



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency

Revised ENG medical examination policy during COVID-19 pandemic information for MCA Approved Doctors and Referees

The MCA has put in place contingency plans to mitigate disruption to essential delivered services as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

Exceptions for ENG 1 Certificates which have expired or are due to expire imminently

In view of the difficulty in obtaining ENG 1 certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been decided to extend the three-month period as currently stated in MSN 1887 section 3.4:

Scenario 1. “A seafarer whose certificate has expired during the course of a voyage may continue to work until the next port of call at which a replacement certificate can be obtained, or for up to three months from the date of expiry of the certificate – whichever is the sooner. The validity of the certificate itself cannot be extended. A replacement medical fitness certificate must be obtained at the next port at which it is possible to do so.”

Scenario 2. “In urgent cases, with MCA’s approval, a seafarer who has no valid medical fitness certificate because their medical certificate has expired within the last month, may exceptionally be employed for a period not exceeding three months without a valid medical certificate, provided that their last medical fitness certificate was valid for a full 24 months (or 12 months if the seafarer is under 18 years of age). The seafarer must obtain a replacement medical fitness certificate at the next port at which it is possible to do so. Any case requiring approval should be referred to MCA’s Medical Administration Team at the address at the end of this Notice.”

NEW Revised Exceptions

Scenario 1 (On board)

There is no need to involve an Approved Doctor (AD) or MCA in the exception process. The seafarer or master should print a copy of the published guidance to present with their (expired) certificate which is then acceptable for the stipulated period.

- **Full 2-year ENG 1 certificate (or 1-year for under 18s):** Extend the above exception to **6 months** for those whose certificate expires during a voyage. This would decrease the administrative burden on ADs, as well as avoiding potential exposure of seafarers to infection when travelling to appointments or in clinics/surgeries.
- **Time Limited ENG 1 certificates (those valid for less than 2 years due to medical reasons):** Exception for current voyage (for 3 months after a time limited certificate expires as above) is retained. Those still on board at the end of that three-month exception will require a [Telephone Review](#) to assess whether a further exception can be approved or not.

Scenario 2 (Joining a ship with an expired ENG 1 certificate)

- **Full 2-year certificate (or 1 year for under 18s):** Extend the above exception to **6 months** for those with a full 2-year certificate whose certificate has expired within the **last three months** when joining a ship. This will decrease the administrative burden on ADs, as well as avoiding potential exposure of seafarers to infection travelling to appointments or in clinics/surgeries.
- **Time Limited ENG 1 certificates (those valid for less than 2 years due to medical reasons):** For anyone needing to join a ship whose time limited ENG 1 certificate expired within the last month, will require a [Telephone Review](#) to assess whether an exception can be approved or not.

For all exceptions in scenario 2, MCA must be informed so we can keep a record for audit purposes. The following information will be required:

- Seafarer's Name and Date of Birth,
- The issue and expiry dates and name of the AD who issued the ENG 1 certificate that has expired,
- Serial number of ENG 1 Certificate.

Telephone review with an Approved Doctor (only necessary for time limited ENG 1 certificates)

- The telephone review should preferably be conducted by the AD who issued the expired ENG 1 certificate.
- A proportionate fee may be charged at the AD's discretion.
- Consider the condition that resulted in restriction or time limitation, eg
 - Stable cardiac conditions with no change in risk factors could be excepted for 6 months
 - Those who are on medications that reduce immunity or have other conditions that make them at significant risk from COVID-19 should not be excepted
 - Those whose ENG 1s were time limited due to follow up requirements would need to provide evidence that follow up was postponed/not urgent.
- If the previous AD/paperwork is not available then assessment in more detail will be necessary, with information from the seafarer's GP if possible. Consider the need for face to face examination accepting that exception may not be possible.
- If the exception is approved, the AD should email an MCA exception letter to the seafarer or master. This should carry full details of the AD with their stamp and signature and be copied by the AD to MCA Medical Admin Team, so that the exception can be verified.
- If it is not possible to make a decision over the phone, then consider a full face to face medical if it is possible to arrange this (but see below).

Face to face medical

Local policy regarding face to face examination should be followed, and it has to be accepted that this may not be possible as guidance changes. If ADs are able to provide this service, then examination of teeth/throat may be omitted and a self-declaration around dental health should

be obtained. Coughing for hernia exam should be omitted (unless with closed mouth). It must be accepted that new ENG 1 certificates may not be available during the pandemic.

General

- If the demand for ENG medicals becomes overwhelming you should prioritise, focussing on seafarers who are providing essential services such as life-line ferries, cargo ships, containers or O & G vessels. This can be confirmed by a letter from their company confirming that they are a key worker or are providing a key service.
- You can consider deferring ENG examinations for those on pleasure vessels, private yachts and other shipping that does not have a clear national priority, as well as those who have non-essential roles such as entertainers and research scientists.

Referrals

No new face to face referrals to independent referees will be requested. If the referee is able to review the case on paper, backed up by telephone or Skype discussion with the seafarer the review may continue, otherwise the review will be deferred until such a time when face to face examination is possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a period at the end.

Dr Sally Bell
MCA Chief Medical Advisor