

1. How does the Coast Guard evaluate state maritime academy compliance with Coast Guard requirements?

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and the six state maritime academies are overseen by the Joint Maritime Administration - U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Academy STCW Review Committee (Review Committee). The Review Committee was established in 1998 to meet the oversight requirements of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW). The Committee oversees the maritime academies training and assessment of cadets in compliance with the domestic and international certification requirements.

To meet the 1995 amendments to the STCW Convention, the academies were required to submit to the Review Committee complete documentation of their programs. This documentation included a description of the steps taken to meet the STCW requirements, syllabi for each course in the program, the type and quantity of sea service, and the criteria used to assess a cadet's competency. The submissions were evaluated and the Academies were subject to an initial audit. All six academies' programs were assessed and were found to meet the STCW requirements. Following the recommendation from the Review Committee, the Coast Guard National Maritime Center issued approval for the deck and engine programs.

All substantive changes to the academy programs must be submitted to the Review Committee for evaluation and approval. The Academies are subject to the Review Committee external audits every five years and are required to conduct an internal audit at least every five years. The last round of audits by the Review Committee began in Spring, 2006, and concluded in early 2007.

2. How have the state maritime academy curricula changed over the years, if at all.

The Maritime Academy curricula were significantly changed by the 1995 amendments to the STCW Convention, including the addition of new training, such as Advanced Fire Fighting training, ARPA training, requiring training in tanker operations for all deck cadets, training in certain elements of electronic navigation, including GPS, and at some of the academies, training in gas turbine propulsion.

As explained above, all changes to the Academies' program must be evaluated and approved by the Review Committee. Since the original approvals of the academy programs beginning with the class of 2001, notable changes and/or additions to their programs include the addition of elective courses in Fast Rescue Boat and Liquefied Gas tank vessel operations at some of the academies.

For any information on changes prior to 1995 please refer the questions to the Maritime Administration. The maritime academies' curricula were overseen by the Maritime Administration per 46 CFR Part 310.

3. How does the Coast Guard assess the quantity and quality of state maritime academy sea time requirements and how has this assessment changed over the years, if at all

The sea service requirements for the Academies are contained in 46 CFR Part 310. Sea service requirements for the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy are specified in 46 CFR 310.59 and for the state academies at 46 CFR 310.3(c)(1). The Coast Guard's requirements for Third Assistant Engineer and Third Mate are contained in 46 CFR Part 10 and incorporate by reference the Maritime Administration requirements in 46 CFR Part 310. These requirements have not changed since the implementation of STCW 78.

4. How does the Coast Guard interpret and apply STCW requirements for state maritime academy curricula

Refer to Question 1. Cadets are required to be trained and assessed in accordance with the STCW Convention. Each academy was required to submit a comprehensive and detailed documentation of its program for evaluation by the Review Committee to ensure compliance with the Convention requirements. The submissions were reviewed by subject matter experts with senior level experience as deck and engine officers on commercial ships, and experience as maritime instructors. In addition to relying on their expertise, these experts also compared the academies' programs to model courses developed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and to other comparable courses offered by other schools, including private schools and labor unions.

5. How does the Coast Guard assess and ensure the ability of maritime academy graduates to exercise the responsibilities of third mate certificates, and

The STCW Convention requires the assessment of competence of seafarers as a requirement for certification. Each academy had to document the manner in which it would assess knowledge-based and practical competencies required by STCW. These assessments were evaluated by the Review Committee and found to be adequate. The assessment practices are subject to external monitoring under the Academy Review Audit.

6. How does the Coast Guard ensure the quality of industry sea time experience of state maritime academy students given MARAD's requirement that USMMA students get first access to available slots on US flagged vessels.

As part of the approval package to the Review Committee, each academy was required to document the manner in which it would provide sea service. The Review Committee required that all Academies placing cadets on commercial ships develop and follow criteria for ships that would host cadets. The Review Committee reviewed these criteria to ensure compliance with the STCW requirements for tonnage and route.

The Coast Guard approval of each maritime academy program included a specification of the type and quantity of sea service each cadet was required to obtain during the academy program. Adherence to the sea service requirements is further monitored through the license application, where the sea time for each cadet is reviewed.