

Taking a punt on shipping

Carly Fields meets students that have chosen to pursue a career in the maritime world



Carly Fields

If the trend in student numbers is to be believed, it's not just those already involved in shipping that are taking professional exams. Today, there are more people than ever choosing to take professional shipping exams without any previous shipping interest. What's the attraction?

Topic: Employment

Keywords: Options, interest, route

Background Info: Students studying for the Institute's exams sometimes stumble upon shipping

Clarksons dry cargo broker Tommy Williams-Jones came to shipping four months ago from a renewable energy start-up based in Vietnam. He was keen to stay in the Far East and started his research into a potential new career. It didn't take long to discover that Singapore was a hub for shipping jobs. However, logistically and financially, it proved impossible to make the move to Singapore, so he pursued the role with Clarksons in London – which in retrospect he sees as a “blessing in disguise”.

Ornela Piriu came into shipping through becoming an administration and claims assistant at Shipperserve International (P&I correspondent), a company which she joined earlier this year. Having completed a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and History of Science at the University of Athens, she decided to move into a sector that would offer greater specialisation. Some research and discussions with friends piqued her interest in the maritime sector and the Institute's exams.

Greece, of course, has a solid maritime standing, which made it easier for Ms Piriu to find the sector. “Shipping is an area where Greeks have experience, knowledge and specialisation,” she says. “This particular thought, combined with the general financial crisis, led me to take the step.”

UNDERSTANDING SHIPPING

Before joining, Mr Williams-Jones already had a fairly clear picture in his head of the work ethic and culture of shipping: “I had always heard that it required a lot of commitment, long hours and so on, but if you had the energy and were good there was a lot of potential. I think this is accurate.” He soon realised that there is a wide spectrum of broker styles and that newcomers need to develop their own and try to make it effective.

Before joining, Ms Piriu possessed only a general perception of the shipping industry, with no specific knowledge or theoretical background to call on. Now she is better versed in the shipping world. “Since I have joined the industry, my whole perception has changed. Shipping is something that keeps moving all the time. It is a ‘living organism’ and it has its norms and rules. For me, shipping is connection.”



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The Institute gave her the introduction she needed to shipping and helped her to understand the value of professionalism in the maritime world. “I remember when I first started lectures, I hardly knew that a ship is a ‘she’!” she says. The Institute programme helped her to gain important knowledge in a short period but, importantly, it also gave her the chance to connect and get in touch with qualified professionals in the sector.

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

Alexandros Bougiouris began his pursuit of a career in shipping at 23 when he committed himself to completing the Institute's professional qualifying exams. Once he gained membership, he moved straight on to the next challenge and enrolled on a LLM in Maritime Law offered by City, University of London.

Mr Bougiouris had some experience of shipping before he chose to take the Institute's qualifications, having held the position of claims handler assistant at Piraeus-based Atlantic Management. However, he gave up that role to focus wholeheartedly on furthering his maritime knowledge. He was initially attracted to