

# Website adds to maths support

Support from the Nautilus JW Slater Fund has helped to create a new maths 'upskilling' programme designed to help more ratings to gain officer certification.

Launched last month, the Marine Society's Maths@Sea web-based portal has been put together in response to evidence that competence and confidence in maths is often a barrier to career progression.

Designed by maritime education specialists, the programme aims to address gaps in maths knowledge and specific areas of the subject demanded at nautical college, including aspects of algebra, geometry and trigonometry.

The Marine Society worked closely with South Tyneside Marine College to identify common areas of weakness, and with specialist maritime e-learning provider CoracleOnline.com to create the content and manage online registration and assessment. Access to the Maths@Sea

programme is free of charge to JW Slater scholars, but there is a small charge for others who wish to use it. Arrangements can be made for access by groups of learners on special terms.

Marine Society director Brian Thomas commented: 'There is a clearly identified need for this programme that will do much to help individuals, colleges, and sponsoring companies. Feedback from those who have road-tested the programme is overwhelmingly positive.'

'Whilst this project is intended to be primarily for ratings, including those seeking placement on the new apprenticeship scheme, it's also being used by prospective M/N officer trainees who welcome the opportunity to refresh their knowledge in functional skills before or during their college studies,' he added.

For more information, check the websites: [www.marine-society.org/maths.aspx](http://www.marine-society.org/maths.aspx) and [www.maths@sea.com](http://www.maths@sea.com)

In fact, says the head of the EU-funded Sea-chiefs project, it is remarkable that there are so few cases of food poisoning at sea or cases of cooks being keel-hauled.

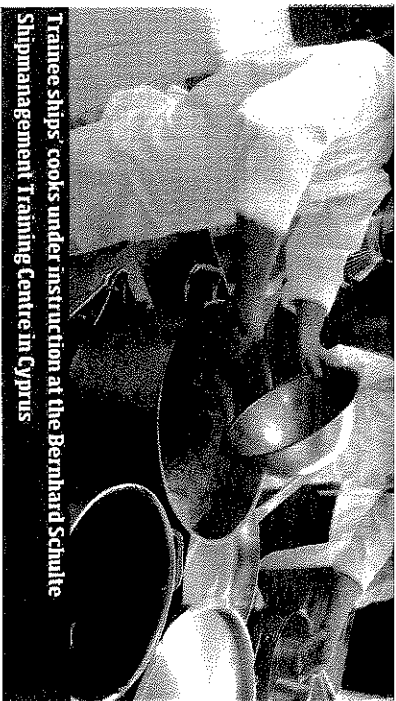
'Flag states urgently need to define regulations for ships' cooks and put them in force to meet the demands of MLC 2006,' said Professor Captain Ralph Becker-Heins, of the Bremen Shipping University.

'The current reality is that owners and managers have little evidence that the cooks they employ really do have cooking and hygiene skills and are not going to poison the crew,' he pointed out.

The two-year Sea-chiefs project investigated ways of providing a standardised, fast-track, system for training a seagoing cook — defining uniform standards of competence and charting a path for hotel and catering personnel

Hopes are rising that a new agreement can be struck to help harmonise standards for seafarer medical examinations across the world.

Dr Tim Carter, special advisor to the International Maritime and Labour Organisations, told a conference in London last month that long-running work to overhaul the existing global



Trainee ships' cooks under instruction at the Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement Training Centre in Cyprus

to switch to the maritime sector. Capt Becker-Heins told last month's ISF/ICS conference in London that there is presently a lack of clarity over the international requirements for ships' cooks' training and qualifications.

The absence of common standards means shipboard food is often of poor quality and consequently many seafarers develop

diet-related problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure and cholesterol by their mid-40s, he added.

Capt Becker-Heins said the Sea-chiefs project had provided a blueprint for raising standards by building on international shore-based cook teaching programmes to develop training that meets the specific demands of a ships' cook

medical fitness and examination requirements in hearing completion.

The revised package will reflect advances in diagnostic and treatment techniques, he added. New elements will include improved guidance on hearing and vision standards, new advice on assessing physical capabilities and use of

drafting and developing the text for MLC 2006. As well as engaging in discussions with the tutor, participants will be encouraged to communicate online with fellow students to pool experience and knowledge. Acknowledging that shipboard broadband connections are not always able to sustain webcam broadcasts, Videotel says the course package will also include traditional distance learning materials and text-based online support.

The course is suitable for shipmasters and officers, as well as ship managers, flag and port state officials and maritime welfare personnel. At the end of the 12 weeks, participants should have a thorough knowledge of MLC 2006 and understand how to play their part in ensuring compliance.

The next start date for the 12-week programme is 25 October.

medication, and greater clarification of the use of restricted certificates.

Dr Carter said the new standards should reduce the need for owners to put seafarers through alternative medical tests, such as those carried out by P&I clubs, and also avoid the need for seafarers to carry repeat certification for different flags.

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