

COVID-19 - PROCESS FOR EXTENSION OF SEAFARER CERTIFICATES

SHIP MARITIME ADMINISTRATION, OWNERS AND OPERATORS, SEAFARERS, MARITIME TRAINING INSTITUTIONS, EXAMINERS AND PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

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|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| ISSUE DATE | 12 July 2021 | EXPIRY DATE | 31 July 2022 or unless withdrawn | REFERENCE | SM6/5/2/1/MIN |
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Marine Information Notice's and /or Marine Notice's affected

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| <i>Cancelled or superseded:</i> | MN 10 of 2021 | <i>Read in conjunction with:</i> | Not Applicable |
|---------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|

SUMMARY

This Marine Information Notice seeks to advise Seafarers, employers and crewing agencies of the process to obtain documents to extend the validity of certificates issued in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Training, Certification and Safe Manning) Regulations 2021

Background and Introduction

1. The World Health Organisation recently declared that the outbreak of COVID-19 Coronavirus is a pandemic.
2. On 15 March 2020, the Republic of South Africa declared a state of disaster following the outbreak of the COVID-19 Coronavirus. Further to this, the President of the Republic has declared a lockdown, which includes the shutdown of educational institutions.
3. On 17 March 2020, through circular letter no. 4202/add.5, the International Maritime Organisation encouraged all parties to the STCW Convention to "...take a pragmatic and practical approach with regard to the extension of the above-mentioned certificates and endorsements..."
4. Depending on each individual situation, it may be necessary for some seafarers to be onboard beyond the validity on their certificates, or to not be able to access the necessary services to revalidate their certificates.
5. SAMS SA offices are open, and service delivery is available as set out in MN 41 of 2020 or its succeeding Marine Notices. Therefore, if a seafarer has all documentation in place, then an application for revalidation should be made in the normal manner - rather than seeking an extension.
6. The provisions of this Marine Notice apply to all certificated seafarers holding certificates issued by SAMS SA, and those issued by institutions accredited by SAMS SA.
7. Applications for the revalidation of Certificates of Competency may be made via e-mail to the relevant SAMS SA Office. Contact details are found here - <https://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Contact-Us.aspx> as set out in MN 24 of 2016 paragraph 20.

Validity and Revalidation of Certificates

8. Certificates of Competency (COC) and/or Certificates of Proficiency (COP) issued in accordance with the International Convention of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW Convention) are generally valid for a period of five (5) years from the date of issue.
9. SAMS SA has considered the predicament many seafarers and their employers are finding themselves in, and have granted an extension until 31 July 2022 to any certificate that may expire during the national lockdown or shortly thereafter.
10. Applications for extensions shall be made electronically. Documents that have exceeded their validity date may be acceptable - provided that the certificate was valid on/before 15 December 2019.

11. Employers with seafarers onboard their ships whose certificates are due to expire whilst on an extended tour of duty as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, shall apply as per paragraph 16 below.
12. South African registered ships who have seafarers holding certificates that will be expiring soon, and are being affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, shall follow the process indicated in paragraph 16 below.
13. South African registered ships who have seafarers holding foreign COC's shall take the direction regarding seafarers Certification from their Administration. They shall also communicate to the Principal Officer where the ship is registered regarding any challenges they may encounter regarding validity of the seafarer's certificates. Those whose administrations have extended their certificates may be permitted to continue serving on such ships.

Validity of Small Vessel Interim Certificate of Competency

14. The COVID-19 Pandemic is affecting the issuance of the National Small Vessel Certificate of Competency (skipper's licences) and has caused delays to issuance of certificates from 15 December 2019.
15. The ***Small Vessel Interim Certificates of Competence*** which is valid for a period of six months, issued by SAMSA and external participants in the National Small Vessel Examination Regime are extended until 31 July 2022. Boaters that intend using expired interims need to keep a copy of this marine notice as proof that the certificates as mentioned before has been extended when confronted by enforcement officers, gatekeepers, or officials at launching sites.

Application for Extension of Certificates

16. Seafarers and Employers who seek documentary proof of the extension of seafarer certification shall:
 - 16.1. [The completed form, a copy of the current certificate should be emailed through to extensions@samsa.org.za](mailto:extensions@samsa.org.za)
 - 16.2. apply through electronic means by following the instructions found here – <http://www.samsa.org.za/Pages/Application-for-the-extension-of-Certificate.aspx>
 - 16.3. In the event difficulty is experienced with the above procedure, please contact the Registrar of Seafarers via e-mail to seafarers@samsa.org.za. Please include both a copy of the CoC/CoP and the form in 16.1 above.
17. Seafarers working onboard ships operating in South African ports do not need to have individual extensions, but must keep a copy of this Marine Notice to show that they are operating under this extension – provided they are permitted to operate under the Disaster Management Act, 2002, as amended.

Rendering of services during the National Lockdown

18. All seafarer related services are being provided in accordance with Marine Notice 41 of 2020, or the latest Marine Notice to replace it.
19. The following services may be rendered, to the best possible extent, from SAMSA employees without the need for them to be physically present in the office:
 - 19.1. Application and issue of endorsement of foreign certificates (only Confirmation of Receipt of Application will be issued during the lockdown) including any related assessments thereof
 - 19.2. Issue of extension of seafarers' certificates as stated 16 above
20. Seafarer certificates issued during this time will be in electronic format. Masters, owners and administration (flag states & PSCO's) shall accept these certificates at face value, provided that the verification of certificate, if necessary, is positive.

Extension of Accreditations and Approvals

21. Training institutions shall apply for re-accreditation in accordance with the relevant process.
22. Medical Practitioners shall apply for approval in accordance with the relevant process.

Certificates issued by SAMSA Accredited Training Institutions

23. The provision of this paragraph applies to all course completion certificates issued in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Training, Certification and Safe Manning) Regulations, 2021, by institutions accredited by SAMSA.
24. Seafarers who have not applied for a Certificate of Proficiency (or Competency) after completing SAMSA Accredited Training - and as such need an extension of an expiring Course Completion Certificate - may apply for an extension to the issuing Institution. In such cases Accredited Institutions are required to issue an extension, by letter referencing the certificate number, or by amendment, or re-issue of the course completion certificate. Extensions shall be valid until 31 July 2022 as per paragraph 7 and 8 above.
25. Each institution shall, before granting any such extension ensure that:
 - 25.1. They only issue an extension for certificates which they have issued.
 - 25.2. Keep records of any such extension granted.
 - 25.3. Where no process exists, the institution shall create a process and means to extend certificates.

Validity of Medical and Eyesight Certificates

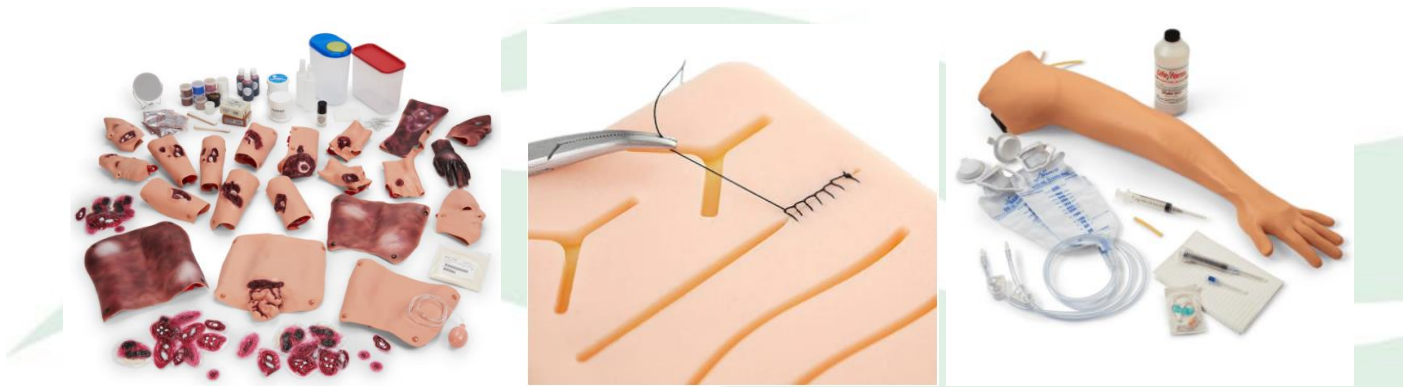
26. Validity of all Medical and Eyesight certificates shall be in accordance to the certificate.

Training Institutions - Operation at various Risk Levels

27. In the determination of the timing and extent of the resumption of operations, Training Institutions shall be guided by the latest Regulations from COGTA, the Department of Health, the DHET and the Department of Labour – and operate under those conditions. Reference www.sacoronavirus.co.za for the latest directives.
28. Institutions should be mindful of compliance with the requirements of the above government departments from the perspective that they are both businesses and educational institutions.
29. Each institution has an obligation to ensure that they meet all government requirements for operating under different Risk Levels. Institutions may therefore be subject to inspection by officials executing their duties under the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs regulations and the Department of Employment and Labour.
30. Records of compliance to government requirements for the COVID-19 pandemic shall be kept, maintained, and be available for inspection by SAMSA if required.
31. All institutions accredited for medical training and any course that deals with medical emergencies shall take note of the following guidelines from the [Resuscitation Council of Southern Africa](#) for:
 - 31.1. CPR for Everyone COVID-19 Algorithm
 - 31.2. BLS Algorithm for COVID-19
 - 31.3. Suggested Training of ALS Courses

Special case – Medical Care exception

32. With the limitations effected by the COVID-19 pandemic on the STCW Medical Care course, SAMSA had desired to preserve the hospital based practical component of training due to the immeasurable value it adds to the training experience. Having observed the application of this arrangement and looking forward, it would appear to be practically infeasible to continue with this approach.
33. The previous edition of this MN (MN 45 of 2020) limited the issue of Certificates of Completion for Medical Care (STCW Code Section A-VI/4-2) to one year from when the candidates completed the course in due regard to the limitations placed on Institutions and Hospitals allowing for practical training of seafarers in hospital.
34. The limitation to a one-year certificate is hereby repealed. All candidates who have completed the training post the initial lockdown may request a re-issue of the certificate for the full term. SAMSA will nevertheless recognise in full the Medical Care Course Completion Certificate for all CoC/CoP applications.
35. In the period that the practical component is not permitted, institutions will increase the classroom based practical and simulation training for casualty responses, which should include mass casualty triage exercises.
36. Where practical, medical care training institutions should procure casualty simulation kits, suture simulation kits and IV simulation kits to allow for authentic simulation exercises in lieu of practical training at a casualty room in a hospital.



37. Institutions will resume the hospital based practical component of the STCW Medical Care course at the earliest possible time after it is deemed medically safe for candidates to return.
38. For existing applications for revalidation or Level 3 assessment, SAMSA personnel will infer a 5-year validity on Medical Care Course Completion Certificates issued from the beginning of the National Lockdown.

Resumption of Seafarer Related Services

39. This part must be read together with Marine Notice No. 41 of 2020 or its succeeding Marine Notices.
40. SAMSA has conducted a Risk Assessment to identify the COVID-19 risk levels which it considers safe for providing seafarer services. Below is the summary outcome and indications of services available at the various risk levels

| X | Service available | # | Online via Microsoft Teams |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| © | Virtual at a SAMSA Office or Virtual from home or physically Face-to-Face (method dependent on examiners evaluation of the special circumstances of the case and feasibility thereof) | | Not available |
| * | Case by Case basis only | | |

Table 1: Nomenclature of the services available

| TASK DESCRIPTION | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training Institution Accreditation | | X | X | X | X |
| Training Institution Re-accreditation (no changes to site, material, facilitators, moderators) | X | X | X | X | X |
| Training Institution Re-accreditation (changes to site, material) | | X | X | X | X |
| Additional Course Approvals ¹ for existing Training Institutions (No site visit required) | X | X | X | X | X |

| TASK DESCRIPTION | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Additional Course Approvals for existing Training Institutions (Site visit required) | | X | X | X | X |
| SAMSA Written Examinations | | © | X | X | X |
| Moderations of Examination Scripts | X | X | X | X | X |
| Level 3 Assessments (<i>online only</i>) | # | | | | |
| Level 3 Assessments | | # | © | X | X |
| Application for Certificates of Competence | X | X | X | X | X |
| Renewal of Certificates of Competence | X | X | X | X | X |
| Special Circumstances exists requiring Certificates of Competence/Proficiency extensions | X | * | * | * | * |
| ¹ Only for courses for which training equipment is already approved for another course | | | | | |

Table 2: Seafarer's service availability during various level of Lockdown

- Enquiries regarding this Marine Notice may be directed to the Chief Examiner via e-mail to exams@samsa.org.za

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