

Getting the best from Cruising Instructor training

The Cruising Instructor's (CI) role is arguably the most important in the cruising scheme. This is because the public's first contact with the scheme is likely to be on a Start Yachting, Competent Crew or Helmsman's course - most of which are run by CIs. Penny Haire offers a few ideas for running training that will result in competent, confident CIs.

Whilst it doesn't require huge amounts of experience to instruct at Cruising Instructor level, it does require a thorough knowledge of the scheme and, most importantly, the ability to put this across to students. So, given that most CIs won't have had the benefit of the five day RYA Yachtmaster® Instructor course, how do we ensure that they receive the training they need?

At present, Principals and Chief Instructors have responsibility for training Cruising Instructors. Training is delivered 'in house', either on dedicated CI courses or on an individual basis. This allows TCs a great deal of flexibility in the way in which they can bring new instructors into the scheme.

Whilst this approach is flexible, there will inevitably be a variance in the standard of training that CIs receive and it may not always be given the priority it deserves.

So what is the required standard?

In basic terms, it is some way above the standard for Yachtmaster®. The Yachtmaster® Offshore exam is essentially a test of a candidate's ability to skipper a boat and manage a crew safely. A CI needs to be able to comfortably demonstrate all aspects of the Yachtmaster® Offshore syllabus, whilst also having enough capacity to be able to teach it. Unless they are exceptionally talented, this precludes candidates who have only recently passed their Yachtmaster® exam.

So how can Principals and Chief instructors ensure that they are training potential CIs to the right standard?

A few pointers:

- Run a dedicated, structured CI course, ideally between three and five days. In most cases it isn't satisfactory to have a candidate 'sitting in' on a regular five day course observing the qualified instructor at work or running teaching sessions. The training and input they need will effectively make them an extra student on the course which isn't fair on paying customers. Once they are qualified, it's fine to let them gain further experience on a course under supervision.
- It may be some time since they passed their Yachtmaster® Offshore exam, so make sure that their practical skills are still up to scratch, perhaps by setting some boat handling and pilotage exercises. Theory knowledge can be tested by getting the candidate to sit the Yachtmaster® theory papers.
- Give candidates a copy of the logbook and instructor handbook. Make sure that they know the Start Yachting, Competent Crew /Helmsman and Day Skipper syllabi backwards and explain to them when to 'pass' or 'fail' students and why.
- Spend lots of time teaching candidates how to structure a course for the expected conditions. New instructors often underestimate how long it takes to complete exercises. They end up running out of time to cover everything by the end of the course, especially if they haven't given due consideration to wind and tide.
- Beware of candidates who might clash with students. Patience, enthusiasm and a good sense of humour are essential requirements for an instructor. Don't be afraid to fail or defer a candidate if you think that their personality will lead to an unhappy atmosphere on board.
- Don't forget to check that the candidate is a commercially endorsed Yachtmaster® Offshore. This may seem obvious, but



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recently a centre running a CI course didn't check the qualifications of a candidate who passed the course and worked for a year as a CI (effectively illegally) before attending a Yachtmaster® Instructor course. He failed the course and it subsequently came to light that he didn't have a Yachtmaster® Offshore certificate or commercial endorsement.

The RYA is reviewing the CI qualification this year as we are being increasingly asked to moderate the course or come up with more robust guidelines.

Resources for shorebased instructors

Students with learning difficulties

Our online resources area now includes advice for teaching students with learning difficulties, and what allowances can be made for them when sitting assessment papers.

Amendments to shorebased papers

All amendments to the shorebased papers can be found in the resources area. The most recent additions are:
Amendment to the portrayal of times in YM1, DS1, BNS1, Yachtmaster® exercises, examination and answer papers:
Any reference to UT-1 should be disregarded. It should be replaced by Zone -0100.

Amendment to DS1 course information and exercise booklet, northern hemisphere exercise 6 – Using GPS:
'Use RYA chart 6, plan F' should read 'Use RYA chart 4, plan F'

To find the resources area go to www.ryatraining.org/runningcourses/instructors and select 'instructor resources' on the left.



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