



## **INTRODUCTION TO SHIPPING**

### **Lead Examiner Report**

**20<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

#### **General comments:**

We had some really good papers, some average, and, regrettably, some that needed considerable improvement.

The questions posed are typical of those seen in many previous papers. An endeavour has been made to adjust the questions to test the students' knowledge and research.

We see that many papers follow the answers given in the book, whilst the real test is to see their research across multiple sources and their comprehension of the essential parts of shipping, such as geography, vessel types, and the main documents used.

We have many students attempting and delivering good answers spoiled by an 'etc', thus not finalising a good answer, or giving a half answer by using 'etc'. We encourage students to utilise their time to expand on their answers by including what is required by the question and not revealing anything unrelated to the question, though related to the subject matter.

A concise and succinct answer, within the confines of the question, earns more marks than a lengthy reply filled with much that is irrelevant to the actual question.

Students are encouraged to practise answering past papers as "mock exams" by doing test exams, which helps them manage their time and write answers calmly, succinctly, and with a clear framework. A good answer requires a solid structure and should not include irrelevant information (for example, B/L, Charterparty to name two), but only what the question asks and in the manner it requests (identify, explain, elucidate, describe). Each of these requires a different structure.

Stay calm and re-read each question a couple of times before attempting to answer. When preparing, carry out research on the topic using external sources outside the course booklet.

#### **Q1 Identify and draw the following on the world map provided.**

##### **Continents:**

- i. Asia**
- ii. Africa**
- iii. Europe**
- iv. South America**
- v. Australia**

##### **Waterways:**

- vi. St. Lawrence Seaway**
- vii. Malacca Strait**
- viii. Straits of Hormuz**
- ix. English Channel**
- x. Strait of Gibraltar**



**Seas/Oceans:**

- xi. Atlantic Ocean**
- xii. Pacific Ocean**
- xiii. Indian Ocean**
- xiv. Caribbean Sea**
- xv. South China Sea**

**Major ports:**

- xvi. Houston**
- xvii. Hamburg**
- xviii. Shanghai**
- xix. Port Hedland**
- xx. Santos**

This question is designed to assess students' knowledge of basic maritime geography, which is essential in all shipping-related roles, both onboard and ashore. This is a fundamental question relevant to more complex, technical ones.

It is a popular question that most students attempt.

The feedback is that many attempts answer most of the questions correctly, although some students unfortunately have not done the necessary preparation. We encourage students to study and research various worldwide maps and atlases to familiarise themselves with world geography, canals, oceans, and other maritime-related geographical locations and seaways. This will assist you in all your future career.

**Q2 Answer BOTH parts of the question.**

**Describe the basic elements of:**

- a) A voyage charter party and give ONE example of a common form used.**
- b) A time charter party and give ONE example of a common form used.**

It is a basic question to ascertain the student's knowledge and preparation for the exam.

Many students cover all parts of the question, with some omitting an example of a common form as required.

Some students confuse and mix up elements of Time and Voyage Charters, using them interchangeably, which can affect their results. It is important to identify the key characteristics of Time and Voyage Charters, as these elements will frequently appear in your careers.



What was being looked for by the examiner:

**A) Voyage Charterparty** with explanation expanding on the list below

Vessel Description  
Ship Owner / Charterer  
Load Port(s)/ Discharge Port(s)  
Cargo Description / Quantity  
Must mention Laycan, Freight and basis of how it is estimated,  
Laytime and Demurrage and Despatch and rates of Demurrage and Despatch: what these are and how they are derived numerically  
Overage, Deadfreight  
Brokerage / Address Commission

CP Form: Accept any main CP e.g. BPvoy4 / 5, Asbatankvoy, Shellvoy6, Gencon and any other Dry cargo CP's such as AMWELSH, Synacomex, Graincon

**B) Time Charterparty** with explanation expanding on the list below

Vessel Description  
Ship Owner / Charterer  
Delivery Laycan  
Brokerage  
Must mention:  
Period of time charter  
Delivery and Redelivery Locations  
Trading Limits  
Hire Rate, basis of calculation, and payment frequency  
OffHire  
Bunkers on delivery/redelivery and why  
Speed and consumption warranty

Time Charter party – accept Baltime 2001, Shelltime 4, Linertime, Bovertime, NYPE 1993, NYPE 2015, BPTIME

**Q3 Explain the main functions of a Bill of Lading and its role in international trade.**

A typically popular question with students. It is a standard question, and as such, we require basic information on Bills of Lading (B/L) and some detail on its role in international trade, thereby applying the functions in practice.

A few students get nervous and either incorrectly apply the mix-up of the functions or do not expand fully on them. A typical mistake is to use brief descriptions of the functions, such as 'Evidence of Contract' instead of 'Evidence of the Contract of carriage' thereby referring to the B/L as being a contract of carriage and not of evidence of it related to the goods carried onboard, thus leading to the other two functions (receipt of the goods and document of title of these goods).



What was being looked for by the examiner:

Receipt of Cargo as to its Quantity and Quality:

Cargo description and condition matching Mate's Receipt  
Cargo amount and date 'shipped' or 'received onboard'

Load port(s) and discharge port(s)

Accurately reflects cargo being shipped, with caveat 'said to contain' said to 'weigh', 'condition unknown'

Evidence of the Contract of Carriage of the Goods:

Charterparty contract is between Shipowner and Charterer

The receiver is a third party; thereby, the B/L is Evidence of the Contract of carriage for the protection of the rights of an innocent third party, a lawful holder of the B/L.

The reverse side of the B/L incorporates clauses from the Charterparty that the receiver can rely on, provided the charterparty is properly identified (date, type) on the B/L.

Document of Title:

The Bill of Lading is not always proof of ownership of the goods. The lawful holder of the B/L is entitled to claim delivery of the goods for themselves. However, it may also be that a lawful holder of the B/L can claim ownership of the cargo. It is a negotiable and tradable document as long as it is made out 'To Order' or is 'Blank'. Endorsed B/Ls can be passed to the new owners of the cargo, who can then demand delivery. Straight B/Ls must be referred to in the answer; of course, these cannot be transferred or endorsed.

B/L's role in international trade:

B/L is treated as security for payment through the banking system (passing of funds from buyer to the cargo seller) allowing issuance of the Letter of Credit, together with other supporting documents that are customarily required under widespread rules such as the ICC (International Chamber of Commerce) Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credits (UCP), with UCP 600 being the latest version.

Documentary credit or letter of credit is the most common method of payment, and the Original BL plays a main role in the process. It is a written commitment issued by a bank on behalf of a buyer (importer), guaranteeing payment to a seller (exporter) once specific terms and documentary requirements outlined in the credit are fulfilled.

When 'To Order' or 'Blank' thus fully negotiable B/L, the represented cargo within the B/L can be traded (bought and sold) numerous times while at sea and the endorsed B/L is passed through the banking system from the seller to the new cargo buyer.

Original B/L's are commonly not available at the final traded discharge port. Letter of indemnity is issued by the Receiver or by the Shipowner with the guidance of its P&I Club to allow discharge. Though the LOI whilst being issued in good faith, does not prejudice the rights of the parties, P&I Clubs treat it as unenforceable and prejudicing P&I cover in case of a dispute and Courts do the same only though if it was issued in bad faith. The solution the Clubs of IG have come up are several common draft wordings to be used by the Members of each IG Club, available on their sites and to be used on Member's sole discretion.



#### **Q4 Describe the role of Port State Control (PSC).**

This is also a popular question. Its structure allows the student to expand on areas to demonstrate what the PSC does, why, how, and by whom.

A lot of answers were very short, and many did not really identify why PSC exists, who introduced them, or the relationship between Bodies (Flag, Class, IMO). Many answers did not refer to IMO and its four main Conventions (the four pillars of IMO: SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW, MLC), the MOUs, or why PSC is important.

What was being looked for by the examiner:

##### **Port State Control's Role**

**Inspection of Foreign Ships:** PSC authorities inspect ships at ports to verify that their condition, equipment, and operations meet the standards set by conventions such as SOLAS (safety), MARPOL (pollution prevention), STCW (crew qualifications), and MLC (crew welfare).

**Enforcement of International Standards:** PSC acts as a secondary safety measure after flag state controls, identifying and detaining, if necessary, substandard ships that might otherwise evade oversight. Inspectors can order repairs, detain vessels, or refuse entry to ships found non-compliant.

**Protection and Prevention:** The system is designed to prevent accidents, pollution, and poor labour conditions by ensuring only properly maintained and operated vessels are allowed to trade. PSC also shares inspection data regionally to more efficiently target repeat offenders.

**Regional Cooperation:** PSC operates under regional Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) such as the Paris MoU (Europe/North Atlantic), Tokyo MoU (Asia/Pacific), and others, promoting consistent procedures and mutual recognition among nations.

By maintaining strict oversight at ports, Port State Control improves maritime safety, safeguards the environment, and promotes fair global competition in shipping.

##### **Safety Net and Regional Cooperation**

PSC acts as a "second line of defence" against substandard shipping when flag states fail to ensure compliance. It helps enforce global maritime standards and coordinate efforts across regions via various MoUs (Paris, Tokyo, Mediterranean, etc.), reducing redundant inspections and targeting repeat offenders.

##### **Main Purpose**

By detaining unsafe vessels and promoting compliance, PSC protects lives, the environment, and fair competition in global shipping



**Q5 Answer ALL parts of the question.**

- a) Describe the characteristics of an AFRAMAX tanker, including dimensions, tonnage, cargo gear and equipment.**
- b) Draw a side profile and a cross-section of the vessel. Do not draw a plan view.**
- c) Label the significant parts of the vessel.**
- d) Give details of ONE trade the vessel operates in, where and how it will load, carry and discharge its cargo.**

**Use the world map provided to support your answer**

Part (a) had a lot of answers that were correct but also many that were inaccurate as to the dimensions and tonnage. A lot of students did not specify why it is called an AFRAMAX.

Part (b) is usually given so as to test the student's knowledge. More research and study are encouraged on this part of exam preparation, since it is fundamental to identifying vessel types, their characteristics, and their trades.

Part (c) follows closely to Part (b)'s feedback.

Part (d) is significant for testing students' knowledge of the very wide and diverse maritime industry.

We prefer seeing major trades, though local trades are common, and we have to assess the accuracy of the answer. Whilst using a local trade to the student's countries or region is not incorrect, a major trade is always welcome to be seen since it shows a broader view of world trade.

What was being looked for by the examiner:

Typical vessel specifications (Deadweight range, Lengths (LOA, LBP), beam, width, draught, freeboard, cargo tanks and pumps, slop tanks, main engine, accommodation, double bottom, double skin)

Oil trade AFRAMAX route, marking the lines and the loading/discharging ports.



**Q6 Answer BOTH parts of the question.**

**a) What are the principles of a legally binding contract?**

**b) Apply the above principles to a maritime document of your choice. Explain with examples for each element**

This was a popular question. Most answers identified and explained what all four principles are. Some areas needed improvement where fewer principles were included. Confusing or very brief identification and explanation of the principles can result in an examiner's being unable to ascertain whether the candidate knows about these essential elements of a contract.

Most students answered part (b), but the application of the principles to a contract, particularly a maritime document, often needed improvement.

What was being looked for by the examiner:

**Offer**

An offer is a definite promise by one party to be bound by specific terms, intended to become legally binding if accepted by the other party. It must be clear and complete, and it must indicate a willingness to form a contract, distinguishing it from an invitation to treat.

**Acceptance**

Acceptance is the unconditional agreement by the other party to all terms of the offer, showing both parties are in consensus. Acceptance can be made verbally, in writing, or by conduct, and it must be communicated for a binding contract to arise.

**Consideration**

Consideration is something of value exchanged between the parties, such as payment, a promise, or an act, which makes the contract binding. Without consideration, an agreement cannot be enforced as a contract, except for certain contracts made by deed.

**Capacity to Contract**

Capacity means that all parties must have the legal ability to enter into a contract. Persons lacking capacity—such as minors, people of unsound mind, or intoxicated individuals—cannot enter binding contracts, and contracts made under such circumstances may be void or voidable.

**B)**

These four principles are essential for forming a legally binding agreement under English law. The principles outlined in (a) can be applied to a charterparty, sale & purchase (S&P) contract, or other agreements that require those four principles to be met. Bills of Lading (B/Ls) may not always be regarded as contracts themselves but may act solely as evidence of a contract. However, under English law, a lawful holder of a B/L can acquire rights under a contract of carriage as if they were an original party to the contract. This can transform a Bill of Lading into a "contract".



**Q7 Answer BOTH parts of the question.**

**a) Explain the importance of the load line in international shipping.**

**b) Draw a detailed load line symbol. Labelling the different marks and their significance.**

This was a popular question. The challenge is the level of accuracy and detail in drawing the load lines, explaining why they are where they are, and describing their actual function. The salinity vs buoyancy relation was not always given, and if so, with very brief remarks. In general, the link between salinity, buoyancy, and safety is not entirely reflected in most answers.

What was being looked for by the examiner:

A.

Importance of the Load Line

Safety at Sea: The primary function of the load line is to define the maximum legal limit to which a ship may be loaded. This prevents overloading, which can compromise freeboard (the distance between the waterline and deck), reduce reserve buoyancy, and increase the risk of capsizing or hull stress, particularly in adverse maritime conditions.

International Regulation: The International Convention on Load Lines (1966), updated and enforced worldwide, is designed to standardise safe loading practices. It divides the world into zones with specific load line requirements for different climates and water densities, ensuring ships carry safe loads whether in salt water, fresh water, tropical zones, or harsh winter seas.

Legal Compliance and Enforcement: Ships without correct load line markings may be detained, denied entry to ports, or penalised by port state authorities. Valid load line certificates are mandatory for access to ports and for passage through many shipping lanes.

Insurance and Commercial Integrity: Compliance with load line regulations is often a prerequisite for marine insurance cover and is a sign of responsible, safe shipping operations. This enhances the reputation of shipping companies and reduces the likelihood of claims due to loss or damage caused by overloading

Samuel Plimsoll introduced the load lines in the 19th century, and there is the IMO Loadline Convention of 1966.

B.

The question required a detailed load line symbol, with labels and their significance.

Users of this Report for future examinations in this subject should consider researching appropriately about Load Line marks on the side of a ship. The research should be fine-tuned to include the positioning of the Load line marks, the thicknesses of each line and circle, and the distances between the horizontal lines and the centre of the Load Line Circle ("Plimsoll circle"), as well as between the vertical lines and the centre of the Load Line Circle ("Plimsoll circle").



**Q8 Answer BOTH parts of the question.**

**a) Provide the full range of vessels in EITHER dry or wet trades, based on their deadweight tonnage and the trade names given to each type per the applicable tonnage and trade route they are in. Why are they named as such, and what cargo can they take?**

**b) Draw on the world map provided ONE major trade route for a dry cargo and ONE major trade route for a wet cargo, giving the full details of the port of loading and port of discharge, seas, lanes, straits, continents and countries she will pass.**

Whilst this question appears easy, it requires attention and calmness of mind to list the main types of vessels in the correct order and to identify the correct trade for each type used as an example.

Understandably, due to the large amount of vessel types, some confusion may arise in relation to the tonnage vis-à-vis vessel name, but most students are very close to the name and related tonnage, so some discretion is applied.

The trades are important because they demonstrate the student's knowledge of each type of trade (dry/wet) and are significant, especially given the variety of trades involved in shipping.

What was being looked for by the examiner:

At least five of the below, and see a reference to the type of cargo carried by each named vessel type and why she is called as such.

#### DRY

Vessel Type	Typical Deadweight (DWT) Range
General Cargo	2,000 – 25,000
Mini Bulk Carrier	2,000 – 10,000
Handysize Bulk Carrier	15,000 – 40,000
Handymax Bulk Carrier	40,000 – 50,000
Supramax Bulk Carrier	50,000 – 60,000
Ultramax Bulk Carrier	60,000 – 65,000
Panamax Bulk Carrier	60,000 – 80,000
Kamsarmax Bulk Carrier	80,000 – 85,000
Post-Panamax Bulk Carrier	85,000 – 110,000
Capesize Bulk Carrier	110,000 – 200,000+
Very Large Ore Carrier (VLOC)	200,000 – 400,000
Container Ship	– From relatively small “feeder” ships (<1000 teu) to 220,000 dwt (approx. 24,000 teu) (Large ULCV)

#### WET

Small Tanker / Coastal	2,000 – 10,000
Handysize/Product Tanker	16,000 – 45,000
Medium Range (MR) Tanker	45,000 – 54,999
Long Range 1 (LR1) Tanker	55,000 – 79,999
Panamax Tanker	60,000 – 80,000
Long Range 2 (LR2) Tanker	80,000 – 159,999
Aframax Tanker	80,000 – 120,000
Suezmax Tanker	120,000 – 200,000
Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC)	200,000 – 320,000



Ultra Large Crude Carrier (ULCC)	320,000 – 550,000
Chemical Tanker	2,000 – 50,000
LNG Carrier	20,000 – 125,000 (by CBM, not DWT)
LPG Carrier	3,500 – 60,000 (by CBM, not DWT)

Students should research Chapters 1 and 5 in the 2023 Course Book for this subject or other information sources to obtain and write about details of port location and accuracy of location, Oceans, Seas, Archipelagos, Straits, sea lanes, coastal countries, Canals and destination Port equally as accurately located as possible.