

## SYLLABUS FOR THE COURSE LEADING TO THE ISSUANCE OF A NAUTICAL LICENCE

*Issued under the Small Ship Regulations (S.L. 499.52)*

Ports and Yachting Directorate

---



**Transport Malta**

Malta Transport Centre  
Marsa, MRS 1917  
Malta

Tel: (356) 2122 2203  
Fax: (356) 2125 0365  
Email: [info.tm@transport.gov.mt](mailto:info.tm@transport.gov.mt)

[www.transport.gov.mt](http://www.transport.gov.mt)

### Basic Seamanship and Safe Boat handling

<b>Scope:</b>	This syllabus defines the minimum training and competency requirements for operating recreational vessels under 24m within the territorial waters of Malta
<b>Minimum Age:</b>	18
<b>Applicability:</b>	Pleasure/recreational vessels operating non-commercially.
<b>Vessel Length and Power:</b>	Can operate any pleasure/recreational vessel under 24 metres of length, including towing any person for the purpose of skiing or any water sports leisure articles, equipped with an engine or engines of 30HP or more.
<b>Operating Limits:</b>	Within the territorial waters of Malta, up to 12 nautical miles from baseline.
<b>Minimum Training Required:</b>	Completion of an approved training course followed by an Oral examination by an examiner appointed by the Authority.:
<b>Course Contents:</b>	Course content is to be based on a minimum of 24hrs tuition covering both classroom and practical training (seamanship and boat handling).

It is up to the training centre to manage and stream students undertaking the training course according to their abilities and knowledge. Tuition hours may be adjusted accordingly. Practical boat handling is mandatory for all students.

Module 1 (Classroom) - Theory		
Task	Competence	Knowledge, Understanding and proficiency
Introduction to first time boating	Awareness at Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates to be aware of perils likely to be encountered at sea. To gain knowledge of hazards present at sea and associated risks. To be able to conduct dynamic risk assessments and assess their ability based on their personal experience and characteristics and limitations of the craft.</li> <li>• Knowledge of appropriate conduct at sea with respect to other mechanical crafts, non-mechanical crafts and swimmers, to ensure awareness of dangers other sea users may be exposed to.</li> <li>• Awareness by candidates to appreciate the importance of proper conduct at sea to ensure safety and enjoyment for self and other users of the sea alike.</li> </ul>
	Situational awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough knowledge on sources of information, such as nautical charts or other means, such as dedicated plotters or nautical smartphone/tablet apps, to determine their location and understand the information provided through such means.</li> <li>• Knowledge on how to plan trip by understanding local regulations and their conduct at sea as per regulations with respect to other users, both leisure and commercial.</li> <li>• Appraisal of information available to conduct planning of the intended voyage.</li> <li>• <b>Thorough knowledge of Notices to Mariners published by the authority and ability to obtain notices relevant for the intended voyage. Identify the need to ensure nautical charts or similar means are up to date. (APEM Principle for passage planning).</b></li> <li>• <b>To be well versed with Notice to Mariners that are not time limited, in effect Notice to Mariners with no expiry date. Understand the need to search for regular updates of Notices to Mariners not solely prior commencement of a voyage.</b></li> <li>• Knowledge on sources of weather forecasts and interpretation. Candidates to demonstrate ability to take decision with respect to prevailing weather forecasts depending on the craft they are on.</li> <li>• Knowledge of potential effects during periods of adverse weather for vessels moored on buoys, in marinas or on hard and the importance to consider</li> </ul>

		relocation during spells of bad weather or deployment of additional mooring lines or other forms of fastening.
Knowledge on crafts	General knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding basic nautical terms with respect to crafts, mooring systems, navigational aids available, purpose and ancillary equipment used in the maritime industry.</li> <li>• Thorough knowledge on local regulations, in particular knowledge of the applicable Small Ships Regulations (S.L. 499.52) and requirements governing small vessels and conduct thereof, and of the Recreational Craft Regulations (S.L. 427.61) concerning CE marking, declarations of conformity and standards for design, construction and emissions.</li> <li>• Basic knowledge on stability and effects of loading the boat with respect to draught, list and trim.</li> <li>• Ability to identify maximum capacity, maximum load and maximum power of a craft and knowledge of the CE plate and manufacturer's recommendations.</li> </ul>
	Types of crafts and layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic knowledge of different types of crafts and be aware of advantages and disadvantages of hull forms with respect to sea keeping abilities.</li> <li>• Basic knowledge of different engines and drives available, including advantages and disadvantages of outboard and inboard engines, 2 stroke/4 stroke engines and fuel types. To be aware of dangers associated with different fuels and precautions to be taken.</li> <li>• Basic knowledge of different propulsion arrangements, including but not limited to single or multiple engines arrangements, shaft drive, 'Z' drive, stern drive or jet propulsion.</li> </ul>
	Operating at High Speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of risks while operating a craft at high speed, including enhanced risks in adverse weather conditions.</li> <li>• Awareness of varying manoeuvring characteristics while operating at high speed.</li> <li>• Awareness of risks to craft occupants and knowledge on conduct while operating at high speed.</li> </ul>
	Operating under the influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear understanding of the safety risks and legal implications involved in operating a vessel while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.</li> </ul>
	Anchoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge on different types of anchors and their suitability for different types of sea bottom.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to plan and perform safe anchorage taking into account depth of water, prevailing weather conditions and proximity of other vessels and/or navigational hazards, including identifying navigational hazards and submarine cables and pipelines from nautical charts.</li> </ul>
	Machinery & Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic knowledge of fuel systems and arrangements, freshwater system, grey and black water system and cooling system.</li> <li>• Basic knowledge of electrical system, including lighting and starting circuits and circuit breakers</li> <li>• Awareness on the need of proper maintenance of machinery, risks if adequate maintenance is neglected, including but not limited to underwater inlets, fuel lines, engine ancillaries and electrical sources.</li> <li>• Understand logic to perform basic fault diagnostics with respect to machinery and electrical system. Identify risks associated with fire, sinking, loss of steering and propulsion and precautions to be taken while performing fault diagnostics and repairs.</li> <li>• Knowledge to identify type and quantity of spare parts to be carried on board, including the need for alternative means of propulsion when possible.</li> </ul>
	Start up, close down procedures and refuelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge on checks to be done before starting up and when closing down craft when moored to a buoy or secured in a marina.</li> <li>• Awareness of the importance to ensure ropes used are adequate in number and strength, as well as attachments to which ropes are secured to are suitable for use.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the appropriate refuelling procedure, risks involved, including fire and pollution.</li> </ul>
	Navigational Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of different navigational equipment available, use of and limitations, including specifically digital chart plotters and smartphone and table nautical applications.</li> </ul>
Emergency situations at sea	Types of emergencies and actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of different emergencies that may be encountered at sea, including but not limited to, fire, sinking, person overboard, grounding, pollution incident and responding to an emergency on board another vessel or person</li> <li>• Thorough knowledge on actions to be taken when encountering an emergency at sea.</li> <li>• Knowledge on towing arrangements, risks and precautions, both while towing and when being towed</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge on methods to alert coast radio stations and other vessels in the vicinity by means of VHF radio, visually and by sound.</li> <li>• Thorough knowledge of the difference between MAYDAY, PAN-PAN and SECURITÉ messages and ability to make the respective calls.</li> <li>• Awareness of reporting sightings of dangers to navigation, such as abandoned crafts adrift, debris, ropes or any other form of danger to the appropriate coastal radio station.</li> <li>• Thorough knowledge of International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) Annex IV and means to raise applicable distress signals.</li> <li>• Knowledge on the procedure in the event of person/s falling overboard</li> </ul>
Navigational Knowledge	Coastal Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and understanding of basic coastal navigation.</li> <li>• Knowledge of and ability to use a magnetic compass for steering and taking bearings.</li> </ul>
	Navigational Aids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough knowledge of the IALA buoyage system with respect to types of buoys available and meaning, conduct when encountering a buoyage system and identification of the IALA buoyage with respect to shape, colour, top mark and lights.</li> <li>• Thorough knowledge of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) with respect to purpose of VTS, areas of operation, VHF channels in use and knowledge of sources of information and procedure when participating with reporting requirements.</li> </ul>
	International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough knowledge and application of COLREGS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rules 5-9 and 12-19</li> <li>2. Lights and Shapes</li> <li>3. Sound and Light signals</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
	International Code of Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to identify code flags 'A' 'B' 'C' 'H' and 'N' and their meaning.</li> <li>• Knowledge of the single letter meaning and meaning of combined letters 'N'C' and action to take when encountering vessels flying any of the above.</li> </ul>
Basic Seamanship	Types of ropes, care and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge on types of ropes available and their care.</li> <li>• Knowledge on choosing the right rope for intended application</li> <li>• Ability to determine condition of rope and when to replace.</li> </ul>
	Ropework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate ability to perform basic Knots and Hitches</li> <li>• Knowledge on best application for basic Knots and Hitches</li> </ul>

Launching and Recovery	Ability to complete safe launching and recovery of a boat from a trailer or trolley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of equipment and parts thereof, used to launch and recover a craft.</li> <li>• Awareness of risks associated with launching and recovery and equipment associated with procedure, including safety considerations to be given to vehicles involved in the process.</li> <li>• Ability to determine manpower required to launch and recover a craft.</li> <li>• Ability to identify suitable locations where launching and recovery of crafts can be carried out, including considerations to prevailing weather conditions.</li> <li>• Knowledge on preparations to be made to craft for launching and recovery, including preparations of mooring lines, fenders, tilting of motor where applicable and requirements for temporary public berthing at public landing sites.</li> <li>• Knowledge to perform a safe launch or recovery of a craft.</li> <li>• Knowledge on local regulations and requirements concerning parking of trailers on public roads.</li> <li>• Knowledge on care and maintenance of trailer and associated parts to ensure trailer is maintained in a safe state to operate.</li> </ul>
Basic First Aid and Fire Fighting	Basic First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic First Aid training to cover emergencies likely to be encountered, including;             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Assessment and Safety</li> <li>2. Life-Saving Techniques (CPR)</li> <li>3. Breathing Emergencies</li> <li>4. Bleeding and Wound Care</li> <li>5. Unconsciousness</li> <li>6. Traumatic Injuries</li> <li>7. Environmental and Medical Emergencies (treatment of burns, shock, heat exhaustions, Hyperthermia, Jellyfish sting)</li> <li>8. First Aid kits</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Basic First Aid training to be given by an appropriately qualified and approved Instructor.</li> </ul>
	Basic Fire Fighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Fire Fighting training to cover emergencies likely to be encountered, including;             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge of the Fire Triangle/tetrahedron</li> <li>2. Knowledge on classes of fire likely to be encountered on recreational crafts</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Knowledge of types of firefighting equipment available for recreational crafts and use</li> <li>4. Knowledge on sources of fire on board recreational crafts</li> <li>5. Importance of proper maintenance to reduce the risk of fire</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Fire Fighting training to be given by an appropriately qualified and approved Instructor.</li> </ul>
	Exemption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requirement for Basic First Aid and Fire Fighting may be substituted with valid certificates issued by recognised institutions in line with the above standards</li> </ul>
Environmental considerations	Sources of Pollution and Pollution Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of sources of pollution from boating, including garbage, oil, sewage and exhaust.</li> <li>• Awareness of existing measures to be implemented to reduce the risk of pollution, through garbage collection and measures to prevent accidental loss of garbage overboard, adequate maintenance, following proper procedures during handling of fuels and oil and installation of black/grey water tanks on board, including the knowledge of existing Notices to Mariners.</li> </ul>
	Promoting Environmental Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of existing environmentally conscious initiatives aimed at safeguarding the marine and wider ecosystem for the collective benefit of all.</li> </ul>
Penalties	Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of enforcement</li> <li>• Awareness of the applicable fines and legal action in the event of any breaches and offences, which includes administrative fines, criminal action, suspension/revocation/non-renewal/non-issue of licences/certificates, non-provision of a service, seizure of vessel</li> </ul>

<b>Module 2 (In Water) - Practical</b>		
<b>Task</b>	<b>Competence</b>	<b>Knowledge, Understanding and proficiency</b>
Boat Handling	Ability to handle craft safely, both at low and high speed under varying load conditions, weather conditions and currents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify parts of craft, including steering components and controls.</li> <li>• Observe effect on planning boats with respect to propeller angle and immersion, shallow drive and effect on high and low speed handling. Difference in handling characteristics of a tiller or console steering.</li> <li>• Practice pre-start checks, engine starting and stopping.</li> <li>• Demonstrate the use of appropriate length kill cord.</li> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of assigning tasks and managing duties of crew on board such as look out duties and distribution on board.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of other sea users and the effect of wash while operating at high speed.</li> <li>• Observe effect on handling and performance of craft at different loaded conditions and the effect on balance and trim.</li> <li>• Practice boat handling on displacement boats moving ahead and astern and carrying way due to momentum as well as effects of current.</li> <li>• Perform steering by sight and by compass.</li> <li>• Carry out low speed manoeuvres including turning into a confined space. Awareness and use to of effect of wind on bow and holding off.</li> <li>• Observe and practice planning while operating at high speed by use of trim tabs and power trim.</li> <li>• Practice high speed manoeuvres including S-turns and U-turns.</li> <li>• Awareness of the danger of flooding while going astern.</li> </ul>
Securing to a Buoy	Ability to secure to a mooring buoy safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness and practice preparations to be made, including safety considerations, length and type of rope and boathook.</li> <li>• Practice planning and executing approach to a mooring buoy, including communication between conning position and person in charge of securing the boat to the mooring buoy, including hand signals.</li> <li>• Contingency planning in the event of overshooting.</li> </ul>
Anchoring	Ability to perform safe and effective anchoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh anchoring theory and putting it into practice.</li> <li>• Practice planning and executing approach to an anchorage position, including communication between conning position and person in charge of letting go of the anchor, including hand signals as well taking into account traffic density and prevailing wind and sea conditions.</li> <li>• Practice preparing craft and anchoring equipment and checks to the same equipment to confirm fit for use.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice methods to confirm effectiveness of anchoring and monitoring methods to confirm holding position.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice heaving up of anchor and clear anchorage area safely, including the proper stowage of anchor and associated equipment.</li> <li>• Awareness of restricted areas.</li> </ul>
Leaving and coming alongside	Ability to berth and cast off safely and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness and practice preparations to be made, including safety considerations for boat and other person in the water, length and type of rope, adequate fendering and use of boathook.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness and best use of prevailing wind and sea conditions to best evaluate approach to a berth.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice method of approach, including speed and angle as well as any currents.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice best method to secure craft alongside berth.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice casting off and moving off berth astern, including use of spring to assist with the manoeuvre.</li> <li>• Awareness on the use and effectiveness at speed of a bow thruster to control the bow of a craft during manoeuvring.</li> </ul>
Man Overboard	Ability to recover a person from the water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of preventative measures to avoid people falling overboard, such as seating while at sea and adjust speed with respect to the prevailing sea conditions.</li> <li>• Awareness and practice to action to be taken when observing person falling overboard.</li> <li>• Practice quick turn manoeuvres and approach person in the water taking into consideration prevailing wind and sea conditions.</li> <li>• Practice recovery of a person from the water.</li> </ul>

**To qualify:**

Following the successful completion of the examination with Transport Malta, and in accordance to TCU Notice 03/2026 applicants are required to apply for the issuance of the Nautical licence within twelve (12) months from the date of the examination.

Applicants holding a proof of the completion certificate stamped and signed by TM examiner may submit their application online by visiting [Training & Certification Unit Application Forms for the Issuance of a Nautical Licence - Transport Malta](#)