

Open Awards Level 4 Award in

Maritime Studies: Tug Master less than 500 Gross Tonnage (Near Coastal)(RQF)

Ofqual: 610/8200/4

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Version Control

v1.0	New document October 2026
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About the Qualification

Title	Open Awards Level 4 Award in Maritime Studies: Tug Master less than 500 Gross Tonnage (Near Coastal) (RQF)
Qualification Accreditation Number	610/8200/4
Sector	4.3 Transportation Operations and Maintenance
Level	Four
Funding	Please click here for more information
Pricing Information	Please click here for more information
Review Date	31/07/2029

Purpose	D. Confirm occupational competence and/or 'license to practice'
Sub-Purpose	D1. Confirm competence in an occupational role to the standards required

Total Qualification Time/Guided Learning	
Total Qualification Time (hours)	120
Guided Learning (hours)	64

Age Range and Restrictions	
Pre-16	x
16 – 18	x
19+	✓
Any other restrictions specific to the qualification(s)	N/A

Qualification Overview

The purpose of this qualification is to enable learners to achieve the required MSQ units detailed [in MGN495](#) that count towards the Master (Tug) less than 500 GT near coastal area Certificate of Competency (CoC), issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

This qualification is **one** component of a wider range of requirements set out by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to achieve the CoC. Whilst it is an occupational qualification, standalone this qualification does not prove occupational competence to drive a tug. On completion of this qualification, learners will continue with professional training to achieve all components required to make them eligible to sit the MCA oral examination to achieve Master (Tug) less than 500 GT near coastal area Certificate of Competency (CoC).

Delivery of the Qualification

Providers are required to engage with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) at **stc.courses@mcga.gov.uk** prior to delivering this qualification to ensure it meets the requirements of counting towards the relevant Certificate of Competency (CoC).

Providers must engage with MCA prior to delivery and ensure they are able to meet the requirements set out in [MGN495](#).

Any Specified Entry Requirements

Learners must be at least 19 years old at the point of registration.

Learners must hold an Officer of the Watch (Tug) less than 500 GT Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Recommended Assessment Method Summary

Learners will be required to complete a portfolio of evidence set and marked by the education provider and externally quality assured by Open Awards.

Learners must provide sufficient evidence that they have the required knowledge, skills and understanding of the assessment criteria and that it is their own work.

Types of evidence are not limited to, but could include:

- a) Observation of performance*
- b) Written assignments
- c) Videos
- d) Photographs

Assessment practices must reflect the Equality and Diversity Policy of Open Awards and [Maritime Skills Alliance assessment guidance](#).

*Due to the nature of the environment a learner will be working in, remote or video evidence is recommended and accepted for this assessment method.

Qualification Structure

Rules of Combination

Credit Value of the Qualification:	12
Minimum Credits to be achieved at the Level of the Qualification:	12
Mandatory Units:	12

Qualification Units

Mandatory Units (all units must be achieved to be awarded the qualification)

Unit Reference Number	Unit Name	Credits	Level
J/652/4167	Direct Tug Operations	6	4
K/652/4168	Manoeuvre a Tug	6	4

Delivering this Qualification

Becoming a Provider

To deliver this qualification you must be an approved Open Awards provider. For more information, head to our [website](#) or contact the team on 0151 494 2072.

How to Deliver

To request to deliver this qualification, please login to [the Portal](#) and then click on 'Tracking' and 'Initiate a Workflow'. You will then need to select 'Apply to Deliver Regulated Qualifications (Specialist Resources)'.

As part of the qualification approval process, providers must submit a delivery and assessment plan demonstrating how the qualification will be delivered and assessed in accordance with the requirements set out in this guide.

For support with this process, please see the following document in the Portal 'Provider Portal Guidance – Qualification Approval' or contact the team on customerservices@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072.

Registering Learners

Once you are ready to deliver this qualification, you will need to register your learners in line with the timescales below:

Short courses (15 weeks or less) within 25 working days of the course start date.

Long courses (over 15 weeks) within 60 working days of the course start date.

You will need to register your learners via [the Portal](#).

Quality Assurance and Standardisation

Delivery of this qualification must comply with Ofqual's regulatory requirements and Open Awards' quality assurance policies and procedures. Providers must also comply with the requirements of the Qualification Assessment Strategy and the Open Awards Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy. Further information is available on our website.

Provider Staff Requirements

Providers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are occupationally competent and have access to appropriate training and support. They are also responsible for notifying Open Awards of staff changes.

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Assessors must:

- Provide current evidence of competence, knowledge and understanding in the areas to be assessed, to the satisfaction of the awarding body and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (where appropriate). This will normally be achieved through providing evidence of competence in the roles that are to be assessed, which may be a logbook showing time spent at sea and job roles undertaken, and/ or the achievement of qualifications relevant to the areas being assessed or by virtue of the professional seafaring certification that they hold.
- Demonstrate competent practice in work-based assessment methods through the achievement of appropriate assessor e.g. Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA). Assessors with previous unit achievement of A1, D32 and/or D33 satisfy requirements, provided evidence of continuous professional development has updated workplace assessment practice.
- Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices in their sector area of expertise and developments in the Proficiency Qualifications they assess.
- Have a full and current understanding of the content and requirements of the qualifications being assessed.
- Operate safely as an assessor in a maritime environment. MSA therefore strongly recommends that the relevant MCA recognised safety courses have been undertaken.
- Assessors 'in training' who are not fully recognised as competent by awarding bodies may carry out assessment practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the assessor must have assessment activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent assessor. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

Internal Quality Assurers (IQA) must:

- Demonstrate sufficient and current understanding of the qualifications to be internally verified and know how they are applied in the sector area(s) concerned.
- Have relevant knowledge and understanding of the workplace areas to be sampled during verification. Relevant experience of working in or with the sector area(s) is preferable.
- Demonstrate competent practice in internal verification and assessment.

IQAs would usually hold an appropriate qualification in internal quality assurance eg 'Award in the internal quality assurance of assessment processes and practice' (RQF) and must be able to understand the principles and practices of internal verification.

Where an internal verifier has not achieved a formal qualification recognised by the Qualification Regulator, they must be working towards one.

Internal Verifiers must:

- Demonstrate their continuing professional development to ensure they are up to date with work practices in their sector and developments in the qualifications they verify.
- Know where and when to access specialist sector advice, where additional specialist or technical knowledge relating to assessment and verification decisions is concerned.
- Operate safely as an internal verifier in a maritime environment, it is therefore strongly recommended that all relevant MCA safety courses have been undertaken.
- Internal verifiers 'in training' who are not fully recognised as competent may carry out verification practice. For the period in training and working towards recognition, the internal verifier must have verification activity monitored and signed off (countersigned) by a fully recognised and competent internal verifier. The 'in training' period should be limited to twelve months and have clear development goals set for achieving recognition and competence.

Assessment

The qualification has been designed as internally assessed qualifications with external quality assurance by Open Awards. Assessment evidence is generated throughout the programme and compiled within a portfolio of evidence that demonstrates achievement of the assessment criteria. The approved provider must assess all units across all qualifications in line with Open Awards Guide to Provider Assessment and Guide to Internal Quality Assurance.

Each learner must produce a portfolio of evidence demonstrating achievement of all assessment criteria. The portfolio must contain evidence that is:

- **Validity** – assessment measures the knowledge and practical skills identified within the qualification
- **Reliability** – assessment decisions are consistent between assessors, cohorts and over time
- **Authenticity** – evidence is the learner's own work
- **Sufficiency** – sufficient evidence is available to support assessment decisions
- **Fairness** – assessment is accessible whilst maintaining qualification standards
- **Manageability** – assessment methods are proportionate and appropriate to the qualification purpose
- **Holistic assessment** – wherever appropriate, a single assessment activity may generate evidence for multiple learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Portfolio evidence should be clearly mapped to the relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria and may include both knowledge and practical evidence generated throughout the programme.

Evidence included within learner portfolios may include, but is not limited to:

- a) Observation of performance*
- b) Written assignments
- c) Videos
- d) Photographs

*Due to the nature of the environment a learner will be working in, remote or video evidence is recommended and accepted for this assessment method.

Assessors must review all learner evidence and confirm that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been achieved before awarding a unit. They must also be satisfied that the evidence submitted is authentic and attributable to the learner.

Providers must retain assessment records (for example, feedback sheets, individual progress records and group progress records) and make them available to Internal Quality Assurers and the Open Awards Quality Assurance Team upon request.

Providers must apply the Open Awards Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration Policy (available on [the Portal](#)) to ensure learners are not disadvantaged during assessment.

Delivery and Assessment Plans

Providers are required to produce a delivery and assessment plan before they start delivering this qualification. This plan is subject to pre-verification by the Open Awards Quality Assurance Team to ensure it meets the following assessment principles.

This qualification must be assessed in line with Open Awards Quality Assurance procedures as well as in line with [Maritime and Skills Alliance assessment guidance](#).

Delivery and assessment plans must include, as a minimum:

- Deadlines and dates for submissions
- Delivery plan for units (i.e. order of delivery; lesson planning)
- Observation plans, methods, and evidence
- Assessment plan and internally set assignments
- Roles and responsibilities (including requirements for designated educational supervisors and assessors)
- Student support and supervision
- Marking criteria for internal assignments
- Procedures for resits and resubmissions
- Procedures for suspected plagiarism and/or malpractice
- Appeals procedures
- Mapping of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Where there is crossover between policies and guidance, e.g. Open Awards policy for resits and resubmissions, providers are requested to provide evidence of how they will meet Open Awards policy and their plans for implementing any required procedures or guidance.

Training and support

Open Awards provides a range of training and support resources for Providers. Online training is available free of charge through our online platform.

Information about available training and access arrangements is provided during provider approval and is available through the Open Awards website.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Providers delivering Open Awards qualifications must operate robust internal quality assurance arrangements that comply with the Open Awards CASS Strategy and the Guide to Internal Quality Assurance to ensure the consistency and validity of assessment and grading decisions.

Providers must have documented processes in place to quality assure and standardise assessment decisions.

Prior to the commencement of each delivery programme, provider must complete an internal pre-delivery review to confirm that appropriate arrangements are in place for delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance.

The pre-delivery review should confirm that:

- assessment activities appropriately cover all learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- assessment methods are suitable for the qualification level and unit requirements
- portfolio guidance and assessment documentation are current
- observation arrangements are appropriate
- grading arrangements are understood by assessment staff;
- assessment schedules are achievable
- learner support arrangements are in place
- internal quality assurance activities have been planned.

Open Awards may review these arrangements as part of pre-delivery quality assurance activity where appropriate. Providers must ensure assessment decisions are internally quality assured by suitably competent staff before certification claims are made. The approved delivery provider must operate a documented, risk-based sampling strategy.

This qualification has been rated as high-risk.

The sampling strategy should ensure appropriate coverage of:

- each qualification within the suite
- all mandatory units over time
- all assessors
- practical observations
- portfolio evidence
- knowledge-based assessment
- grading decisions
- learners representing different achievement profiles
- assessment decisions identified as presenting increased risk.

The Internal Quality Assurer should increase sampling where risk factors are identified.

Examples of increased risk include:

- newly approved assessor
- newly appointed Internal Quality Assurers
- first delivery of a qualification
- revised assessment materials
- Merit and Distinction grading decisions
- previous External Quality Assurance actions
- learner appeals
- suspected malpractice
- inconsistent assessment decisions identified through previous sampling.

Sampling should include both formative sampling during programme delivery and summative sampling before certification claims are submitted.

External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Open Awards operates an external quality assurance process to monitor provider compliance and ensure consistent assessment standards. External Quality Assurers will review assessment and internal quality assurance arrangements and may sample learner evidence and assessment decisions.

Details of the External Quality Assurance and Compliance activities are outlined in the Centre Assessment and Standards Scrutiny (CASS) strategy.

Standardisation

Providers are expected to participate in Open Awards standardisation activities where requested. Standardisation supports consistency of assessment decisions and provides opportunities to share good practice.

Details of upcoming events are available on the Open Awards website.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Achievement (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) enables evidence of prior achievement to be considered where it demonstrates that the requirements of a unit have already been met.

Evidence of learning must be sufficient, reliable and valid.

Providers must identify any claims for RPL or exemption at the point of learner registration. All RPL decisions must comply with the Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and will be subject to external quality assurance.

For more information, please see our Recognition of Prior Learning Policy found on [the Portal](#).

Appendices and Links

The following documents can be viewed on the Open Awards [website](#):

- Provider Handbook
- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures_
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy_
- Invoicing Policy_
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Procedures
- Prevent Policy
- Privacy Notice - Learners
- Privacy Policy
- Provider Approval Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy and Procedures

Further supporting information can be found on the Open Awards Portal, including:

- Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) Strategy
- Guide to Provider Assessment
- Guide to Internal Quality Assurance

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