



Maritime & Coastguard Agency



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The Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) is an Executive Agency in the UK Government's Department for Transport. One of its responsibilities is the issue of Certificates of Competency covering a wide range of maritime Deck Officer and Engineer Officer roles and vessels. MCA partnered with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to support the development and delivery of a suite of valid qualifications to ensure this responsibility is fully achieved.

The Challenge

To be able to successfully deliver their responsibility with respect to Deck and Engineer Officer competency, the MCA needed a global solution that encompassed the core services of an awarding body. Those services had to be backed with robust processes & quality assurance, flexible assessment delivery and capacity to grow.

Annually, MCA needed a trusted partner to help them deliver:

- 150 different exam papers
- 8,000 tests
- Written and oral assessment options
- to 3,800 candidates
- at 20 UK and 7 international locations

The Approach

SQA's collaborative approach to designing and implementing the proposed solution secured this contract in 1986. We leveraged our skills and strengths running national exam systems to propose a robust, scalable and flexible solution for MCA. In effect, we proposed creating a mini awarding body to manage their requirement.

One crucial element when considering SQA was our experience in the maritime sector. SQA has developed a comprehensive portfolio of maritime qualifications recognised on the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). These qualifications develop the employability skills valued by employers in general and those necessary for effective work within the maritime industry.

We were able to demonstrate how our experience gave us the ability to fully understand the needs and standards required to assess across job roles, and how we could bring in and manage people involved in the industry to shape and deliver an assessment model that addressed MCA's needs.

SQA has experience of developing qualifications and running global multi-site assessment, marking and certification for a national school and college system. This provides MCA with ongoing assurance of our competence and ability to successfully manage the delivery of their exams, marking and certification needs.

The Solution

The start point was the qualifications.

Certificates of Competence were designed for Deck and Engineer Officers working in the Merchant Navy and on:

- Merchant Vessels
- Fishing Vessels
- Yachts

With access to the latest thinking and knowledge, delivery capacity and technical resource, we were able to design the right support to deliver, assess, mark and provide certificated proof of achievement.

Examinations for all are prepared by SQA facilitating a series of panels to ensure all assessments meet required standards using industry experts to set and mark exams.

Consistent quality of question papers is ensured by SQA through managing a rigorous cycle of verification panels, comprising of question setters and vetters who compile question papers from a question bank.

Consistent quality of results is achieved using strong quality assurance tools including marking schemes agreed by subject experts and checking of exam content by SQA.

SQA manages the delivery of the exams across 20 UK centres and a further seven around the world.

SQA manages the secure creation and delivery of Certificates.

The Benefits

MCAs requirements were fully understood from the outset. The solution of managing a suite of exams, assessed and administered by SQA fully meets the needs of MCA and exam candidates. Over the lifespan of this contract SQA has worked collaboratively with MCA to refine and update delivery.

Benefits to MCA

- assurance that their reputation is safe working with a respected national awarding body
- good collaboration to ensure a varied solution that fully met their requirements
- assurance of the ongoing validity and currency of exams consistently delivered to standard
- SQA's expertise ensures the standard of exams across differing forms of assessment
- peace of mind that SQAs stringent processes ensure security and help prevent fraud
- ability to have Certificates issued to their requirements
- meets their responsibilities without risk to their reputation
- ongoing access to our latest assessment and standards knowledge



Benefits to Candidates

- candidates gain a qualification that is recognised and valued by employers in their industry
- assessments take the form that is right for the candidate and for the exam, examples include written and oral assessments
- peace of mind that they can take the exams at a place and time that suits
- confidence that their Certificates are authentic and have inbuilt security making them difficult to fake

Recognised Standards

SQA operates to the highest recognised industry standards, we are accredited to both ISO Quality 9001 and Information Security 27001 certifications.

Our stringent quality assurance model is based on quality assuring all key activities to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data.

Insight

SQA provides actionable insight to MCA reporting on learner results and contract performance.



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