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## **The Extended Support for Maritime training (SMarT) Fund During the COVID-19 Period – Extension Amendment 1**

**Notice to all ship owners and managers, masters, deck and engineering officers and ratings of merchant vessels and those concerned with maritime training.**

*This notice should be read with MGN 455 and MIN 615  
This MIN expires 14 October 2021*

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### **Summary**

The expiry date of this MIN has been extended to 14 October 2021. This MIN extends the UK Government's additional financial support to assist cadets during the COVID-19 pandemic period by three months. The eligibility requirements remain as per 3.1 (Annex A) and 3.2 of MIN 615 (see Annex B) unless otherwise stated.

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on cadet training, the MCA plans to extend its support by a further three months (up to six months in total) for those cadets who are unable to complete their training and obtain their Certificate of Competency (CoC) within the allotted 150-week SMarT funding period. This funding will enable the cadets to remain sponsored and to develop relevant knowledge and skills through online learning.

## **2. The Proposal**

### **2.1 Confirmation of Extension of COVID-19 Funding**

This three-month extension of SMarT COVID-19 funding can be claimed for cadets who are unable to complete their training and obtain their CoC within the allotted 150-week period because:

- A delay has occurred in taking an MCA oral exam or an MCA written exam because the exams were unavailable due to COVID-19;
- A delay has occurred in completing STCW safety courses as they were unavailable due to COVID-19;



- A delay has occurred in obtaining sea service due to the non-availability of ships.

A maximum of up to six months funding is available per cadet and for Graduate Engineers (fast trackers) where they have not been able to complete their training and obtain their CoC within the allotted 50-week SMarT funding period.

## **2.2 Effects on Future Cadet Cohorts**

Funding will also be available for eligible cadets still going through the system during the next three years including those who have or who will enrol between April 2020 and March 2021; requests will be considered on a case by case basis. It is anticipated that claims for these cadets will predominantly be due to a shortage of sea service as a result of the current shortages of berths causing a knock-on effect for future cadets. This policy will be kept under review should the pandemic impact further on cadet training. A letter from the cadet's actual sponsoring company (in the case of consortiums this means the sponsoring client company) must be provided confirming that the cadet has been unable to obtain the required sea service within the allotted 150-week SMarT funding period.

## **2.3 Backdating the Cadet Eligibility Period/Date**

The cadet eligibility period/date has been backdated to 1st July 2019. The MCA will consider requests from Training Providers on a case by case basis where cadets have been unable to obtain their CoC within the allotted 150-week SMarT funding period and still need to:

- Complete an STCW Advanced Short Course; and/or
- Complete an MCA/MNTB Approved Long Course (Foundation Degree, HND etc); and/or
- Attend MCA Written Exams; and/or
- Complete the seagoing service requirement; and/or
- Attend an MCA Oral exam due to availability of MCA examiners.

Requests should be submitted to [smart@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:smart@mcga.gov.uk) providing trainee details and the reasons why the CoC has not yet been obtained. Please note that only the cadet eligibility date has been backdated, the date from which this funding can be claimed remains 30th March 2020.

If requests are approved, funding may be claimed up until the week before the CoC is issued, up to a maximum of six months, whichever comes first. Once approved, the Training Provider will be advised to add the cadets onto the COVID-19 Declaration Form (MSF 3905) and add a comment onto the portal. This will be processed via a balancing claim.

## **3. Claims and Forecasts Process**

- 3.1** Instructions and guidance for the COVID-19 SMarT claims process is available on request from the MCA (please send your request by email to [smart@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:smart@mcga.gov.uk)). A new COVID-19 Declaration Form MSF 3905 must be submitted each month and uploaded to the comments section of the SMarT portal at the same time as the monthly claim.
- 3.2** Training Providers should forecast all anticipated claims for each month within their next forecast and submit with their next claims period in accordance with the payment schedule.



#### **4. Training Plan**

- 4.1** As per Annex A, Training Providers must submit a proposal of how the funding will be allocated to ensure that the funding continues to benefit the cadet's development needs, to meet State Aid reporting requirements and be accountable in the interest of public spending. Training Providers must submit their proposal **before** their first claim is submitted as payments cannot be approved until the plan is received.

#### **5. Online oral exams**

- 5.1** If a candidate refuses<sup>1</sup> a date for an online oral exam, then the MCA Marine Office will notify the Training Provider. The additional SMarT funding can no longer be claimed for that candidate.

#### **6. Trainees Completing in less than 150 weeks**

- 6.1** Some cadets may have completed their training in less than 150 weeks but have not been able to obtain their CoC due to COVID-19 during that time period. Training Providers should continue to claim for these trainees using the normal SMarT categories up to 150 weeks (unless it transpires that the CoC is issued in less than 150 weeks). This policy supersedes any previously issued guidance on this topic.
- 6.2** Where the trainee has not obtained their CoC within the 150-week allotted funding period, then TPs should start claiming the COVID-19 funding for them (i.e. from week 151) up to the week before the CoC is issued, up to a maximum of six months, whichever comes first.

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<sup>1</sup> If the reasons are beyond the candidate's control such as illness, they may appeal to the Chief Examiner by sending an email to [exams@mcga.gov.uk](mailto:exams@mcga.gov.uk)



## More Information

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Published: October 2020  
Please note that all addresses and  
telephone numbers are correct at time of publishing

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