

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Proposal for Medical Fitness Regime for
Local Certificates of Competency
Results of Trial Run for New Medical Fitness Assessment**

Introduction

This paper summarizes the results of the trial run conducted for the new medical fitness assessment, utilizing the newly developed Medical Assessment Form (MAF) and Medical Assessment Guidelines (MAG). The trial aimed to evaluate the effectiveness and practicality of the assessment methodology prior to full implementation.

Background

Further to the endorsement of the LVAC Paper No. 5/2024 (“Paper”) at the 34th Local Vessels Advisory Committee (LVAC) meeting held on 9 July 2024, it was agreed in the meeting that the Marine Department (MD) shall conduct a trial run. LVAC initially recommended a sampling size of 30 participants for the trial run. However, due to overwhelming support from trade associations representing Class I, II, III, and IV local vessels, the sampling size was increased to 50 participants. This reflects the commitment of the maritime community to enhancing medical fitness standards.

Acknowledgments

We extend our sincere thanks to the following groups and individuals for their invaluable support in completing the trial run:

- Trade associations of Class I, II, III, and IV local vessels;
- All 50 participants who volunteered for the assessment;
- The Hon. Ho Chun Yin; and

- The five dedicated doctors who conducted the assessments. Without their contributions, the trial run would not have been completed smoothly within the one-month timeframe.

Trial Results

Participant Demographics

The age distribution of the 50 participants is illustrated in the table below:

Age Group	Number of Participants
19-30	1
31-40	3
41-50	5
51-60	16
61-65	11
66-68	5
69-71	4
72-73	1
74 or higher	4
Total	50

Assessment Time

The following average time were recorded during the trial run:

- Face-to-Face assessments: 22 minutes
- Tests conducted in clinic: 13 minutes
- Waiting Time: 15 minutes

Medical Findings

- **Medical Consultation:** Only one participant required a consultation with a medical specialist for the insertion of a cardioverter defibrillator (not a pacemaker).
- **Eyesight Issues:** Three participants were identified with eyesight issues during eyesight testing; however, it is important to note that the eyesight issues were not related to eye diseases, and eyesight testing was not a component of this trial run. Therefore, these three participants were still considered to have passed the assessment.

- **Overall Findings:** No unexpected abnormalities were identified throughout the trial, indicating that the assessment methodology is robust and effective.

Periodical Medical Examination

- 92% of the 50 participants had a medical examination done within 5 years prior to the medical fitness assessment.

Refinements to the Assessment Regime

Based on feedback from participants and medical professionals, the following refinements and clarification to the assessment regime have been proposed:

1. *Pre-Assessment Preparation:* To streamline the assessment process, the assessee is encouraged to review the assessment form prior to the appointment and prepare any necessary medical records for the doctor's information during the assessment.

2. *Eyesight Testing:* Eyesight testing is conducted under existing mechanism and not included in the assessment. If an assessee fails an eyesight test, they may use corrective measures (e.g., wearing spectacles). The MD will specifically brief participating medical practitioners to ensure that failure of an eyesight test shall not affect the issuing of a medical fitness certificate. Specific guideline for eyesight test will be provided to the participating medical practitioners in future in case assessee requests the eyesight test be carried out concurrently with the medical fitness assessment.

An updated medical fitness assessment regime is presented in Annex to this paper.

Conclusion

The trial run was satisfactorily completed, and the results indicate that the new Medical Fitness Assessment scheme is ready for implementation. As

endorsed in the last LVAC meeting, the new scheme will take effect from the first quarter of 2025.

Way forward

On receiving final endorsement of this paper, MD will promote the regime to the Hong Kong registered medical practitioners and start receiving their applications for listing under the MD's list of Local COC Medical Fitness Assessors. It is expected to take two months to complete. Therefore the Medical Fitness Regime for Local Certificates of Competency shall take effect from **15 March 2025**.

Local Vessels and Examination Division
Marine Department
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Medical Fitness Assessment Regime

Overview

A medical fitness certificate, valid for five years normally, will be issued to individuals who have satisfactorily completed a medical fitness assessment by a registered medical practitioner on the MD's List of Local COC Medical Fitness Assessors. The following outlines the regime for obtaining and maintaining a medical fitness certificate in relation to the Certificate of Competency (COC), with updated validity periods after age 65.

Medical Fitness Assessment Requirements

1. Initial Application for Certificate of Competency (COC)

- When: At the first-time application for a COC.
- Requirement: A valid medical fitness certificate must be presented.

2. Revalidation of COC

A valid medical fitness certificate is required for revalidation of the COC at the following ages:

- Ages: 65, 68, 71, and every year thereafter.
- Application Window: Revalidation can be applied for within six months prior to reaching age 65, 68 and 71, and three months prior to reaching age 72 and every year thereafter. Each valid medical fitness certificate can be used only one time for COC revalidation.

3. High-Risk Vessel¹ Operators

- Assessment Frequency: Coxswains and Engine Operators of high-risk vessels must undergo a fitness assessment every five years until reaching the age of 65. Thereafter the frequency of assessment will follow the requirements for COC revalidation.

¹ HRV includes vessels which are: (a) passenger carrying vessels; and (b) vessels such as oil/gas carriers which may present significant pollution risk to the environment. There are currently approximately 600 HRV licensed for operation within Hong Kong waters.

- The current medical examination required for Coxswains operating Class I vessels with Carrying Capacity above 100 will be obsoleted and replaced by the new medical fitness assessment.
- Transition Arrangement: The existing medical examination carried out prior to the effective date of the new medical fitness assessment scheme will remain acceptable for operation or COC revalidation until it's expiry date.

Validity of Medical Fitness Certificates

- Ages 18-64: Valid for 5 years.
- Age 65: Valid for 3 years.
- Age 68: Valid for 3 years.
- Age 71 and onwards: Valid for 1 year.

Document Handling Procedures

1. **Medical History:** The assessee should bring relevant medical history for the doctor's review during the assessment.
2. **Assessment Outcome:** Upon completion of the assessment, the doctor will provide the assessee with the completed Medical Fitness Assessment Form. Unless the assessee was considered unfit to operate a local vessel, based on the assessment results, the doctor will issue one of the following:
 - (a) A clean medical fitness certificate;
 - (b) A medical fitness certificate with conditions; or
 - (c) A referral letter for the assessee to seek further medical advice from a medical specialist.
3. **Submission to MD:** The assessee shall forward a copy of the medical certificate to the MD for registration in the MD's computer system.

Summary of Regime

Age Group	Action Required	Notes	Medical Fitness Certificate Validity
Ages 18-64	Present valid medical fitness certificate	Required for initial COC application	5 years
Age 65	Present valid medical fitness certificate	Can use existing valid certificate for revalidation	3 years
Age 68	Present valid medical fitness certificate	Revalidation application within 6 months prior	3 years
Age 71	Present valid medical fitness certificate	Revalidation application within 6 months prior	1 year
Age 72 and onwards	Present valid medical fitness certificate	Annual revalidation within 3 months prior	1 year

Conclusion

This above provides the structure for obtaining and maintaining a medical fitness certificate, ensuring that all personnel are medically fit to operate vessels. Adherence to these guidelines will contribute to the safety and well-being of all maritime operators, particularly as the validity of certificates changes with age.