

The International Sail Endorsement (ISES)

Laying a course for a career in Tall Ships

Capt John Etheridge [MNI](#)

The well-established International Sail Endorsement Scheme (ISES), administered by The Nautical Institute (NI) and Sail Training International (STI) – both highly prestigious organisations – assists skippers, masters and mates of any rig with objective, accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Following my article in *Seaways* February 2024, the scheme has been fine-tuned to better reflect the situation of career-minded tall ship sailors.

If you serve on any of the vessel types pictured in this article, down to 24 metres Length Overall or 80 Gross Tons, and would like a pathway to professional recognition, an International Sail Endorsement could help with:

- Free Student membership of The Nautical Institute
- Discounted examination fee
- Accredited CPD
- Access to a Provisional Sail Endorsement prior to obtaining a CoC
- Flexible, work-based learning
- A superior professional qualification to complement your CoC/CV.

An endorsement is issued to an individual on completion of practical tasks, written and oral examination and requisite sea service.

To date, enrolment in the Scheme may have been perceived as a rather costly addition after the demanding and expensive passage to a Certificate of Competency (CoC). Those sailing in smaller vessels and the heritage fleet may see a Sail Endorsement as the province of those working on large sail training vessels or even exclusively square riggers. However, it is a fact that the UK sail training fleet, which once included at least five square riggers over 45 metres LOA, now has only one of these remaining. This makes vessels of 24m/80 GT and over a

more attractive prospect for those looking for career development and makes a sail endorsement a valuable enhancement to their skippers and mates.

This article aims to review overall perceptions of the qualification and introduce the concept of ISES as a realistic and integral part of a tall ship career pathway which can include crewing, sailing and shore management as well as training and education.

The value of CPD

The ISES Training Executive understand the typical financial situation of sea staff on low wages but wishing to advance to mate/skipper positions and follow a career under sail. A CoC is an essential foundation, but verified and documented Continuing Professional Development, such as the ISES sail endorsement, can add significant value to career development and employment prospects.

While a CoC issued by the UK MCA does not formally recognise tall ship sailing skills, an ISES is accepted in this respect, and also meets the requirement for owners/operators to establish formal assessment procedures for Masters and Mates prior to service on Square Rigged vessels per MSN 1802(M).

The Executive wish to enhance and encourage this career choice by making a Sail Endorsement more attainable, and has introduced some procedure and policy changes in order to facilitate this aim:

- **Free student membership of the NI** to anyone partaking in the Scheme while studying for an appropriate CoC. This also gives access to the resources of the NI Academy. Note: The minimum CoC allowable is a Commercially Endorsed RYA Yachtmaster Offshore.
- **Facility for the issue of a Provisional Sail Endorsement.** This allows a candidate to work through the Task Book, syllabus and the required sea service **without having to pay any fees until ready to enrol** at the discounted rate (provided they are engaged in formal





study for a CoC) and apply for ISES examination. If successful, a Provisional Sail Endorsement would be issued which could be exchanged for a full International Sail Endorsement on obtaining a CoC.

This pathway enables a low cost route to documentation of a candidate's knowledge, ability and sea time in advance of or concurrent with formal CoC shore-based study. This could prove advantageous when seeking employment, as a demonstration of commitment to the profession. Sponsorship from the likes of Trinity House is competitive, so possession of a Provisional Sail Endorsement would highlight an applicant's motivation and ability.

Once issued, a full Sail Endorsement is valid in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and acknowledged by owners and organisations supported by The Nautical Institute, Sail Training International and the Association of Sail Training Organisations – the Endorsement expands with your CoC grade and vessel type. Endorsements are issued marked either Fore and Aft or Square Rig but there is a facility to upgrade.

The depth and scope of study involved gives a candidate a broader understanding of the profession and vessels; this may prove useful if a holder wishes to advance into training, nautical education, boat building or shore management. For myself, the knowledge gained by following the Scheme was very helpful in my own study for a Diploma in Marine Surveying. I quote Capt. Ben Wheatley, Master and Technical Engineering Manager at Adventure Under Sail:

'During my career I've had the opportunity to spend time working in a number of square rigged sail training vessels. Having the International Sail Endorsement has supported that process, not only as a way of demonstrating a level of professional knowledge and competence, but also having the potential to simplify the induction process when joining a new ship. I would definitely recommend the ISE to any aspiring Deck Officers who would like to follow a similar path.'



Sail Endorsement holders who have particular skills or knowledge and wish to engage more fully with the Scheme can be offered the opportunity to contribute via the ISES Training Executive Group or, indeed, submitting articles to *Seaways*.

The NI also offers free membership to all ISES examiners in order to reward and encourage ongoing participation.

The existing 'Experienced Candidate' pathway remains available to those who already have 600 days sea service under sail.

Although only a relatively small specialisation, operating large vessels under sail in a 21st century shipping environment combines historical and traditional techniques requiring a diverse and exacting skill set which can also be applied in the sailing superyacht sector. For those willing to accept the challenges and demanding study associated with a career under sail I hope that this article and the ISES revision will have clarified the way ahead. 🌊



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Or email: ises@nautinst.org