

Hong Kong Maritime to get HK\$200m more for manpower development

Hong Kong's maritime sector is in celebratory mood following a raft of new incentives introduced by the Chief Executive during this year's policy address.



Among the sector-boosting measures announced in October is a HK\$200m cash injection into the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund (MATF) which was established in 2014 to sustain and enhance existing training schemes and scholarships, that will triple the funds for manpower development from HK\$100m to HK\$300m.

At the Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI), the main educational body responsible for training local deck cadets in Hong Kong, Principal Instructor, William Wong Lap-wah is enthusiastic about the potential that would be unleashed by the extra funding:

"The funding offered by the Government would certainly encourage the younger generation of the right calibre to undertake continuous professional development in order to meet with the Marine Department and the international maritime training requirements. Students also have the opportunity to explore other maritime-related professions ashore, such as ship management, marine insurance and



William Wong Lap-wah

Principal Instructor,
Maritime Services
Training Institute

“The funding offered by the Government would certainly encourage the younger generation of the right calibre to undertake continuous professional development

shipbroking,” he explains.

In common with many land-based industries, shipping is facing a period of extreme digital disruption. Mr Wong says young seafarers will now have to continuously build their competence in maritime skills within the digital and automation context.

"The additional funding would help support updating or upgrading simulators and other advanced training equipment abreast of technological development and advancement, as well as meet with International Maritime Organisation requirements," he adds.

The Hong Kong Seaman's Union has been in close collaboration with MSTI, and prides itself on providing a vital bridge between graduating students and prospective employers.

"We believe that seafaring is a good career," says Captain Cheung Sai-teng, Chairman of Hong Kong Seaman's Union. "It provides an attractive remuneration package and ultimately a better life.

"As a union we help young cadets recognise the promising career path ahead of them. We also assist

them in their education, and offer guidance in exploring job opportunities. Ultimately we are here to safeguard their interests and wellbeing as the cadets embark on their seafaring journey."

The wellbeing of cadets has also been a concern of government, which recently introduced enhancement measures to provide students of the Sea-going Training Incentive scheme with additional financial support, even while they are onshore preparing for their professional examinations.

Now, with the added bonus of a much-augmented MATF, Captain Cheung is happy to note that students of the Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme, and the Hong Kong Nautical and Maritime Scholarship Scheme will materially benefit.

"There is no doubt that these additional resources will reduce the financial burden of the students," he says.

For students studying at the tertiary level the MATF will ensure the sustainability of on-going scholarship schemes and the opportunity to expand the current range of programmes.

In 2017 alone, the Manpower Development Committee of the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board implemented the Hong Kong Nautical and Maritime Scholarship Scheme; the Maritime Law Scholarship Scheme and The University of Hong Kong – Shanghai Maritime University Academic Collaboration Scheme.

Among a handful of elite local universities, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) would be a beneficiary of the Government's funding.

PolyU currently runs a scholarship scheme for the BBA (Hons) in International Shipping and Transport Logistics programme under the auspices of MATF. The Seafaring Scholarship under the Hong Kong Nautical and Maritime Scholarship Scheme is subject to an award of HK\$120,000 over the two-year life of the scheme, and is aimed at providing incentives for students to pursue a sea-faring career.



Professor Chin-Shan Lu

Associate Head of
the Department of
Logistics and Maritime
Studies, PolyU

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The Maritime Scholarship under the Scheme is subject to an award of annual HK\$42,100 over four years. It is available to the brightest first-year-first degree applicants who have an eye on a career in the maritime industry after completing their studies.

Professor Chin-Shan Lu, Associate Head of the Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies says the scholarships are an important component in attracting outstanding students to pursue the maritime and logistics programme.

"These young graduates amount to a marvellous opportunity for the industries they will go on to serve. They bring energy and the ability to further develop the maritime and logistics sectors," he maintains.

Asked how the university department could utilise additional funding it could attract under the new arrangement, Programme leader, Dr TL Yip says extra funds would be helpful in their efforts to strengthen the two existing maritime and logistics programmes,

namely International Shipping and Transport Logistics, and Global Supply Chain Management.

"We are now incorporating technology and data analytics topics such as big data, artificial intelligence, autonomous shipping, social media, and digital shipping into our programmes."

Dr Yip adds: "We would hope that a portion of the MATF could support our education, training and research-related laboratories so that students can experience the latest world-class technologies being applied in the industry."

The foresight demonstrated by Government in helping the maritime sector to nurture talent and contribute to the life-long learning of practitioners has been widely applauded by Hong Kong's maritime-related industries. Hong Kong can face future competition with confidence that comes with a workforce of fully qualified professionals.



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