

Some of the most frequently raised points were:

- ▶ Concern over competition from low-cost labour supply countries
- ▶ Lack of guaranteed employment after gaining OOW certification as a 'tonnage tax' cadet
- ▶ Uncertainties arising from Brexit
- ▶ Positive long-term prospects in the wider maritime industry

Quotes

'Yes but apprehensive due to the overwhelming shift in the shipping industry away from British seafarers in favour of cheaper seafarers.'

'No. The market has gone down the drains. Due to the increasing market competition, cut-throat business models and oversupply of seafarers in India has caused massive disruption for employees. I am really hoping BIMCO predictions of market settling in the latter half of 2020 to come true. If not, I'll be forced to step out of the industry ending the family tradition.'

'No, I am very nervous about future employment opportunities and feel as though I was mis-sold a career. I now feel that I may have wasted three years of my life chasing a job that does not exist, it's a horrible gamble to have to take and is very demoralising.'

'In between – worried about automation and the reluctance to use British officers.'

'Optimistic but mainly because I have to be. The issue regarding employment of British officers with foreign companies is a worry most of my colleagues share. However, it is only the initial finding of a post-cadetship job that has me worried. I am undoubtedly optimistic for career prospects beyond that.'

'Once I get a few trips in my discharge book then yes, but I know getting those first few could be a real struggle.'

'With my current employer I do not feel optimistic. However, I will acquire several dangerous cargo endorsements which I feel will give me better employment opportunities with other tanker companies.'

'Recently looking at job opportunities for 3rd Officer, I am less optimistic than when I first started my cadetship. I realise the competition from other nationalities and my lack of experience make it more difficult.'

'Unknown, I've been waiting for 1 month now since completing my EOW Certificate struggling to find work.'

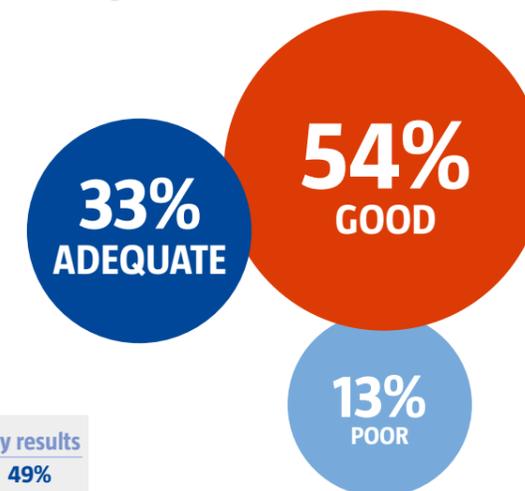
'Yes, I have job security, a structured career, foreign travel and a good income.'

Are you optimistic about your future career prospects?



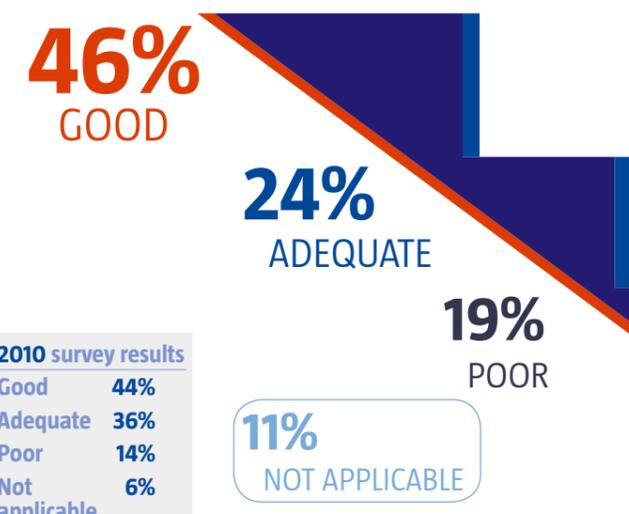
2010 survey results	
Yes	75%
No	18%
Don't know	7%

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



2010 survey results	
Good	49%
Adequate	37%
Poor	13%

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



2010 survey results	
Good	44%
Adequate	36%
Poor	14%
Not applicable	6%

Have you had any problems with your Training Record Book?

If so, please give some details.

A total of **221 participants** responded to this question, of which **54%** reported problems or issues with their Training Record Books.

The most common difficulties reported were:

- ▶ Unsupportive/disinterested officers
- ▶ Lack of clarity in the instructions for tasks and reports – in particular with the navigation and operations workbook
- ▶ Language/comprehension problems involving foreign officers
- ▶ Certain tasks not suitable for certain ships
- ▶ Some outdated/irrelevant tasks
- ▶ Lack of clarity over the standards to be achieved
- ▶ Time pressures in completing tasks and securing signatures

What is your monthly wage?

The two previous cadet surveys uncovered considerable disquiet about the low level of pay and the considerable variations in pay and conditions between cadets employed by different companies. This survey was no different, and a number of cadets complained about being paid less than the National Minimum Wage.

Notably, the results show that cadets' pay rates have not increased significantly since the 2010 survey, while their accommodation and living expenses have risen substantially over the same period.

Monthly pay rates varied between £450 and £1,800.

Four cadets said they were not being paid and three reported that they were paid £450 or £500 a month, but only at sea.

A significant proportion of the cadets were paid between £600 to £762 a month while at college and between £400 to £514 a month while at sea. One cadet was paid £1,500 a month at college and £1,250 a month at sea.

Three cadets reported that they were paid £600 a month plus an accommodation allowance.

Do you think there should be a standard pay rate for cadets?



Do you think cadets' pay should be increased annually in line with average increases for officers?



2010 survey results

Yes 75% No 13% Don't know 12%

In 2004, **78%** of cadets said they believed cadets' salaries should be linked to the increases awarded to other officers employed by their companies.

Are you paying for your accommodation at college – if so, how much per month?

▶ £400-500	85
▶ None/not applicable	49
▶ £300-400	46
▶ £500-600	29
▶ £200-300	8
▶ £600-700	5
▶ £700-800	4

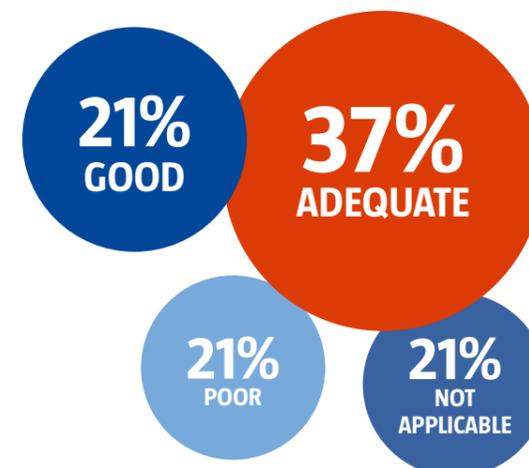
Past surveys have also show wide variations in the rates being paid for accommodation, and four cadets reported separately that they were sharing homes and rooms at rates between £198 to £260 per month.

A number of cadets complained that they were left with very little money when, for example, they were paying £500 per month out of a total monthly income of £700.

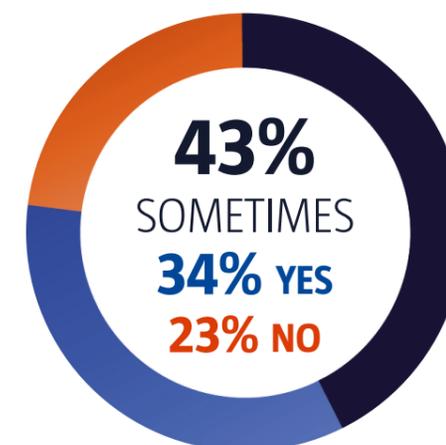
Does your company pay anything towards your accommodation costs?

- ▶ The vast majority of cadets said their company paid nothing at all, or that accommodation formed part of their monthly allowance.
- ▶ Nine cadets said their company paid the first month's accommodation fees during their first phase.
- ▶ Sixteen cadets said they were paid accommodation allowances of up to £390 a month, or full costs covered.

How would you rate the quality of your accommodation at college?



Do you struggle to cope financially?



Do you receive any form of subsistence or allowance from your company to cover the costs of food and incidental expenditure at college?

(If yes, please give details)

The vast majority of cadets received no additional allowances above their standing training allowances. A total of 33 reported that their company covers travel costs at the start and end of phases and for holidays. Six cadets said they received various forms of uniform allowance and 10 reported receiving allowances for medicals, vaccinations and visas. Five cadets said they received allowances for stationery and books, one was bought a laptop by the employer, and two said they could claim expenses with a direct link to their training.

Does your company cover the costs of exams and college fees?



Do you have a designated Training Officer?

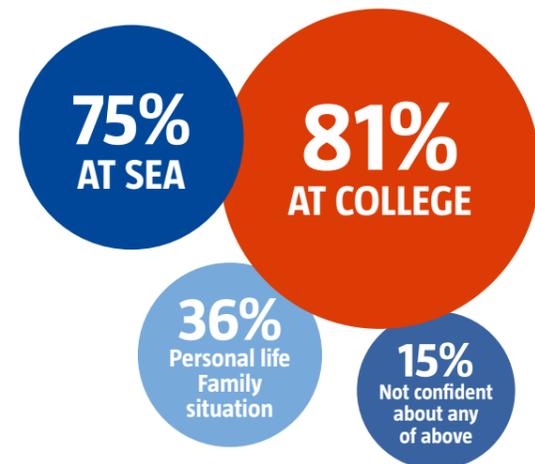


Do you know who s/he is?



This section attracted a diverse range of more than 150 replies – some very positive and some very negative. Many of the negative complaints related to a perception that their company did not care for them, or was not interested in their welfare or progress. There were repeated concerns over the gap between the company and the training provider and infrequent contact from their training provider.

Are you confident you can approach and discuss your training officer in relation to any difficulties experienced:



Do you feel your Training Provider and/or company has your best interests at heart and are actively supporting you in obtaining the skills and experience needed to kickstart your career at sea?



If you do not feel your Training Provider and/or company has your best interests at heart, what more do you think they could do to support you?

A considerable number of cadets said their companies had not responded to complaints or concerns that had been raised, the stress of sea phases not being organised well in advance.

Many cadets expressed their concern about the uncertain employment prospects post-qualification, and there were suggestions that companies should provide support and advice on finding work or offer additional sea time as an OOW at the end of the cadetship.

Some of the Typical comments are given below:

‘Cadets are taken on to save companies money on tax mostly. Being taught is the secondary concern for them, this has to change! Far too many cadets are taken on at any one time and classes drastically drop in numbers through the course... As for my company, the very first meeting I had with them I was informed that I would categorically not be getting taken on with them, what a terrible message to send to someone trying to get into the industry.’

‘It feels to me like my sponsor company are only taking on cadets to get a reduction in tax and grants from the government. Since beginning my cadetship I have had zero communication from the actual sponsor company. I have no say over how my sea time will be accrued or the type of vessel which it will be served on. My training officer has said he has spoken to them on my behalf although I am kept out of the loop with this, only being passed along messages so cannot say whether my best interests are being looked after. I’d like to see lines of communication opened as this would make me feel more valued and not just like a number to them.’

‘When I first started my cadetship and realised I was the only female on my course it was difficult to fit in at first... I told my training officer I was concerned because if I were to be the only female on as ship it would get very lonely and other reasons relating to them not having seen a girl in a while, to put it nicely. I was told [the company] was used to having girls onboard and would treat me just like another engineer... However, I feel there should have been some sort of talk or guidance on what to do with men like this (not to stereotype as some of the crew were genuinely nice). When I joined my ship, not surprisingly I was the only female onboard and some of the men were not very nice and inappropriate. I did not feel like an engineer most of the time just an entertainment piece and I will quote an officer who said ‘I don’t want you to go home because there will be no more entertainment and it will be boring’. I know this isn’t my training officers’ fault, however I feel there should be some organisation to lessen the amount of female cadets and female officers onboard alone because it made my time onboard harder than it should have been.’

‘Whilst the £480p/m can be just about acceptable at sea where day to day costs are much lower, this is unbearable when waiting at home for a ship. This is because rent or digs money must be paid when at home, and for some people rental agreements must even be paid all year round resulting in severe financial struggle. I believe a minimum of £700 per month is required to actually survive and this should be paid all year round, or at the very least, paid until the cadet has been placed on a ship. Even £700 is very low with today’s inflated prices; this figure has remained unchanged for almost 15 years if what I have heard is correct.’

‘Training companies should also standardise their expectations of the training to be given on board, and of the level of work required by cadets in regard to TRB tasks. I observed wildly differing expectations and attitudes between the different officers I worked with onboard and found there was little consistency.’

‘I feel they have had my interests at heart, however I believe there could be more of a support network there in cases where cadets feel like they are not getting the training required. Sometimes it feels like the blame is passed when working for third party training providers.’

‘Be more sympathetic. Problems at home led to depression. I went home to be with family, college defended me and said it was OK to have some time off especially because we had completed most work. XXXXX made me come back on train (6hrs) immediately, threatening termination. Overall very bad experience for mental health.’

‘The merchant navy used to be a good supporting organisation in regards to food and accommodation being paid whilst training. Now in the current economy I have gained a debt of £6,700 in 10 months of training due to no accommodation/food help and I’m really struggling financially at sea on £500 a month. Wages need to be increased in the current economy.’



Sea cadets warsash spark solent ssu Credit: Paul Watts/PBWPIX

Positive comments included:

‘My college has done things beyond appreciation. They had extra lectures for us to really understand subjects and they never failed to take another step to help us.’

‘I haven’t had any issues yet. They have been really helpful and I hope that they keep this up throughout my cadetship.’

Are there any other comments or concerns that you would like to raise with us?

Answered: 188

A large proportion of the comments concerned the inadequacy of pay rates, with many cadets questioning the rationale for reducing pay while at sea. Several cadets said their pay should be aligned with that given to other apprentices.

There were a number of comments calling for better support for female cadets, and several cadets complained about racism, homophobia and sexism that they had encountered onboard ships.

There were a significant number of negative comments about the quality of training at college, large class sizes, disorganisation, and complaints about the lack of adequate preparation for the first seagoing phases.



Maersk Crewing Cadets 2012

'At the age of 23, living off around £100 pounds a month is not doable. When you take into account of the bills which I have to pay such as my phone, I am left with £100 to cover the costs of food, transport, laundry etc for the month. I have savings before I started however I do not see myself having any savings left for next phase which is a worry.'

'My average monthly wage minus the cost of accommodation and my phone bill leaves me with a daily budget of £4.30. It's absolutely disgraceful.'

'The Filipinos onboard were shocked to see how little I was paid. They told me Filipino cadets get \$500 a month. They were genuinely upset and wanted me to work as an OS for my year's seatime. If Filipinos are shocked something is very wrong. It is also very upsetting that they pay more in airfare than for my work for the phase!'

'On a financial level, I do believe that the pay is too low. With [my company], cadets from other countries (Sweden, Argentina) are receiving free schooling in their home country and then coming to sea as a cadet and earning four times the salary of myself. I appreciate that tuition costs are high in the UK, and the costs incurred would be significantly greater if studying a standard university degree, but I do believe that pay for cadets is something that does need attention.'

“Quotes”

'It is very difficult to live off the cadet wage, as accommodation costs often up to 70% of the salary, leaving very little to live on. With the intensity of the college phases making it unpractical to take up a part time job, extra money is usually found taking a loan, such as from the student loan company. This forces cadets into unnecessary debt before they qualify and find employment in the industry.'

'The wage provided to the cadets is far too low in order to cover costs. During the first phase it is mandatory that cadets stay within the halls of residence. Now the cost of this is £560 to the cadet and when you're on a wage of only £750/month it's barely manageable. Many a time I seen cadets calling home for more money. This should not be the case as you may have cadets with poorer backgrounds which would mean they would not be able to manage to complete a cadetship under the pay being given.'

'The pay is a very serious issue. On the ship, you are working for £2.70 an hour. This is very un-motivating when you know the officers are getting £30K plus a year tax free.'

'For older cadets with other outgoings (car insurance/houses) it's very difficult and am normally overdrawn by the end of every month-even with very careful money planning. The training is great, although college can sometimes feel a bit "sausage factory" with quantity not quality feeling a priority.'

'The industry is a joke. Colleges are full of the 'top tier' cadets from Cunard, BP, Shell and so on who get more money and accommodation paid for. This to me isn't fair but then again, life isn't. I personally work as hard if not harder at sea than AB's and certainly some officers so how can it be right that at 16 my girlfriend's brother got twice my 'salary'? Cadets should earn at least £1,000 a month and have accommodation paid for.'

'During a lot of my time at sea I felt pretty isolated being the only cadet on the boat for a lot of the time on the vessels where English wasn't the engine crew's first language. This then takes a while to get used to especially being 18/19 at the time. Also I don't think I was fully prepared for my first sea phase as I hadn't went over many basics about the systems in college meaning more explanation or self research was required at sea where engineers on the cruise ship often seemed annoyed to continuously having to explain systems to me, or when internet struggled to load.'

'There seems to be little to no communication between colleges / companies / training providers. There is very little guidance regarding how to compile your navigation workbook or reports, with both colleges and companies seemingly assuming that the other will take you through that.'

'My college experience was rather poor, I admit first and third phase were a good experience and I felt the college wanted to help. My final phase arguably the most important was very poor. I regularly had classes cancelled lecturers not turn up, lecturers seemed uninterested and unwilling to help. the college organised classes appallingly and the classes offered very little benefit. Once I finished college I was waiting four months to get a date to sit my orals and I sent my NOE of as soon as I got my TRB from my training provider back in May. I felt very unprepared with the preparation the college gave us let alone waiting so much time.'

'A more personal approach to the cadetship will always be appreciated, which is understandably difficult with the number of cadets increasing every year. However a system in which a cadet is able to raise concerns with the company, such as this survey which can be anonymously answered, would very well received I reckon. This would help to reduce the felling of lonesomeness and powerless sometimes felt by cadets.'

'[A] structured training program onboard would be useful, incentivise the training of cadets by giving officers who are willing to train cadets an extra monetary bonus perhaps. Some officers were helpful and yet on some trips I was left to my own devices and was offered no guidance, generally feeling like I was just cheap labour.'

'Currently seeking work as an OOW and have been for two months. Have kept a record of all my applications and enquiries which now number over 400. Out of all of this I have had only one interview. Additionally, I frequently telephone agencies asking if they have any work, but all come back politely, saying nothing appropriate... I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the MN, my training has been superb, and I have never been mistreated and been well looked after by everyone involved. The money wasn't much, and at times it was hard to get by, but I appreciate it's better than being in £30k debt like my university contemporaries. Yet here's the crux – I'm graduated, highly competent, and unemployed. And soon I will run out of money. What am I to do?'



Cadets Glasgow college jobs fair



RFA cadets

Conclusions & Recommendations

This is the third survey of its kind and once again has attracted a strong and thoughtful response from officer trainees. Many themes have remained constant across all three surveys over the past 15 years. As NUMAST stated in its first survey, skilled and experienced ships' officers are a scarce and increasingly valuable resource, and it is therefore important that the industry attracts people of the right calibre for the future and makes sure its investment in training cadets is backed up with policies that cut waste to the minimum.

The findings show that cadets are very realistic about the state of the industry they are entering into. However, there are high levels of uncertainty about post-qualification job prospects and this illustrates the importance of government policy measures to improve the tonnage tax training requirements to ensure that officer trainees have the opportunity for continuing employment to the level at which their certification provides them with international opportunities.

The survey also starkly shows the wide variations in the standards of training experienced by officer trainees. Coupled with the considerable differences in the pay and conditions provided to cadets, this has a damaging impact on morale and motivation at an early stage. It is clear that severe pressures on cadet pay rates have increased the financial pressures that many of them face during training and there continues to be a strong need for the sort of model cadet framework agreement proposed by NUMAST in 2004, with national-level minimum terms and conditions covering such points as: salaries; annual increments; accommodation; subsistence; college and exam fees; travel; interview expenses; uniforms; cost of medicals; discharge books, visas, etc; books and study materials.

Financial

Between 2008 and 2018 the RPI (Inflation Index) has increased significantly by 73%, with the payments made to officer trainees remaining flat over the same period. Significant numbers of officer trainees are consequently having to live and support themselves on significantly less money, in real terms, than previous cadets.

With the implementation of SMaRT Plus and continuation of SMaRT Tier 1, companies are given increasing incentives to train and retain cadets whilst seemingly being ignorant of the very real need to provide sufficient financial support to enable cadets to study without undue concerns over their financial wellbeing, having to seek additional employment or needing to rely on parental largess.

The maritime industry should be seeking to enhance demographic proportionality and to train cadets that are more representative of the UK population. However, the failure to provide adequate financial support for officer trainees disproportionately impacts already under-represented groups.

Those without the ability to rely on parental subsidy struggle to support themselves in training. Incidents of short-term homelessness (between vessel assignments) malnutrition, and the need to obtain external secondary engagement to earn

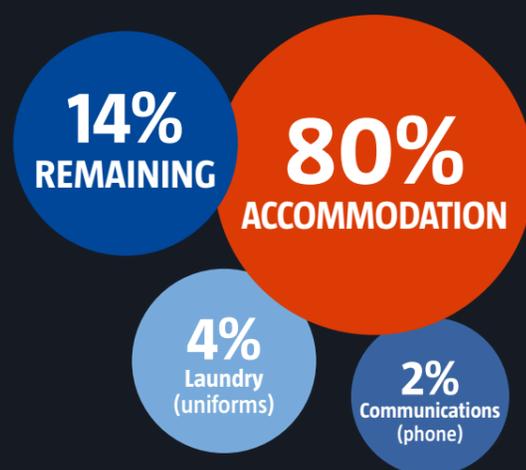
money are becoming more commonplace. This is exacerbated by the way in which some training providers discriminate on payment amounts based upon college or sea phase of training.

With many sponsors and training providers mandating ability to make contact with their officer trainees, a mobile phone is considered to be essential to the training of cadets. It allows for communications to be received between cadets, college, companies and training providers and is the primary means of communication for dissemination of joining instructions, D&A testing, timetable changes, and much more. A reasonably modern smartphone is required. It is a necessity as opposed to a luxury and eats into the minimal surplus cadets have available for discretionary training. With a reasonable sim-only package costing £10, and one with a basic smartphone being closer to £20 pcm, this expense is a necessary burden for all cadets.

Many officer trainees also cite other expenses involved in college training and sea phase training, such as exorbitant laundry fees (in some halls of accommodation, this can be as much as £8.00 for a wash and dry cycle per load of laundry. Over a month between £30 and £60 alone could be spent on merely keeping uniform clean).

A college sponsorship payment of £700 pcm would break down as follows in meeting necessary expenditure:

Cadet Cost Breakdown



This leaves 14% in which to feed, clothe, entertain, socialise, and transport themselves whilst in a college phase. A stark reality that many cannot afford to do, unless depending on secondary income through other work (often not permitted under training agreements and certainly not recommended on such an intensive scheme of study) or through reliance on family support.

However, the starkest contrast comes when considering employment levels compared with apprentices in the maritime sector.

Some cadets will only receive £120 per week during their sea phase. An apprentice will earn the same amount in a little under 32.5 hours of work. Based upon the apprentice minimum wage regulations, a cadet working eight hours a day for six days a week (a highly favourable view of the working conditions that the bulk of UK cadets face) would be performing 48 hours of duty in a week. This is indicative that cadets, to be on the same income as other trainees, should be achieving more than £177 per week during a sea training phase. This does not reflect the additional responsibility, conduct or knowledge that a cadet is expected to have, now is it sustainable for good moral and cadet recruitment when a job with less responsibility will pay significantly more.

Financial recommendations

Students in the UK minimally require an average of £210 per week or around £11,000 per annum to sustain themselves whilst engaged in studies. This is based on a survey of students and different geographical areas have different requirements.

With current cadet training payments averaging around £8,147 per annum over 36 months of training, an average increase in sponsorship payments to cadets of more than 27% would be required to cover minimum costs. For reference inflation of the last decade is equal to c.34%.

Educational conclusions

The survey revealed a mixed bag in respect to educational issues and identified room for improvement and some examples of best practice. Whilst recognising funding constraints with educational centres, it is essential that colleges offer the opportunity for feedback from the cadets they train and share this to identify issues or possible future issues.

Significant numbers of cadets feel that the quality of their training is good. However, a concerning number feel there is room for improvement and it is essential to engage to encourage honest feedback and improvement where the opportunity exists.

Halls of accommodation are worryingly expensive and additional extras (such as laundry) seemingly overpriced for the value represented.

Educational recommendations (colleges)

Work with the cadet training centres to improve engagement by cadets through class representatives and open feedback forums where constructive criticism can be provided a fed through the correct scheme.

Identify issues as early as possible and seek resolution before frustration compounds issues to escalation.

Ensure halls of accommodation offer best value for cadets and that costs for ancillaries and extras are fair and reasonable based upon the level of service provision.

Educational conclusions (sea)

Numerous cadets experiencing issues with at sea training highlight difficulties in the current scheme with respect to the standards and quality and sheer variation of on-ship training. Unfortunately, not all officers are encouraging, supportive or understanding of cadet training and this is demonstrated by the often patchy and unpredictable experiences our members have shared with us within this survey.

There is significant room for improvement, with some examples highlighting a cause for concern in relation to the very suitability of some ships to deliver appropriate training for a UK cadet, as the base knowledge of crew onboard does not necessarily represent that required by the MNTB or MCA under the approved scheme of training.

Notwithstanding, the isolation experienced by cadets during the sea phase should be investigated to ensure that the welfare of our trainee seafarers is being kept of paramount importance. It is apparent, from some submissions, that cadets believe they are onboard as cheap labour and are worked to the limit of MLC 2006 (and on occasion beyond).

Unfortunately, some cadets have no seagoing experience during their first sea phase (Phase 2 of training) and this must be addressed, as it is not conducive to their continuing education in phase 3 and can again lead to financial and social hardships should the cadet affected not be able to rely upon family support.

Educational recommendations (sea)

The establishment of a UK cadet training ship with sufficient berth space and a possible incentive of enhanced seatime should improve consistency and training experience for officer trainees.

Many institutions around the world operate such training ships and these enable high quality maritime education to be provided to all cadets without discrimination based upon the quality of the officers allocated to the vessel in which the cadet is assigned. By investing in the future of its maritime sector in such a way, the UK would show an enhanced commitment to quality training and to returning actual investment to the UK taxpayer as opposed to the shareholder of the organisations currently part of the scheme.

Development of an approved DSTO scheme through the MNTB could be explored, a scheme that could be provided electronically to allow for frequent refresher training and ensures reasonable knowledge of all requirements that a UK cadet must complete prior to being eligible for MCA examination.



Engineering cadet in workshop

Cadet Survey 2019



Nautilus seeks to set 'best practice' standards for officer trainees' pay and conditions

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