# Dynamic Positioning Operator

Dynamic positioning (DP) is a system which controls a ship's position and stability while at sea, using its propellers and thrusters. A dynamic positioning operator (DPO) is a specialist post within the Merchant Navy; they are primary watch keeper at the DP control desk, operating and monitoring the DP system and monitoring logistic operations around the vessel.

## The Work

You could be:

- responsible for the ship's 'safe station keeping system' and for monitoring the logistic operations around her, such as the movement of supply vessels or helicopters
- understanding and controlling the DP computer system, as well as the thrust units, power management and equipment redundancy
- controlling the vessel using manual and joystick controls
- monitoring the radar periodically for changing traffic and weather conditions
- keeping the vessel in a stable position directly over a fixed point on the seabed (absolute dynamic positioning)
- keeping the vessel at the same position relative to another moving object such as another ship or submarine (relative dynamic positioning)
- keeping the vessel positioned at a favourable angle towards wind, waves and current (weathervaning)
- helping the offshore installations manager (OIM) and the mate to set up emergency systems and putting them into effect in the event of mechanical failure
- taking your turn on watch, keeping a log and carrying out the other normal duties of a deck officer when not operating the DP system.

## Pay

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

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

Dynamic position operators earn between £31,000 and £55,000. Salaries can sometimes be higher, depending on the area of work and location. The employer provides food and accommodation while at sea.

## Conditions

- You work indoors on the ship's bridge while at the DP control desk but at other times you could be out on the deck in all weathers.
- You work shifts (watches) often 12 hours at a time.
- You will be away from home for long periods – possibly up to 3 months at a time – but with good periods of shore leave.

- You live in cramped conditions with the rest of the crew but with your own cabin and bathroom on larger ships.
- You would wear a uniform.
- It can be cold, wet and stormy at sea – you must not be prone to seasickness.

## Getting In

- You would usually start out as a watch-keeping deck/navigation officer.
- In Scotland 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 HNC Nautical Science (SCQF Level 8) which is part of the Merchant Navy Cadet Programme. See their website for details and entry requirements.
- All courses require sponsorship by a shipping company or agency and involve spending time at college and at sea. The sponsoring company may have additional entry requirements to the colleges.
- You will have to pass a statutory medical examination.
- 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.

DPOs work for the Merchant Navy as deck or navigation officers. A list of employers is on the Merchant Navy Training Board website. A lot of jobs are in the offshore oil and gas industry.

## What Does It Take

You need to have:

- initiative and self-reliance
- good verbal and written communication skills
- good numeracy for making navigational calculations
- the ability to get on with a range of different people
- analytical and problem solving skills
- an understanding of engineering concepts
- computer and technical skills
- good observation and the ability to concentrate for long periods.

## Training

Once qualified as a deck officer, the trainee works towards a Dynamic Positioning Operator's Certificate accredited by the Nautical Institute. There are two DP training schemes: Offshore and Shuttle Tanker. This is to enable certification for different types and classes of vessel.

Both training schemes involve:

- a DP induction course
- a minimum number of days of sea time

- online examinations and a DP simulator course
- at least 6 months' watch-keeping on a DP ship.

Specific components for each scheme are available on the Nautical Institute website.

## Getting On

The Merchant Navy has a clearly defined promotion structure for DPOs which entails attending college from time to time to gain more qualifications. You start off as junior dynamic positioning operator and move on to senior DPO. You can also become a dynamic positioning instructor.

Experienced deck officers are in demand for both onshore and offshore positions, with shipping companies, port authorities, maritime insurance companies and shipping brokers. Officers can also use their skills to transfer to managerial roles in other industrial and commercial sectors.

## Contacts

**Maritime UK**
Email: info@maritimeuk.org
Website: www.maritimeuk.org/careers
X: @MaritimeUK

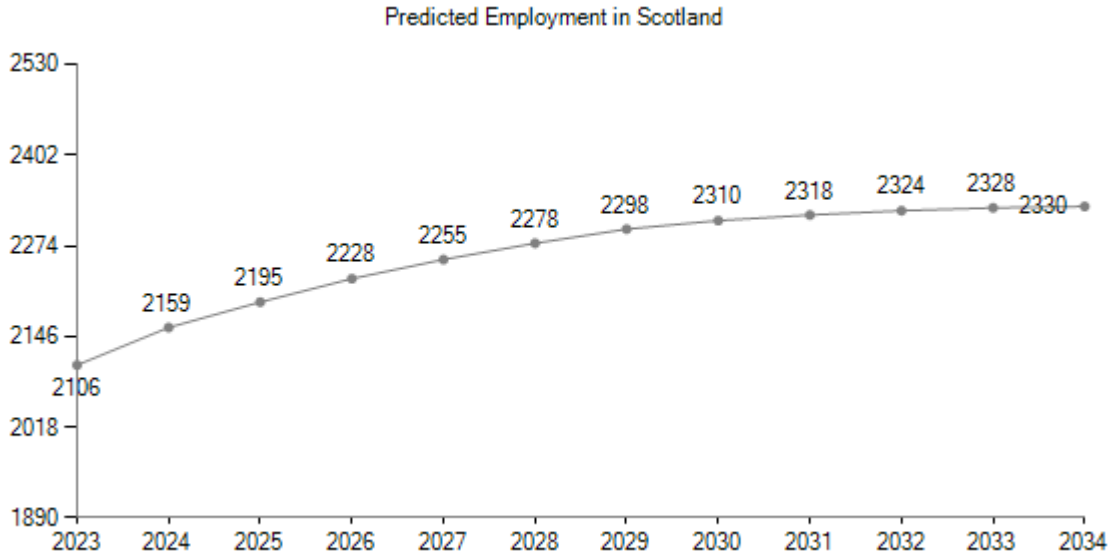
**Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB)**
Email: enquiry@careersatsea.org
Website: mntb.org.uk
Website (2): www.careersatsea.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/careersatsea

## Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

**Past Unemployment - Scotland**

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

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