

# MARINE SOCIETY COLLEGE OF THE SEA



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## Assessment Information

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| <b>Assessment Type</b>                                      | Accreditation Review    |
| <b>Assessor's Decision</b>                                  | Standard Met            |
| <b>Assessor's Name</b>                                      | Steve Jackson           |
| <b>Visit Date</b>   | 22/11/2021 – 23/11/2021 |
| <b>Client ID</b>  | C12033                  |
| <b>Assessment Reference</b>                                 | PN200990                |
| <b>Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by</b>           | 26/10/2022              |
| <b>Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by</b>           | 26/10/2023              |
| <b>Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by</b> | 26/10/2024              |

## Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

Marine Society – College of the Sea (hereafter MS) was formed in 1756 and has a long heritage of supporting seafarers particularly through welfare support. MS is a registered charity and comprises several ‘arms’ representing its charitable aims. One of these arms covers seafarer education and welfare which was the scope of the **matrix** Accreditation Review. This included apprenticeships and projects as well as a well-established library service, and telephone and web-based support service based on the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) service provided to seafarers and those engaged in maritime activities on land such as in ports and the off-shore energy sector. MS continues to support employers as an apprenticeship training provider with the ambition to expand this area of activity. MS is also focused on raising technical excellence in the maritime sector, and upskilling the existing workforce is critical to its ambitions. Encouragingly there is an increasing emphasis on green technologies and environmental issues and with other maritime sector partners, MS is exploring how to make energy use, recycling, water use and green transport key themes.

Above all MS is a highly respected partner in the maritime sector and has strong links with other sector bodies. It is regarded as the ‘go to’ body for many issues in the maritime sector and repeatedly during the **matrix** Accreditation Review the reputation of MS was specifically noted, with words like “totally dependable,” “reliable,” “excellent,” “valuable and valued” featuring in interviews. That said the maritime sector as a whole is frank about being behind other sectors and relying too heavily on tradition, important though this is. There is a modernising agenda agreed, given further scope by the government Review *Maritime 2050 Navigating the Future* (January 2019), which sets out eleven elements for the sector that include: ‘...competitive advantage...clean maritime growth...maximising benefits for the UK of from new maritime technology...grow our workforce and transform their diversity.’ These all endorse MS’ position but the last is most relevant to the use of the **matrix** Standard to help improvement.

The MS Strategic Plan provided for the **matrix** Accreditation Review sets out the ambitions for the Marine Society as a whole including its custodianship of the Sea Cadets, which was not in scope on the Accreditation Review, but contributes to the supply chain of labour for the maritime sector. The Strategic Plan is comprehensive in scope and sets out the aims and values of the organisation which are: ‘To give current and aspiring seafarers the best possible lifelong learning opportunities tailored to their individual needs.’ The emphasis is very much on personal IAG support: ‘We inspire and support seafarers to realise their full potential through a wide range of services that are geared towards their personal development, education and learning support needs. Our skilled staff are experienced in supporting appropriate development and learning. Through our work we inspire seafarers to gain new skills and qualifications to help them progress.’ It is particularly noteworthy that learners are placed at the centre of the organisation’s agenda and this person-centredness was evident throughout the Accreditation Review.

Since the last **matrix** Accreditation Review in 2018, MS has improved once more in several key areas. Investment in staff and resources has begun to improve capability and capacity and the organisation’s focus on growth in the learning and training offered provides new impetus to the organisation. The Board and senior leaders act as champions of the Marine Sector nationally and MS enjoys a high profile in this sector as a result. Partners interviewed during the **matrix** Accreditation Review were unequivocal in their praise of the quality of partnership working and high quality delivery. Partners of MS recognise the added value MS brings to their industry and are very happy to be described as partners with MS, citing their expertise and knowledge of the sector and the advantage of working with a charity.

During the **matrix** Accreditation Review there was considerable evidence made available to help understand how MS delivers its learning offer to a high standard. IAG is embedded in the delivery of all MS's learning activities and is recognised as key to performance. IAG is the principal activity of the Seafarer Support Services, particularly telephone/internet services providing information and advice and this includes a signposting and referral service to other agencies if MS is unable to offer the information or advice required in response to e-mail enquiries. This support also extends to the digital and non-digital library service which provides IAG on books to borrow and recommendations, which in term helps seafarer welfare and wellbeing. The main learning offer is centred around fifteen (and expanding) courses delivered on the learning platform @Sea, which includes units such as English@Sea, Navigation@Sea and Stability@Sea. MS has also been asked by the Maritime Skills Commission to design and deliver a new level 3 maritime course which has just had its first learners complete.

The IAG service aims to give seafarers 'Supported learning, Opportunity to read & learn, Expert advice and guidance and Career development.' The IAG accessed by seafarers ranges from advice and services to enable effective study, progression IAG and support for leaving ship-based careers. The latter has been enhanced further by the creation of a new mentoring programme called 'Coming Ashore' which seeks to enhance advice and guidance for seafarers wanting to continue their careers on shore by creating a structured approach to transitioning ashore, providing resources to help research new role, building a CV and online networking, being paired with an industry mentor and free access to Learn@Sea courses. Support from a mentor is considered a key part of this service and mentors have been trained to offer support. There is considerable scope for expansion of this programme and it could be one answer to the wastage of talent identified by the sector itself and by the mentors interviewed.

Another element of support is provided through bursaries. Being a charity MS is able to use its charitable status to work closely with other welfare charities and beneficiaries from two bursary schemes were interviewed: Slaters (named after a former General Secretary of the Seafarers Union) providing financial support for study and an MSG Covid 19 Redundancy and Retraining Bursary that was designed to help those affected by the pandemic, especially those losing their jobs or becoming stranded because of quarantine. In the first year of the latter bursary there had been 41 awards made and one recipient said it had been a lifeline, and he and his family would have been struggling badly without it. Indeed this interviewee, 25 years at sea, said that MS 'has always been there' for seafarers and its reputation was as a helping, caring organisation.

The delivery of apprenticeships is relatively new, with there being 42 apprentices at the time of the Accreditation Review, but the offer has been established using good practice examples and seems well-received. One employer using MS having moved from another training provider was very pleased with the support that apprentices received and with the IAG they were receiving as employers, based upon the quality of communication and the knowledge of the maritime sector. Apprentices too were pleased with their support from an excellent training officer and consequent progress being made. There is a clear IAG process, ensuring that apprentices know what is expected of them. Apprentices interviewed confirmed they had discussed career plans beyond the qualification but remained happy with their current employer. Apprentices confirmed they were formally reviewed once/twice a month and regular reviews involving their employer took place. There is a vacancy for a Head of Apprenticeships and once this appointment is made it will give MCSC the opportunity to review processes and procedures and identify further areas for improvement. The scope for expansion is clear especially among maritime industries in ports where many apprenticeship opportunities are probably managed by non-specialist training providers.

MS has put in place a series of targets to raise and maintain achievement and produces regular reports to monitor progress. As may be expected apprenticeships are measured by three Key Performance Indicators: retention, achievement and progression, and MS uses a data tracker to identify progress. This data Tracker was helpful to see how MS monitors participation in programmes and completions. Current performance suggested high retention, and apprentices being well on target to complete, having used lockdowns to complete theory units. Monitoring reports of interventions such as IAG were provided with a monthly breakdown of enquiries. For example from April 2021 to October 2021 there were 946 enquiries requiring IAG while in 20/21 there had been 7051 in total though this fell short of the target of 9680 but was attributable to a change in the counting methodology. Similarly Coming Ashore sign-ups, Bursary Awards made and @Sea registration reports are all compiled and monitored rigorously with commentaries on any variances. These are subject to monthly scrutiny and act as the main measures of performance.

MS makes good use of its resources and its staff are its principal asset. They are highly motivated towards the organisation's ethos and those staff members who had experience of other training organisations were able to reflect that they were happy working for MS suggesting the size of the organisation and ethos were very positive differences. All staff interviewed felt the line management support was very good and that they could share issues without stigma. Team working featured strongly as may be expected, and this is a very important element of the organisation's success.

Discussions with learners about online learning was very helpful in understanding the impact of online courses with very helpful comments that will help inform future decisions about the organisation's evolving online strategy. Apprentices and other learners interviewed confirmed that working online was managed well by MS. It is recognised by MS staff how important high quality IAG is to achievement and there is appropriate emphasis on 'front-end' support. Examples were provided of high quality information provided to learners through website referral, particularly to reputable organisations and product manufacturers. MS ensures access to current information on other sources of help such as mental health and addiction, and there were further examples provided by staff of information sources on careers. Tutors and training officers themselves are valuable sources of career information, but the value of impartial sources was also recognised.

MS operates a number of mandatory training programmes as well as encouraging staff to take up online training. Regular team meetings and standardisation meetings provide many opportunities to build on knowledge and skills and identify emerging good practice. Examples of mandatory training included Prevent Strategy, British values, safeguarding and health and safety. Staff interviewed talked about being part of a 'global' organisation with 'great team work' and always trying to find better ways of improving.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is monitored by the Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare. Staff can access online training easily and gave many examples of on-line training they had undertaken. There is enormous potential for enhancing CPD through webinars, blogs, vlogs and sharing of learning and IAG materials and it is well worth the organisation exploring how it can make thematic teaching units or sections available. Indeed the organisation could explore how marine expertise could be offered more widely through its online presence. MS places a high priority on feedback from apprentices, learners and mentees. Apprentices confirmed that their feedback is sought regularly and learners using @Sea said they had completed questionnaires asking for feedback. All learners interviewed felt that they could email or call staff and that staff were genuinely interested to know how they felt about their experiences. Employers and partners confirmed they are always able to provide feedback and are regularly asked for their views.

Apprentices and learners interviewed noted that they could provide feedback including responses to surveys and they confirmed that they always asked them for feedback after every session. High levels of satisfaction with support on courses was evidenced and there were many comments about extra support that MS welfare staff provide to learners on programmes. 'Going the extra mile' was a frequent comment made by learners and partners. The IAG service is delivered effectively to meet learners' needs. An analysis of learner feedback was provided and showed very few negative comments were received and refreshingly included comments from learners about how to improve delivery and content.

Feedback from employers and partners confirmed positive interventions and respect from those interviewed for the professionalism of MS staff. Phrases such as 'MS are amazing' and 'fantastic staff' were used by employers and partners.

Even though the **matrix** Accreditation Review was carried out remotely the wealth of evidence encountered in interviews, and the quality of evidence provided to the **matrix** Assessor demonstrated that MS is operating at a high level of competence and effectiveness. Reviews of service and performance were shared extensively and generated considerable confidence that these processes are customer focused and clearly support the evolving ethos of the organisation. The commitment to high quality IAG and continuous improvement built into the **matrix** Standard was obvious. The impact on apprentices and learners on programmes was clear and unequivocal, and those interviewed were confident and positive about their future as a result of their interactions and learning with MS.

MS's resilience will continue to be tested in the aftermath of the coronavirus, particularly the ongoing effect on the labour market, though there were positive signs of businesses indicating a need to recruit apprentices. The IAG Service in place is testimony to the professionalism of staff and their determination to enable seafarers to achieve the best possible outcomes from their experiences with MS.

MS is an impressive organisation that is in a very good place to use its considerable expertise to help seafarers and those managing career change thrive in the post lockdown world.



## Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- MS provides clear strategic leadership and management with excellent direction, communication, and decision making. MS managers provide very good management support to staff. (1.1,1.2)
- As a charitable organisation that lobbies effectively on behalf of the Maritime Sector, MS has an authority and reputation that is reflected in the ethos and high quality delivery evidenced. (1.1, 2.1, 3.2)
- Partners interviewed consistently praised the quality of delivery and cited the professionalism and enthusiasm of staff and their 'can do' attitude noting that MS is a consistent presence on the maritime scene. The reputation of the organisation is a key part of their remaining partnered with MS. One marine employer noted the in-depth level of understanding about the marine sector and knowledge about the changing nature of the industry. She further commented on importance of MS's lobbying on behalf of the industry. (1.8, 3.2)
- IAG activity is very well embedded in the delivery of welfare services and online services were enthusiastically praised. The learning offer built around @Sea is building to become a tried and trusted product that seafarers find accessible and valuable. (2.1, 3.2)
- There is a strong compliance and quality culture. MS maintains a robust Quality Assurance system to enable it to monitor outcomes effectively for its various funders and their often rigorous requirements. The commitment to continuous improvement is embedded in all activities in delivery and reinforced by its values. (4.2, 4.3, 4.8)
- MS's responsibilities are discharged effectively and consistently with regard to safeguarding and health and safety. MS's approach to the coronavirus lockdown demonstrated absolute commitment to safe working practices and procedures that ensured risks were minimised and staff, apprentices and learners would feel safe and be safe. (1.4)
- The focus on high quality delivery is underpinned by very good internal CPD, while sharing of good practice gives MS an edge in determining what works well. Shared values and a commitment to help apprentices and learners progress well enhances delivery. (2.4)
- The breadth of provision is good and gives MS the capability to engage most potential learners and meet their needs through online services and now the Coming Ashore programme. This contributes to MS's reach and instils confidence in partners and learners. (2.1, 3.2)



## Areas for Development

Areas for development are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and areas for development. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

The annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow the organisation to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make in order to support individuals. These may include the Areas for Development above. <https://matrixstandard.com/assessment-journey/continuous-improvement-checks/>

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

- There was evidence of using former apprentices' experience for marketing to provide inspirational evidence that learners and seafarers using @Sea and other programmes can and do succeed, perhaps unexpectedly. It is suggested that MS adopt a more consistent approach by creating an Alumni Strategy that harnesses the talents and loyalty of former learners to add impetus to acquiring career management skills and help raise aspirations. MS could explore using webinars and recorded masterclasses to share these experiences. Tracking the destinations of former learners, targeting particular modules, may provide some excellent examples of success to share with potential learners. Some current MS mentors are former MS learners who could record their experiences for the benefit of potential learners. (1.8, 2.1, 3.2)
- It is recommended that staff providing IAG should acquire appropriate qualifications to raise further the quality of IAG and also demonstrate how MS supports high standards. The Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare could consider L6 in Career Development for example and other IAG staff should be qualified at least to L4. (2.1, 2.4, 3.2)
- IAG is well-embedded in all the training activities of MS and the IAG Policy reflects the intention to raise standards to impact on retention and progression. It is suggested that formal Observation of IAG could be included in the observation cycle and that peer observation would be advantageous to spreading good practice and ideas among staff. This should be introduced across the project range to help understanding of how projects contribute to the MS offer and provide scope for generating new ways of working. This would also provide opportunities for evidence for IAG qualifications. (2.4, 4.1, 4.2)
- Apprentices interviewed confirmed they had been well supported but for those apprentices where it is apparent there may not be an opportunity at the end of the apprenticeship it is suggested there should be a career IAG discussion by month 9 of the apprenticeship, to give time to determine options and consider an 'exit plan'. It may also be helpful to ensure the apprentices 'journey' is reviewed particularly after the first set of End Point Assessments to identify any areas for improvements and particularly to obtain employers' views. (2.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.8)

- MS encourages staff to undertake CPD activities and training, particularly online. Some staff have followed mental health/wellbeing courses but not all. It is suggested that the organisation work towards all delivery staff taking the Mental Health First Aid course to give confidence about differences between conditions and the right language to use when discussing wellbeing and mental health. Over time some staff could increase their knowledge by obtaining L2/L3 mental health awareness, perhaps those with safeguarding responsibilities. This also strengthens MS's position in discharging its duty of care responsibilities to staff and to learners. (1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 3.2)
- There was evidence of some activity around the promotion of self-employment and entrepreneurship but this could be more consistent and focused. Given the success of promoting @Sea it is suggested there could be a unit(s) developed that include learning about enterprise, business creation/incubation to support new business ideas. Partners may also be interested in supporting this venture. This could also be more strongly tied into online Employability activity. A pilot in Marine Sector activities in ports may be worth exploring with MS members. Working with partners to create business incubator units could be very helpful in encouraging apprentices and Coming Ashore participants to consider setting up a business. (1.8, 2.1, 3.2)
- As always there is the challenge of how to attract more apprentices from non-traditional backgrounds. Greater diversity has been identified as a specific aim in *Maritime 2050*. One observation from a partner described the language used in the industry as a barrier: "very masculine, authority-derived and formal. A change in taxonomy may lead to perception changes but this is culture change which takes time and has to be achieved if the sector is to attract the people it needs from a diverse background." Developing better role model examples too, (the video example of Beauty working at Port of London Authority is excellent) might encourage applicants from under-represented groups. Since MS is inevitably reactive to applicants recruited by partners it may wish to consider targeting specific groups and using differentiated messaging to drive traffic to specific campaigns, especially apprenticeships. Clear pathways to careers ('line of sight') could also be promoted through the partnership with Maritime Careers in their products and Job Cards. (1.5, 2.1, 3.2)
- Coming Ashore appears to be an excellent programme and with over 200 beneficiaries already there would be scope for some formative evaluation about what works well, possible gaps and what could be improved. So far the beneficiaries appear to be mainly officers and it is suggested that over time a greater range of mentors should be built up. The current list of mentors is impressive and very 'high-powered,' but some mentees may find this a psychological barrier to progress. The mentor list could be augmented with mentors who have more recent seafaring experience and are drawn from ratings backgrounds. One mentor interviewed suggested that as a group they should be a force for change promoting new ways of working, challenging stereotypes, and helping mentees explore new pathways and ways of working. As part of any review it is suggested that such far-sighted mentors should be a key part of the development of Coming Ashore and help widen its appeal and broaden its reach. Becoming a mentor is an excellent career development tool and this could have benefits for mentors who are establishing their onshore careers. (2.1, 2.4, 3.2)
- Although MS is targeting growth in the L2/L3 market it should be mindful of the opportunities to expand L4/L5 in Leadership and Management. There appears to be potential for Advanced or degree apprenticeships especially in the Maritime sector and a Higher Education partner may help explore this further, particularly in relation to higher skillsets and the gaps in the labour market. (1.6, 2.1, 3.2)

- The recruitment of a Digital Marketing apprentice is very welcome and progress is being made. There is room for further expansion and one suggestion is to consider the use of TikTok to promote careers in the Maritime Sector and perhaps @Sea. It is suggested MCSC use its links with Maritime Careers to use TikTok, perhaps using existing apprentices to help with video content. (1.6, 2.1, 3.2)
- As apprenticeships grow within the organisation it will be necessary to carry out greater oversight of operations and the role of SeaRegs Training in delivering learning and support. This will be considered during the Continuous Improvement Checks over the next two years and at the next **matrix** Accreditation Review. It is suggested that once the appointment is made of new staff a review of quality assurance processes is undertaken by the new Head of Apprenticeships. The new capacity the appointment brings will provide a fresh approach to progress of the apprenticeship programme. (2.1, 3.2, 4.1)

## Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process. The **matrix** Accreditation Review took place post Lockdown 3 and was carried out remotely by MS Teams and telephone.

Initial discussions with the Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare to identify scope

Opening meeting with the Director of Maritime Training and Development and the Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare

One to one and group interviews with:

Chief Executive

Seafarer Learning and Welfare Co-ordinator

Books and Library Manager

Digital Marketing Apprentice

Maritime Consultant developing educational outreach and course content

Two Employers who are Coming Ashore Mentors

One Employer using MSSC as the apprenticeship learning and support provider

One Partner helping to develop @Sea courses

One Awarding Body representative and Partner

Two Maritime Sector apprentices

One Coming Ashore Mentee

One L3 Maritime Studies student

Two Slaters' Scholarship recipients

One MCG Covid-19 Bursary recipient

Closing meeting with the Director of Maritime Training and Development and the Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare

Desk research including, Strategic Plan, Annual Review 20/21, Policies including Internal training, Curriculum Development Plan, Theory of Change background, learning support materials, Website, Social media including Face Book.

## Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.
2. Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Organisation that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.
3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.
4. Inform The Growth Organisation or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.
5. Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the **matrix** Standard at least 3 months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 3 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.
6. Inform The Growth Organisation of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: [matrixStandard@growthco.uk](mailto:matrixStandard@growthco.uk).
7. Inform The Growth Organisation immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.
8. Inform The Growth Organisation of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).
9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Organisation and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.
10. Only use the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines. For example, if a certain department is successfully **matrix** accredited, the Quality Mark can only be used on that department's letterhead or on that department's page on their internet homepage.
11. Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for accreditation review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by The Growth Organisation and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.
12. Be aware that The Growth Organisation reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.