

## Merchant Navy Deck Officer

Merchant Navy deck officers are members of the team responsible for navigating and steering the ship. They supervise crew members and ensure the safety of passengers and cargo. They may also work for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA), which supplies the needs of Royal Navy ships at sea.

### The Work

You could be:

- using satellite and radar equipment to navigate and to steer the ship
- controlling communication systems
- ensuring the stability of the ship in port
- using electronic equipment to plot and follow the ship's course and assess weather conditions
- checking and controlling speed and fuel consumption
- overseeing the loading and unloading of cargo
- supervising maintenance work and the mooring of the ship
- checking that deck gear, safety and fire-fighting equipment are all in good order
- keeping records, correcting navigational charts and ordering supplies.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual salaries may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job.

During training the sponsoring company may pay the cadet an allowance of between £5,500 and £15,000 a year as well as accommodation while attending college. Average starting salaries, when qualified, are £22,000 to £30,000 a year for a third officer, rising to £34,000 to £42,000 for a second officer. Chief officers can earn up to around £55,000 a year and masters (captains) can earn up to £80,000 or more a year.

While at sea, you would have free food and accommodation as well as some travel costs. On foreign-going ships, your earnings may be tax free.

### Conditions

- You would work on the ship's bridge for part of the time.
- You would also work on deck in all weathers.
- You would be required to work shifts (watches).
- You may be away from home for long periods, but would have a good shore leave allowance.
- You would live on board ship with the rest of the crew.
- On larger ships you might have your own cabin and bathroom.
- You would be required to wear a uniform.

- In the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) you may work in combat zones.

## Getting In

In Scotland, there are a number of options to train as a Merchant Navy deck or navigation officer.

- There are two institutions that run courses for training as a deck officer: City of Glasgow College and the University of the Highlands and Islands (NAFC Marine Centre UHI).
- City of Glasgow College offers a range of courses leading to marine-related qualifications. See their website for details and entry requirements.
- UHI offers the Merchant Navy Cadet Programme. See their website for details and entry requirements.
- For many entry level cadet training courses at NC level (SCQF Levels 4-6) you typically need 4 subjects at National 4 including Maths and Physics or a science subject.
- HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8) entry level cadet training programmes typically require 2 Highers including Maths and a science or technological subject.
- You require sponsorship by a shipping company or agency and the programme involves spending time at college and at sea. The sponsoring company may have additional entry requirements to the colleges.
- Some shipping companies have training programmes that lead to a degree. Entry requirements vary, but you would need some subjects at Higher.
- You will have to pass a statutory medical and fitness examination.
- Specific entry requirements for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) can differ from Merchant Navy shipping companies, including attendance of the Admiralty Interview Board. Full details are on the [RFA website](#).

[The Merchant Navy Training Board \(MNTB\) careers website](#) provides a full list of all the shipping companies and training organisations which offer sponsorship for the above entry routes.

There is a National 4 Skills for Work course in Uniformed and Emergency Services which introduces school pupils to careers in the emergency services, the armed services and the Merchant Navy. There is also a National 5 Skills for Work in Maritime Skills.

## What Does It Take

You need to be:

- good at problem solving
- responsible
- confident and enthusiastic
- decisive
- aware of safety issues
- quick to react in an emergency
- able to stay calm in a crisis
- good at working as part of a team.

You need to have:

- good maths ability

- the ability to carry out more than one task at once
- leadership and management skills
- initiative and self-reliance
- good communication skills - the members of the crew generally come from a wide range of countries and will have varying degrees of knowledge of the English language.

## Training

- The training programme for Officer Trainees lasts for approximately 3-3.5 years and involves periods of study at college and time at sea.
- Graduate entrants follow a fast-track programme of training, combining periods at marine college and at sea.
- All training routes lead to the internationally recognised Officer of the Watch (OOW) certificate which will allow you to work on board any ship anywhere in the world.
- You may later be able to study for higher qualifications which will enhance your career prospects.
- The training programme for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) may differ. Details can be found on the [RFA website](#).

## Getting On

- In the Merchant Navy there is a clear career structure, with promotion being based on merit, length of service and gaining the relevant Certificates of Competency.
- You can progress through the ranks from junior or third officer to chief officer or master (captain).
- Experienced Merchant Navy officers are also well-placed to take up shore-based positions in shipping companies, port authorities and other organisations which require seagoing experience.
- Merchant Navy training and experience can also prepare you for a wide range of jobs in general management.

## Contacts

### Maritime Skills Alliance

Website: [www.maritimeskills.org](http://www.maritimeskills.org)

### Maritime UK

Tel: 0333 050 3663

Email: [info@maritimeuk.org](mailto:info@maritimeuk.org)

Website: [www.maritimeuk.org/careers](http://www.maritimeuk.org/careers)

Twitter: @MaritimeUK

### Nautical Institute

Tel: 020 7928 1351

Email: [sec@nautinst.org](mailto:sec@nautinst.org)

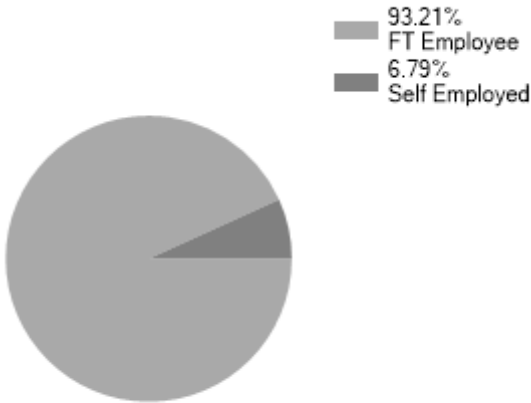
Website: [www.nautinst.org](http://www.nautinst.org)

Twitter: @NauticalInst

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thenauticalinstitute](http://www.facebook.com/thenauticalinstitute)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

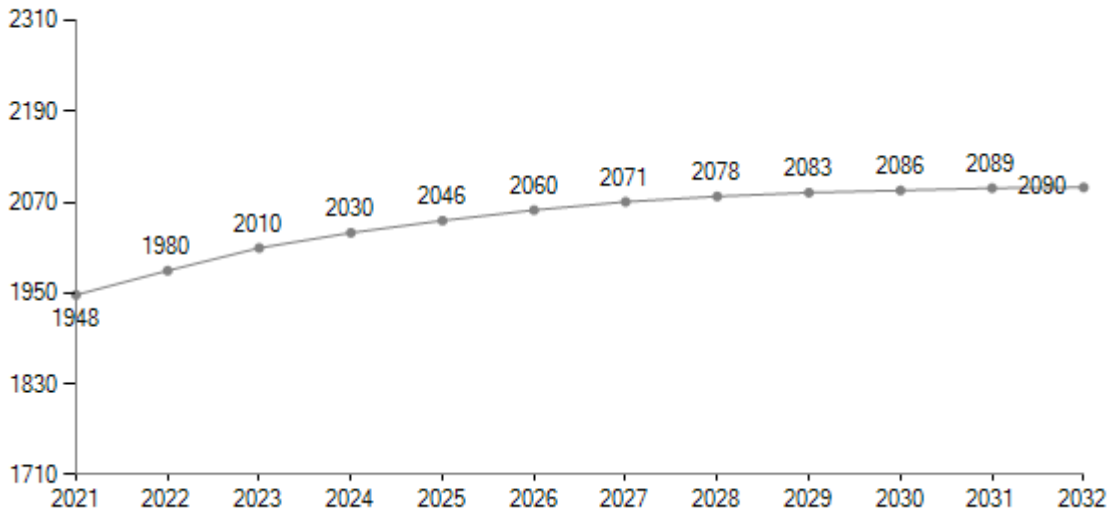


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [Lightcast](#)