

# Certification

A look behind the scenes of one of The Nautical Institute's most widely recognised services



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DP Certification Manager

Previous articles on accreditation and recognition have described how The Nautical Institute helps ensure that the organisations applying adopt a process of quality management in the delivery of their services. For many, the most significant contribution that The Nautical Institute has made to maritime safety has been the provision of certification services for suitably experienced Dynamic Positioning Operators (DPOs).

With over 20,000 certificates issued since 2005, this is a major contribution to the offshore sector and has helped employers, operators, classification societies and other stakeholders recognise a common pedigree of training and experience in the cadre of NI DPOs worldwide.

## Certification processing

The certification team at the headquarters of The Nautical Institute is responsible for processing over 5,000 applications each year for certification, revalidation or for conversion from one grade of certificate to another. The systematic checking of applications is a thorough and at times complex process that seeks to ensure that all applicants receive prompt and fair treatment. The team aims to turn round applications within the four week KPI agreed with industry and is currently delivering well within this target period.

To achieve this there are three core teams addressing:

- Applications for initial certification;
- Applications for revalidation;
- Incomplete applications.

The certification process is supported by a sophisticated on-line application tool accessed through the bespoke system developed by The Nautical Institute and delivered through the NI ALEXIS portal. Applicants fill in essential personal and professional details online and then submit original documents to NI headquarters for inspection and verification. It is important to check each individual application thoroughly to ensure that it fully complies with industry standards and expectations as set out in the agreed rules of the scheme.

The most difficult submissions to handle are those which are either incomplete or non-compliant. Wherever possible the certification team will assist the applicant by seeking clarification and additional documents without needing to return documents to the sender, which is both time-consuming and expensive. If the criteria have not been met, application fees must be paid again on the second application – just as you would pay again for a failed application for a passport or a Certificate of Competency.

## Training the team

The certification team is well-trained. It has to be, because consistency and thoroughness are essential to delivering a good service. With applications being processed every week for the Offshore New Scheme, Offshore Old Scheme, Shuttle Tanker, Revalidation, conversion or some special recognition, the permutations are numerous. Added

to this, dealing with online and telephone enquiries demands considerable expertise. It takes around three months to fully train a certification administrator, and new team members require substantial supervision and support.

## Practical considerations

The certification team is well aware of the importance of the DPO qualification to seafarers and the reliance others place on it. As with any important certificate, unscrupulous individuals sometimes try and circumvent or short-cut the application process. Some even resort to fabricating evidence in support of their experience. Each application is scrutinised in detail. Where an application raises any doubts, all the evidence is evaluated by the Compliance Review Panel, which has the authority to require further information before a certificate is awarded. Where applications are found to deliberately contravene the rules, documents including logbooks are withheld by The Nautical Institute. Applicants are notified of the outcome and any associated penalty, often preventing further participation in the DP scheme for a period of time. The costs of running the certification scheme are quite significant, with investment required in the technology solutions, staff resources including training and development, the production costs for the logbook and certificate and courier costs around the world. These costs determine the fees to be charged for certification. These seem to be broadly in line with the costs for the issue of Certificates of Competency and much less than (for example) the cost of a Heavy Goods Vehicle licence in most countries.

## Looking ahead

The certification team will continue to improve the efficiency and security of the application process. Already discussions have been held to see how electronic records can help in the authentication process. In due course, industry might wish to see 'platform endorsements' recognised on DPO certificates, or even a special certificate for Senior DPOs. Whatever changes take place, the certification staff at The Nautical Institute will be ready to assist mariners from around the world. 🌍

## Jenny Daintree

Jenny's career in the maritime industry began while travelling in New Zealand, where she began working for Maritime New Zealand (the NZ Maritime Administration) in 2009. She started in the sea-going licensing department, initially issuing marine pilot's licences, and graduating later to assessing and issuing all STCW Certificates of Competency.

On returning to London, Jenny started at The Nautical Institute in the Dynamic Positioning department processing DP certificates. With her maritime certification background she was soon promoted to assistant manager. She is currently DP Certification Manager, managing the largest team in The Nautical Institute, and is a key supporter of the work of the Dynamic Positioning Training Executive Group (DPTEG).

Jenny holds a degree from University of Surrey, Roehampton.