

## **MEF Officer Training Good Practice Guidelines**

The Maritime Educational Foundation (MEF) aims for its trainees to receive an exemplary training programme and experience, as managed through contracted training companies, and seeks to become known as a Centre of Excellence for Officer Training.

The MEF may use a variety of contracted training management companies to facilitate its strategy of training a specified number of officer trainees each year.

This paper sets out the good practice features and guidelines that the MEF expects to ensure a fair and consistent approach for MEF trainees.

### **1. Recruitment**

- 1.1 A suitable recruitment process, with objective selection criteria, should identify why the prospective trainee feels the Merchant Navy is an appropriate career choice for her/him.
- 1.2 Recruitment from under-represented groups (i.e. females and those from ethnic minorities) should be actively engaged in, with the aim of increasing the numbers of quality applicants from these sources.
- 1.3 Each trainee will be issued with an MLC-compliant training agreement that must be fully explained to the trainee before it is signed. In principle, no fees will be charged to individual trainees who do not complete the programme, unless discussed and agreed with the MEF.
- 1.4 An agreed training allowance should commence as of the first day of arrival at college/university OR the first day of arrival on the MEF induction course, whichever is first.
- 1.5 The first month's accommodation fees should be paid in advance, on behalf of the trainee, and separate from the training allowance.
- 1.6 Each trainee is to be issued with a standardised MEF branded jacket, jumper and tie.
- 1.7 With regard to on-board uniform requirements, these will be identified with each trainee at the end of phase 1 and before the commencement of the first sea phase. The most cost-effective means of uniform procurement will be undertaken, to ensure that the costs are fully covered for each trainee. This process will be repeated if required, to assist with the upkeep of uniform at the end of phase 3 training.
- 1.8 The MEF shall be provided with a breakdown of trainees recruited as soon as practicable once recruitment is complete. This will include, as a minimum, college/university, discipline, programme, age group, gender, ethnic category, and contact details.

### **2. Induction course**

- 2.1 It is expected that all newly recruited officer trainees will attend a three day MEF induction course run at the Outward Bound Centre in Eskdale, Cumbria. Prospective candidates should be made aware of this at the recruitment stage and attendance included as part of an offer of MEF sponsorship. Training Agreements must be signed by both parties and be fully in place prior to the induction course. The training allowance will commence from the first day of the induction course, or the first day of college, whichever is first. The course will normally be held in the last week of August for the autumn intake and the second week of January for the spring intake, with course dates being provided to all concerned as soon as they are available.
- 2.2 It is expected that the training management company will meet their contracted numbers for attendance on this course, and where contacted numbers are not met any Outward Bound Course costs arising from unfilled places will be recouped from the relevant training company. Where a list for the contracted number of officer trainees is supplied to the MEF one month before the start of the Outward Bound

Course, then the costs of a candidate dropping out after this point will not be recuperated from the relevant training company. This recognises the risk for the training company of prospective trainees failing exams, medicals or having a last minute change of heart, although the identification of reserve, or contingency, candidates should also be considered.

### **3. The training placement – college/university phases**

- 3.1 The most appropriate college/university and course programme for each trainee should be identified based on the prospective trainee's preferences, home location, place/programme availability and taking into account the MNTB's Key Features of Merchant Navy Education and Training programmes (see Appendix 1). NB – it is expected that trainees will be placed on FD/SPD or HND programmes and not HNC only programmes.
- 3.2 It is required that a memorandum of understanding be in place between the training management company and each college/university at which MEF trainees are placed, clearly identifying the responsibilities of each throughout the programme, and that this is updated with each establishment on an annual basis.
- 3.3 Company and programme induction is to be undertaken as soon as is practicable following commencement at college/university – i.e. ideally within the first week. This will include, as a minimum, the MEF and what it is, details of the programme the trainee is on and the phasing arrangements covering the full period of training, details of the trainee's allocated Company Training Officer (CTO) and how to contact her/him, how often the trainee will be visited in college/university, and the company complaints procedure.
- 3.4 It is required that the CTO will visit the trainee at least once each term to monitor trainee progress, including receiving a progress report about the trainee from the college/ university named programme manager/liaison person.
- 3.5 Issues that may affect the potential completion of the programme should be identified as soon as possible and appropriate solutions determined at the earliest opportunity and dealt with according to usual procedures. Any specific issues and queries that cannot be dealt with as a matter of routine are to be reported and discussed with the MEF Director at the earliest opportunity. This should include possible solutions and options such as providing additional academic or pastoral tutorial support, transferring the trainee to a less arduous programme, etc. If such measures might incur additional expense this will be considered by the MEF on a fair and consistent basis and a response will be provided as soon as possible.
- 3.6 Where it is necessary for a trainee to re-sit any examination or STCW short course that incurs an additional cost, it is expected that the trainee will cover the cost, unless the CTO identifies extenuating circumstances and an appropriate course of action with the MEF Director – e.g. for the MEF to pay half/full cost. However, the full cost of one MCA oral examinations re-sit may be considered on a case-by-case basis, in agreement with the MEF Director.
- 3.7 It is expected that drug and alcohol testing will be undertaken on an ad hoc basis when required by the shipping company providing a trainee berth. Trainees will be informed that failure of a drug or alcohol test may/will lead to removal from the vessel and may lead to the complete termination of sponsorship. Any such incident arising will be reported to the MEF Director with a recommendation as to the appropriate action to be taken. The MEF will agree the final outcome.

### **4. The training placement – sea phases**

- 4.1 All reasonable efforts will be made to place the trainee in the sector and type of vessel for which they have identified a preference, although it will be made clear to the trainee that this will not always be possible.

- 4.2 It is expected that sea phase placements will normally be provided within three weeks of the start of the sea phase, and will be in line with the MNTB guidelines for 'Planned Training at Sea'. The importance of placing the trainee on the most suitable vessel is recognised, and if this should result in a wait of more than three weeks, the extended time frame should be communicated to the trainee and, where practicable, directed study or office visits should be arranged to keep knowledge and enthusiasm fresh. It is also expected that the date of joining the ship will be provided to the trainee with a minimum of one week's notice, although it is recognised that this is not always possible, in which case, trainees will be kept informed on a weekly basis of the expected joining date.
- 4.3 It is expected that a reasonable amount of additional sea time, e.g. up to three months above the statutory minimum for deck officer trainees be incorporated into all programmes for MEF officer trainees, in line with MNTB best practice guidelines. This will provide the opportunity for trainees nearing the end of their sea time to gain greater experience understudying the officer of the watch and so be more 'watch ready' when taking up their first junior officer position.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding this expectation, trainee welfare as well as training needs must be considered when allocating the length of an individual trip. It is not expected that any MEF officer trainee trip length exceed circa 4-5 months.
- 4.4 It expected that first trip trainees are placed on-board with at least one other UK officer trainee.
- 4.5 It is required that trainees be provided with a sea phase briefing, including ship joining information, sea phase expectations and full TRB briefing prior to commencement of the first sea phase (ideally during the preceding week). This will include a copy of the programme being undertaken and phase/content details, for inclusion within the TRB, plus details of the TRB tasks to be completed during the phase.
- 4.6 It is expected that trainees be provided with details of the Designated Shipboard Training Officer prior to the trainee joining the ship. This will include the DSTO's name, rank/job title, how to make contact once on board and the name of the ship's Captain and Chief Engineer.
- 4.7 The CTO will provide information regarding DSTO liaison and organisation of the sea phase, i.e. weekly discussion regarding general on-board support and completion of TRB tasks, and monthly reviews of progress by the DSTO and Master/Chief Engineer.
- 4.8 It is required that the CTO and DSTO will endeavour to provide a suitable on-board mentor for trainees, who will support, encourage and provide a 'listening ear' and appropriate guidance/counsel with regard to issues and problems that may be encountered at any time during the sea phase.
- 4.9 It is required that trainees be provided with details of the complaints procedure to be adopted whilst on board. This will include contact details for the CTO and information regarding CTO and trainee contact during the sea phase should this be required.
- 4.10 With regard to all trainees on programmes that have a work-based element (FD/SPD and some HNC/HND programmes) it is required that CTOs liaise with relevant personnel in the college/university to discuss and agree the type and nature of the work-based activity – which should be relevant to the ship type on which the trainee will be placed - and inform the DSTO accordingly prior to the trainee arriving on board.
- 4.11 Communication between the CTO and DSTO is expected so any issues that may affect the trainee's potential completion of the programme can be identified at the earliest opportunity and dealt with according to usual procedures. Any specific issues and queries that cannot be dealt with as a matter of routine are to be reported and discussed with the MEF Director at the earliest opportunity. This should include possible solutions and options such as an on-board mentor, pairing with another trainee, transferring the trainee to a different vessel, additional sea-time etc. If such

measures might incur additional expense, this will be considered by the MEF on a fair and consistent basis and a response provided as soon as possible.

- 4.12 Following sea voyages, it is required that trainees receive an appropriate de-brief within two weeks of the voyage ending and check of the TRB where possible, to ensure everything is on track. Concerns or issues arising from the voyage will be dealt with at this stage and the MEF Director informed of any outstanding issues or where any decisions need to be determined.

## **5. General**

- 5.1 The training management company must ensure that MEF trainees are appropriately insured during all stages of their training
- 5.2 Where opportunities for additional training courses and/or further sea time are identified that would enhance the trainee's ability to complete the course and more readily secure employment, the costs should be determined and discussed with the MEF Director for consideration
- 5.3 Where issues are identified with any trainees, at any stage of their training that may affect their potential completion of the programme appropriate solutions should be identified at the earliest opportunity and discussed with the MEF Director.
- 5.4 It is the aim of the MEF that trainee attrition rates are kept to a minimum and ideally should be no higher than 15% of any one cohort.
- 5.5 Termination of a trainee contract must be discussed with the MEF Director prior to any such action being taken.
- 5.6 The MEF shall be informed of the successful completion of trainees as soon as practicable, with progression/job details where available.
- 5.7 Training management companies are required to comply with all Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and industry recommendations with regard to officer training and with particular regard to equality of opportunity and diversity guidance and elimination of workplace harassment and bullying. (See ECSCA/ETF Guidelines to Shipping Companies and support materials at <http://videotel.com/etf/> ).
- 5.8 Training management companies are expected to encourage and support trainees in becoming members of relevant industry organisations that provide individual and professional representation and development – i.e. Nautilus International, Nautical Institute, Honourable Company of Master Mariners, IMarEST.

Departure from these guidelines may, occasionally, be necessary due to specific or unforeseeable circumstances. In such cases, all reasonable efforts should be made to implement alternatives that are as consistent with the guidelines and as fair to the individual trainee(s) as practicable. In any case, an explanatory rationale may be required by the MEF. The implementation of these guidelines will be monitored by the MEF on an annual basis and future contracts awarded accordingly.