

World Maritime University

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WMU in the News

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THE WORLD MARITIME UNIVERSITY

The World Maritime University, based in Malmö, Sweden, was officially opened on 4 July 1983 and is one of the most exciting and ambitious projects ever undertaken by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

The purpose of the University is to provide advanced training for senior personnel from developing countries who are involved in various maritime activities. Training of this type is not available in the developing countries and there is no comparable institution anywhere in the world.

The WMU therefore fills an important gap in maritime training and in the years to come will have a marked and beneficial effect on the two areas of greatest concern to the Organization – the improvement of maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution from ships. IMO recognises that the improvement of personnel standards – on shore and at sea – is crucial if its regulations are to be effectively implemented.

Considerable progress had already been made towards improving training standards before the University was opened, but these efforts concentrated on training at relatively junior levels. The WMU is the first international effort to provide training opportunities for personnel who have already reached positions of some authority – personnel, in fact, who are responsible for the effective implementation of IMO standards.

The manpower crisis

All the developing countries among IMO's 129 Member States have shown a great awareness of the need for tackling safety and pollution at an international level, through the adoption of conventions, codes and other recommendations under the auspices of IMO. The majority of these instruments are highly technical in nature – a reflection of the increasing complexity of the shipping industry itself, which has changed more in the last 25 years than in any similar period in history.

Ships are bigger, faster and more versatile than they were. Their equipment is more complex. The cargoes they carry are more diverse. Ports and loading terminals are more sophisticated. At the same time more and more countries, many of them developing nations, are becoming involved in shipping.

All these developments provide many opportunities. The technical changes which have occurred in the shipping industry during the last two decades (and which are likely to be even greater in the future) offer the possibility of greater efficiency and economy and – perhaps the most important of all – greater safety.

Training of this type is of course essential for the personnel on board the world's ships. In many ways it is even more important for the administrators, teachers, inspectors and other key figures upon whom a nation's shipping industry depends.

The problem is that many countries, especially in the developing world, lack the trained personnel needed to fill posts at this level. To make matters worse, they often lack the means to train people of the right calibre to fill them.

It is a deficiency which could not only seriously handicap economic development in the country concerned but could have a disastrous impact upon maritime safety and marine pollution.

IMO has been aware of this problem for many years and has taken steps to help Member States to overcome it. Several years ago the Organization established a technical assistance programme designed to help countries wishing to improve their maritime activities.

The creation of the University

In 1976, the Secretary-General of IMO, Mr. C.P. Srivastava, visited Sweden for talks with representatives of the Swedish Government. Sweden had always given great support to the IMO technical assistance programme and during this visit there was considerable discussion about the problems developing countries were experiencing in finding personnel of sufficiently high calibre.

During the next few years, IMO organised a series of seminars on various technical subjects for representatives of developing countries. Many of these seminars were supported by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) and some were held at the Merchant Marine Academy in Malmö.

These seminars and other efforts made by IMO to improve training were so successful that many of those involved began to consider ways of extending the programme still further. By 1980 serious consideration was being given to the idea of establishing a permanent centre in an established maritime country where students from developing countries could receive the advanced training that was denied them at home.

In November 1980 a seminar on the implementation of global training standards was held in Malmö, with financial support from SIDA. In connection with the preparation of this seminar, informal exchanges of views and discussions were held between the representatives of the Swedish Government and the Secretary-General of IMO about possible Swedish support to the IMO technical assistance programme through further co-operation in the field of maritime training.

As a result of these discussions, at the beginning of the seminar the Minister of Transport of Sweden made an important statement relating to the establishment of an international University of Maritime Sciences and Technology in Sweden designed to provide up-to-date training in various maritime activities for students from developing countries.

The seminar was attended by delegates from 45 developing countries who concluded the meeting by adopting a resolution requesting IMO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – which acts as the main funding agency within the United Nations system – to support the idea of establishing such an institution. The resolution referred to the 'enormous need' of developing countries for administrators, teachers, surveyors, examiners and other senior personnel, stating that a minimum of one or two years in a suitable academy would be necessary to acquire the extensive training needed.

From this point events moved swiftly. In November 1981 the IMO Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take all further necessary action for the establishment of the World Maritime University. He was authorised to take all steps necessary to secure financial support, especially from the UNDP, and the Assembly appealed to the Administrator of the UNDP to give the highest priority to providing financial support to the University.

In August 1982 the Secretary-General and the Administrator of the UNDP held detailed discussions concerning the WMU project, as a result of which the UNDP agreed to provide \$800,000 per year.

The idea received formal approval from the IMO Assembly in November 1981. Barely 15 months had passed between the start of the project when, in February 1983 the Agreement concerning the establishment of the University was formally signed by the Secretary-General of IMO and the Swedish Ambassador in London. Following approval by the Swedish Government this Agreement became effective on 1 May 1983. Six weeks later the first of 72 students from 40 different countries arrived in Malmö. By 1986 the number of students had risen to 95 students from 76 countries.

The aims of the World Maritime University

These can best be stated by quoting the Charter of the WMU, which says:

"The World Maritime University shall be the international maritime training institution for the training of senior specialist maritime personnel in various aspects of shipping and related fields concerning the improvement of maritime safety, the protection of the marine environment and the efficiency of international shipping, in furtherance of the purposes and objectives of the International Maritime Organization as a specialised agency of the United Nations."

In order to achieve these objectives, the Charter says that the University shall:

"provide interested countries, and in particular developing countries, with the most modern and up-to-date facilities for the training of their high-level maritime personnel in all areas of shipping and related maritime activity . . ."

The University will also:

"help to establish an internationally recognised cadre of experts in the major aspects of shipping, including visiting professors, lecturers, consultants and other experts to provide suitable knowledge and assistance to developing countries and other governments as appropriate, on problems relating to maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and the prevention and control of marine pollution."

Finally, says the Charter, the University will:

"help in developing a uniform international system for the training of experts in the maritime field as a means of facilitating and promoting international co-operation in shipping and related maritime activities."

NAUTICAL YEARBOOK

The courses offered

The World Maritime University now concentrates on two-year courses, satisfactory completion of which results in the student receiving a Master of Science degree. Courses run from February to December, with a December-February break.

MSc degrees are offered in:

- General Maritime Administration
- Maritime Safety Administration (nautical and engineering)
- Maritime Education (nautical and engineering)
- Technical Management of Shipping Companies.

All instruction at the WMU is in English and for students who need to up-grade their proficiency in that language two special intensive courses of 18 weeks' and 10 weeks' duration are held prior to the regular maritime courses.

Organisation of courses

The teaching methods used at the World Maritime University have been carefully designed to meet its special requirements and take full advantage of modern technologies and teaching methods.

While students will spend most of their time at the University, arrangements are made for them to extend their experience by field trips to other cities and institutions within Sweden and many other countries in Europe and elsewhere. These visits are one of the most important features of the whole project and were one reason why Malmö was selected as the site for the University.

Visits normally begin during the students' second semester at the University and generally consist of relatively short visits to ports, industries and other organisations involved in shipping. The third semester is mainly dedicated to field training.

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the World Maritime University is essentially a practical institution designed for students who have already proved their abilities and have been selected for further promotion. While courses include a considerable amount of traditional classroom work, the practical content is much greater and more varied than in normal post-graduate studies.

Professional faculty

The academic and administrative work of the University is directed by the Rector. He is assisted by the Vice Rector, eight full-time academic professors each specialising in a different field, and a number of lecturers.

In addition to the full-time academic staff, the University also benefits from short-term visiting professors and lecturers to cover certain specialised subjects.

There are also three programme officers, who are involved in organising the field trips and the practical aspect of the on-the-job training programme, and aiding the professors and visiting lecturers as well as the students in the conduct of the University's course work.

Living accommodation and social facilities

Students at the University are provided with their own individual self-contained apartments in the Henrik Smith House. The Malmö authorities have also arranged for students at the University to be allowed to use a modern recreation centre, situated only a few hundred yards from the World Maritime University itself.

Admission to the WMU

All candidates for places at the University are expected to be nominated by Governments. Those interested in attending the University should therefore contact the appropriate Government department in their home country.

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Financial and other forms of support

The money for the University comes entirely from voluntary contributions both in cash and in kind.

Over half the annual budget in 1985 came from recurring contributions from Sweden (\$1 million), the United Nations Development Programme (\$800,000), and Norway (\$350,000). Other contributions come in the form of Fellowships.

Since it is proposed to increase the intake of students to 100 per annum (i.e. a total of 200 students each year), the budget will also need an appropriate increase.

The donation of a substantial amount of training equipment has been arranged by several donors.

Several organisations have also donated textbooks and other professional literature. One has even donated a mini-bus.

Maritime administrations, shipyards, classification societies and other maritime institutions are also playing a very important role in educating the students. Their facilities are now available to the students free of charge during their field trips for on-the-job training.

The countries which have offered such facilities are Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

To help secure funding for the University on a long-term basis, the Secretary-General of IMO has launched a world-wide appeal for contributions to a Capital Fund, the aim of which will be to provide very stable financing for the University. By 31 October 1985 there had been a total contribution of \$280,055 to this Fund.

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