

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Sub-committees on Classes III Vessels

Proposed Amendments to the Examination Rules
for Local Certificates of Competency

Purpose

This paper sets out the proposed amendments to the Examination Rules for Local Certificates of Competency (“Rules”) to relieve the manpower shortage problem for the local shipping industry and to enhance the navigational safety of local passenger vessels.

Manpower shortage problem for the local shipping industry

Background

2. The local shipping industry has encountered severe manpower shortage and succession problems in recent years. Apart from aging workforce, retirement wave and failing to attract new blood joining the industry, several large scale marine infrastructure developments such as the construction work of HK-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the coming third airport runway project have also generated a huge demand on local marine workforce. In particular, the situation has imposed a negative impact on the local ferry sector whereby if not being rectified promptly, public transport services would likely be seriously disrupted in the coming years.

Proposals

3. In response to the trade's suggestions, MD proposes the following measures to alleviate the manpower shortage problem that require the amendments to the existing Rules —

(a) To grant an endorsement to allow a Coxswain Grade 2 Certificate (“CoC 2”) or a “60 tons” CoC holder to act as the coxswain of specified vessel that is of more than 26.4 m in length overall

To ease the trade's manpower problem, especially the shortage of Grade 1 coxswains to operate large vessels, it is proposed that a CoC 2 or a “60 tons” CoC holder may be granted an endorsement to allow him/her to operate a large local vessel subject to the following conditions —

- (i) the applicant has completed the company's in-service shipboard training programme approved by MD;
- (ii) the applicant has passed a practical assessment ¹ conducted by MD; and
- (iii) the endorsement is only valid for specified type of vessels and specified route in the CoC.

¹ The outline of the syllabus of the practical assessment is attached in Appendix 1.

(b) To allow a candidate to sit for coxswain or engine operator Grade 3 examination first before acquiring the necessary sea experience for meeting the requirement of Grade 3 certificate of competency (“CoC 3”)

(i) Under the current examination system, it is a mandatory requirement that a candidate intended for coxswain Grade 3 qualification has to complete a maritime preparatory course and a 9-month shipboard training programme before he/she is allowed to sit for coxswain “CoC 3” examination.

(ii) Candidates for engine operator CoC 3 examination are not required to attend the maritime preparatory course and shipboard training programme but the candidate is still required to have 12-month shipboard service experience before he/she is allowed to apply for the examination. However, engine operator CoC 3 examination candidates who have satisfactorily completed the approved maritime preparatory course, they may be granted with a 3-month remission of the sea service required for the examination.

(iii) Feedback from the trade is that this arrangement deters youngsters from joining the trade concerning that they may not be able to pass the examination despite having spent a lengthy period working on board local vessels.

(iv) Taken consideration the trade's view, it is proposed to amend the examination rules to allow a candidate for coxswain "CoC 3" qualification to sit for examination first after completing the required maritime preparatory course (one month shipboard experience is still required before allowing to enroll the course). If the candidate passes the coxswain "CoC 3" examination, he/she will attain the "CoC 3" qualification upon finishing the remaining 8-month shipboard training programme.

(v) Similarly, a candidate with one month shipboard experience intended for engine operator "CoC 3" qualification can sit for examination first and if he/she passes the examination, the candidate will attain the engine operator "CoC 3" qualification upon finishing the 11-month shipboard service requirement or 8-month shipboard service requirement if he/she has satisfactorily completed the approved maritime preparatory course.

Consultation

4. The Manpower Development Committee under the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board was consulted on the measures outlined in paragraph 3 in October 2016. The Members of the Committee expressed no objection to the proposals.

Navigational safety of local passenger vessels

Background

5. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Collision of Vessels near Lamma Island on 1 October 2012 (“CoI Report”) was released in April 2013. Amongst others, the CoI Report recommended that local passenger vessels permitted to carry more than 100 passengers should be required to install radar. MD concurs that the proposed requirement will be conducive to enhancing the overall marine safety and the safety of passengers on board, and is currently working on the relevant legislative amendments².

Proposal

6. In addition to the installation requirement, MD proposes as part of the legislative amendments that the radar equipment fitted on the vessel must be used and operated by a holder of a local certificate of competency as a coxswain of a local vessel with an endorsement that the holder is competent in the use and operation of radar equipment. The radar operators need to have completed a radar training course approved by the Director of Marine before obtaining the said endorsement.

7. The relevant legislative amendments are under preparation. In the meantime, MD will amend the Rules to set out the eligibility criteria and procedures for issuing/endorsing the CoC for competent radar operators before the proposed legislative amendments come into operation.

² MD’s proposal regarding the installation requirement of radar on Class I vessels excludes floating restaurants, stationary vessels and Class I vessels the operating licences of which restrict the vessels to plying within typhoon shelters. It also excludes Class I vessels which operate a franchised or licensed ferry service, and which ply only within the Victoria port without any permission granted to proceed at a speed exceeding the statutorily permitted speed.

Consultation

8. At the LVAC meeting held on 25 April 2014, Members endorsed, amongst others, the proposed installation requirement of radar as well as the related operational requirement.

Advice Sought

9. Members are invited to comment on the proposals set out in paragraphs 3, 6 and 7 above; and the proposed syllabus of the practical assessment and draft text of the amendment to the Rules appended in the Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

Shipping Division
Marine Department
November 2016

Outline of the Syllabus of the Practical Assessment

1. Knowledge on bridge controls and equipment
2. Use of VHF including emergency calls and normal radiocommunications with port stations
3. Precautions while navigation in fairways or channels
4. If circumstances admit, taking avoiding actions in accordance with the collision regulations
5. Ship Handling (e.g. manoeuvring the ship by steering or conning the wheel, making round turn, stop or emergency stop and berthing and / or unberthing / or anchoring)
6. Emergency Handling (e.g. oil spill, fire-fighting, abandon ship, collision and local knowledge on handling emergency situations)

Amendments of the Rules

1. To add a new subsection in Chapter 2 – Radar Operator Endorsement

2.12 Radar Operator Endorsement

A person operating radar fitted on board a local vessel shall, in addition to the appropriate Coxswain Certificate, be required to hold a Radar Operator Endorsement showing that the holder is competent in the use and operation of radar equipment.

2. To amend existing subsection 3.1.1 -- Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate

3.1.1 To be eligible for the application for the examination of a Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate an applicant must:-

- (1) be at least 18 years of age;
- (2) be able to prove to have:-
 - (a) (i) ~~— a minimum of 1 year~~ 9 months of service in any deck or engineering capacity in any mechanized vessels other than pleasure vessels, or
(ii) ~~— the sea service requirement be reduced to 9 months if he/she has completed a maritime course recognized by the Director.~~
 - (b) (i) ~~— 2 years'~~ a minimum of 18 months' service on non-mechanized cargo vessels, or
(ii) ~~— the sea service requirement be reduced to 18 months if he/she has completed a maritime course recognized by the Director; or~~
 - (c) (i) ~~— 2 years'~~ a minimum of 18 months' service on pleasure vessels whilst holding any type of pleasure vessel certificate of competency; ~~or~~

- ~~(ii) — the sea service requirement be reduced to 18 months if he/she has completed a maritime course recognized by the Director;~~
- (3) reach the eyesight standard described in Chapter 4 of these Rules; and
- ~~(4) — with effect from 2 January 2015:-~~
- (4) ~~(a)~~ be able to prove to have completed in-service training according to the above paragraphs 3.1.1(2)(a) to (c). The in-service training records shall be conformed to a proper documents as prescribed by the Director; and
- (5) ~~(b)~~ be able to prove to have attended a maritime course recognized by the Director prior to Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate examination. ~~The time taken for completing the maritime course is considered as the service time.~~
- ~~(5) — If an applicant has not attended a maritime course recognized by the Director, but he/she has fulfilled the requirements as stipulated in paragraph 3.1.1(1), any one of sub-paragraph (i) in 3.1.1(2) and 3.1.1(3) and submits an application for the examination of Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate before 2 January 2015, the applicant may be allowed to attend one of the examinations scheduled on or before 30 June 2015.~~
- (6) An applicant is eligible to apply for the examination after attending the first month's shipboard training and the subsequent completion of the recognized maritime course as stipulated in paragraph 3.1.1(5). He/she shall have to complete the remaining required sea service and the shipboard training programme.

3. **To add a new subsection 3.7 in Chapter 3 -- Radar Operator Endorsement**

3.7.1 To be eligible for the issue of a Radar Operator Endorsement an applicant must: -

(1) have already obtained the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate or equivalent; and

(2) be able to prove to have attended a radar operator course recognized by the Director.

4. To amend existing subsection 3.4 -- Engine Operator Grade 3 Certificate

3.4.1 To be eligible for the issue of an Engine Operator Grade 3 Certificate an applicant must:-

(1) be at least 18 years of age;

(2) be able to prove to have either:-

(a) (i) a minimum of 1 year of service in any deck or engineering capacity in any mechanized vessel other than pleasure vessels; or

(ii) the sea service requirement be reduced to 9 months if the applicant has satisfactorily completed a maritime course recognized by the Director; or

(b) two years' service on pleasure vessels whilst holding any type of pleasure vessel certificate; or

(c) served a recognized apprenticeship as a fitter or as a mechanic for remission of all or part of the service; and

(3) pass the Engine Operator Grade 3 Examination described in paragraph 6.4 and paragraph 7.3 of these Rules.

3.4.2 Notwithstanding the requirements set out in Section 3.4.1(2)(a) , an applicant is eligible to apply for the examination after having a period of one month sea service. He/she shall have to complete the remaining required shipboard service and pass the examination before attaining the Engine Operator Grade 3 Certificate;

3.4.23 An applicant will also be eligible for the issue of an Engine Operator Grade 3 Certificate if he meets the age requirement specified in paragraph 3.4.1(1) and:-

- (1) holds a Local Certificate of Competency as Engineer (up to 150 BHP) issued under the provisions of the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance, Cap. 313; or
- (2) holds a Fishing Vessel Engineer Certificate (without restriction or condition) issued under the provisions of the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance, Cap. 313.
