



**REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR
MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE ADMINISTRATION**

Marine Guidance (6/2025)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MARITIME ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST (MEPT)

Dated 21 November 2025

Applicable to: Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs), Maritime Training Centres (MTCs), Seafarers, Shipowners, Seafarer Recruitment and Placement Services (SRPS), and Shipowners' Associations

- References:*
- (a) *International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978, as amended (STCW)*
 - (b) *Myanmar Merchant Shipping Act*
 - (c) *Notification (108/2012) (Rules for granting of Certificates of Competency and Certificates of Proficiency of Masters, officers and Ratings), as amended*
 - (d) *Marine Guidance (6/2021) dated 22 October 2021*

Summary

This Marine Guidance establishes the national implementation of the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT) as a standardized framework for assessing English communication skills among seafarers. It supports the development of role-specific language competencies aligned with international maritime practices, the STCW Convention, as amended, and recognized global benchmarks such as IELTS and CEFR. The MEPT promotes safe shipboard operations, enhances employability, and ensures regulatory compliance throughout certification and career progression.

1. The Department of Marine Administration (DMA) issues this Marine Guidance to operationalize the national implementation of the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT), with the aim of strengthening the linguistic competency of Myanmar seafarers in accordance with internationally recognized maritime communication standards.
2. In line with the STCW Convention and the Code, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) requires shipboard personnel, particularly officers and watchkeepers, to demonstrate the ability to understand and communicate effectively in English for the safe conduct of navigational, operational, and emergency duties.
3. Accordingly, all seafarers, including new entrants, shall undertake an approved English proficiency assessment as part of their certification and placement process, in accordance with the attached English Proficiency Standards for Seafarers (Ratings and Officers).

4. The DMA recognizes test results issued by Cambridge English Authorised Exam Centres, which may be accepted as equivalent for MEPT Basic Level certification under the national MEPT framework. A list of authorised centres is available on the Cambridge English official website: -

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/find-a-centre/find-an-exam-centre/?location=myanmar>

5. Certificates of English proficiency used for MEPT purposes shall remain valid for a period of **two (2) years** from the date of examination.

6. The DMA may issue further instructions or related guidelines to support phased implementation, compliance oversight, and future updates to this framework.

7. This Marine Guidance shall take effect on **1 January 2026**, from which date all first-time SIRB applicants must submit a valid English test certificate.



Dr. Ko Ko Naing

Director General (Acting)

Guidance on Maritime English Proficiency Standards for Seafarers (Ratings and Officers)

Introduction

1. English language proficiency is a critical component of safe and effective shipboard operations, as stipulated in the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW Convention), particularly under Regulation I/1 and Section B-I/1. In the global maritime industry, English serves as the *lingua franca*—the universal working language—making it essential for all seafarers to demonstrate a level of proficiency that allows them to effectively understand and communicate safety information, emergency procedures, operational instructions, and technical documentation.
2. This guidance sets out practical and standardized benchmarks for assessing the Maritime English proficiency of Myanmar seafarers, both officers and ratings. The framework is aligned with the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) due to its global recognition and compatibility with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
3. Additionally, the guidelines further encourage the use of the **Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT)**—a targeted evaluation tool designed to assess communication skills specific to seafaring duties and real-world shipboard operations.

MEPT Standards – International Score Comparison Table

4. This table presents the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT) levels in comparison with widely recognized international English proficiency standards, including IELTS, CEFR, and MARLINS. Each category corresponds to a target seafarer group, with an associated proficiency level and purpose of English use onboard.

Table: MEPT Levels Aligned with International Language Proficiency Benchmarks

Category	MEPT Level	IELTS Band	CEFR Level	MARLINS Score (%)	Purpose
New Ratings	Basic Level	4.0	A2-B1	–	Basic onboard communication, safety instructions
Experienced Ratings	Support Level	4.5	B1 (Mid)	60% – 69%	Routine watchkeeping and work-related dialogue
Junior Officers	Operational Level	5.0	B1 (High)	70% – 79%	Bridge/Engine-room communication, recordkeeping
Senior Officers	Management Level	5.5 and above	B2 and above	80% and above	Full understanding of technical documents, GMDSS, and meetings

- **MEPT Level:** Indicates the corresponding Maritime English Proficiency Test level.
- **IELTS Band:** Shows the equivalent IELTS band score.
- **CEFR Level:** Aligns MEPT levels with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
- **MARLINS Score (%):** Indicates the percentage equivalent in the MARLINS English test.
- **Purpose:** Describes the expected language function and application relevant to the seafarer's role.

Annex: Implementation Framework for MEPT

5. The Guidance sets out the Implementation Framework for the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT), a structured assessment system designed to evaluate and certify English language competencies of Myanmar seafarers at four progressive levels: Basic, Support, Operational, and Management. The framework must define institutional responsibilities for test administration, outlines integration points with training and certification pathways, and establishes standardized examination formats aligned with the internationally recognized language benchmarks (IELTS, CEFR, and MARLINS). It serves as a national standard for ensuring consistent and reliable assessment of maritime communication skills essential for safe, efficient, and compliant shipboard operations.

Recommendations

6. While the IELTS and CEFR frameworks offer general standards for language proficiency, maritime training institutions and SRPS companies are strongly encouraged to adopt the MEPT or equivalent in-house assessments tailored to reflect shipboard operational requirements. These tests should evaluate SMCP usage, listening and speaking skills in realistic shipboard scenarios, and vocabulary related to ship safety, machinery, cargo handling, and emergencies. Maritime English training should be embedded in pre-sea and upgrading programs and reinforced through simulator-based exercises and onboard safety drills.

7. Effective communication is essential for preventing accidents, ensuring crew coordination, executing emergency protocols, complying with Port State Control inspections and international regulations, and facilitating smooth interaction among multinational crews.

Review and Updates

8. This guidance should be subject to a formal review at least once every two years, or more frequently if deemed necessary. Revisions should incorporate relevant amendments to the STCW Convention and Code, lessons learned from marine casualty investigations, and practical insights gathered from stakeholders such as employers, maritime training institutions, and Port State Control (PSC) authorities. This ensures the guidance remains operationally relevant, aligned with international regulatory and current industry best practices.

Implementation Framework for the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT)

1. This Annex outlines the implementation framework for the Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT), based on four defined levels: Basic, Support, Operational, and Management. It details assessment responsibilities, integration within training and certification stages, and standardized exam formats aligned with STCW and international language standards.

MEPT Standards – International Score Comparison Table

2. The **Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT)** establishes a structured framework for evaluating seafarers' language abilities at four ascending levels: **Basic**, **Support**, **Operational**, and **Management**. These levels reflect job-specific communication requirements onboard and are benchmarked against international English language tests such as **IELTS**, **CEFR**, and MARLINS test while aligning with the **Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP)** and STCW communication competencies.

3. Effective communication in English is essential for maritime professionals to ensure safety, operational efficiency, and compliance with international standards. The MEPT framework establishes clear language proficiency benchmarks tailored to different career stages within the maritime sector.

4. This comparison table supports training institutions, SRPS companies, Shipowners' Associations and the Department of Marine Administration (DMA) in making consistent, evidence-based decisions related to admissions, certification, promotion, and deployment.

Table 1: MEPT Standards – International Score Comparison Table

MEPT Level	Target Group	IELTS Band	CEFR Level	MARLINS Score (%)
Basic Level	New Ratings (entry-level)	4.0	A2-B1	Not Applicable
Support Level	Experienced Ratings (Able Seafarers)	4.5	B1 (Mid)	60% – 69%
Operational Level	Junior Officers (OOW/OEW/ETO)	5.0	B1 (High)	70% – 79%
Management Level	Senior Officers (Master/Mate/CE/2E)	5.5 and above	B2 and above	80% and above

- **MEPT Level:** Represents the career stage of seafarers, ranging from entry-level ratings to senior officers.
- **Target Group:** Specifies the group of seafarers (e.g., new ratings, experienced ratings, junior officers, senior officers) for whom the training is intended.
- **IELTS Band:** Indicates the minimum IELTS score expected for each level.
- **CEFR Level:** Corresponds to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, providing a widely accepted standard for language proficiency.
- **MARLINS Score (%):** Reflects the percentage score on the MARLINS maritime English test, specifically designed for seafarers.

5. MEPT results will be recorded in the national seafarer database for use by SRPS companies and the DMA. Guidelines, test content, and performance benchmarks will be reviewed every two years or as needed based on industry developments and IMO amendments.

Maritime English Proficiency Test (MEPT) Criteria

6. This Annex outlines the basic criteria and focus areas of the MEPT, tailored to different ranks of Myanmar seafarers. These criteria are aligned with international standards such as IELTS and CEFR, and emphasize real-world shipboard communication needs. MEPT serves as a practical tool to assess readiness for safe and effective onboard communication.

7. New Ratings

(a) Target: IELTS 4.0 or CEFR (A2-B1)

(b) Objective: To demonstrate to establish basic comprehension and communication ability for safe integration onboard.

(c) MEPT Focus Areas:

- i. Understanding simple safety signs and verbal instructions
- ii. Responding to basic commands (e.g., “close the valve,” “sending away the mooring rope”)
- iii. Recognizing keywords in emergency messages and alarms
- iv. Using simple phrases from Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP)

(d) Testing Format:

- i. Multiple choice listening tests with visuals
- ii. Oral response to standard commands
- iii. Simple form filling and vocabulary matching

8. Experienced Ratings

(a) Target: IELTS 4.5 or CEFR B1 (Mid-level)

(b) Objective: Communicate effectively during routine operations, particularly during watchkeeping and maintenance duties.

(c) MEPT Focus Areas:

- i. Routine shipboard conversations (e.g., handing over watch, reporting defects)
- ii. Describing conditions, positions, and actions
- iii. Enhanced understanding of SMCP for deck/engine ratings
- iv. Ability to read and interpret shipboard notices and procedures

(d) Testing Format:

- i. Role-play: interaction with officers or multilingual crew
- ii. Listening test: bridge or engine room recordings
- iii. Fill-in-the-gap SMCP usage exercises
- iv. Reporting or describing equipment faults in written and oral form

9. Junior Officers

(a) Target: IELTS 5.0 or CEFR B1 (High-level)

(b) Objective: Perform operational-level communication involving bridge/engine room coordination and logbook entries.

(c) MEPT Focus Areas:

- i. Watchkeeping dialogue and operational reporting
- ii. Report writing and oral briefing skills
- iii. Proficiency in maritime radiocommunication phrases
- iv. Clear pronunciation and syntactical accuracy

(d) Testing Format:

- i. Listening comprehension with GMDSS and bridge equipment
- ii. Short operational report writing (e., engine logs, safety reports)
- iii. Scenario-based SMCP oral drills
- iv. Grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structuring under time limits

10. Senior Officers

(a) Target: IELTS 5.5 and higher, or CEFR B2 and above

(b) Objective: To demonstrate the ability to lead shipboard teams, communicate in formal and operational meetings, and interpret and draft technical documentation.

(c) MEPT Focus Areas:

- i. Leading and participating in safety meetings, drills, and audits
- ii. Interpreting technical manuals, SOLAS/MARPOL entries, and regulatory circulars
- iii. Writing inspection reports and procedural notices
- iv. High fluency in spoken and written Maritime English

(d) Testing Format:

- i. Case study analysis with written technical response
- ii. Simulated meeting participation
- iii. Listening to incident reports and summarizing
- iv. Precision in SMCP, tone, and professional clarity

11. The MEPT is a tiered assessment tool aligned with IELTS and CEFR levels and job-specific duties. It should reflect realistic shipboard language use, scale in complexity according to rank, and be integrated into entry screening, pre-departure checks, and upgrading programs.

Integration into Training and Certification

12. The MEPT framework is structured to ensure that seafarers acquire the necessary competencies and certifications at various stages of their maritime careers. The framework aligns with international standards, particularly the STCW Convention, and is designed to integrate seamlessly with the certification and career progression pathways of maritime professionals.

13. The following table outlines the MEPT levels, identifies the target groups for each level, specifies the corresponding certification stage, and highlights the critical integration points within the certification process. This structured approach ensures that seafarers receive the appropriate training and assessment relevant to their roles and responsibilities, thereby enhancing safety, operational efficiency, and career development in the maritime industry.

- **MEPT Level:** Categorizes the training and proficiency requirements according to the seafarer's career stage (Basic, Support, Operational, Management).
- **Certification Stage:** Indicates the specific point in the certification process where the training or assessment is required (e.g., initial certification, revalidation, promotion).
- **Integration Point:** Identifies when the test must be completed in relation to the certification or application process (e.g., prior to SIRB application, before revalidation, at oral examination).

Table 2: MEPT Integration across Maritime Training and Certification Stages

MEPT Level	Target Group	Certification Stage	Integration Point
Basic Level	New Ratings (entry-level)	Completion of Safety Familiarization and Basic Training (SFBT)	Prior to the application of SIRB
Support Level	Experienced Ratings (Able Seafarers)	Revalidation of CoPs	Prior to revalidation of CoPs or promotion
Operational Level	Junior Officers (OOW/OEW/ETO)	CoC Application	Prior to CoC exam (STCW II/1, III/1, ETO)
Management Level	Senior Officers (Master/Mate/CE/2E)	CoC Application	At oral examination (STCW II/2, III/2) or revalidation

14. This systematic integration ensures that all seafarers are adequately prepared for the responsibilities they will undertake at each stage of their maritime careers.

Test Features and Sample Tasks by Level

15. The MEPT framework is designed to systematically assess and enhance the English language skills of seafarers at various stages of their maritime careers. Effective communication is critical for safety, operational efficiency, and compliance with

international maritime standards, particularly the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP).

16. This framework aligns language proficiency requirements with the responsibilities and duties expected at each career level—from entry-level ratings to senior management. The table below outlines the MEPT levels, the specific language testing domains assessed at each level, the primary purpose of the assessment, and examples of typical tasks that candidates may encounter.

- **Testing Domains:** Specifies the language skills assessed, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and use of SMCP.
- **Purpose:** Describes the main objective of the assessment at each level, focusing on the communication needs relevant to the seafarer's role.
- **Sample Tasks:** Provides examples of practical tasks that reflect real-world communication scenarios encountered onboard.

17. This structured approach ensures that seafarers are equipped with the appropriate language skills for their current and future roles, thereby supporting safe operations and effective teamwork in the maritime environment.

Table 3: MEPT Structure, Objectives, Tasks, and Approved Examination Centres

MEPT Level	Required Tests	Purpose	Typical Tasks	Administered by
Basic Level	Listening, Speaking, Reading	Basic safety and effective communication onboard	Safety signs, basic commands, SMCP matching, form filling	DMA-accredited Exam Centre*
Support Level	SMCP, Speaking, Listening	Routine watch-keeping and work-related activities	Routine communication, reporting defects, bridge/engine orders	DMA-approved MTIs & MTC
Operational Level	SMCP, Writing, Oral, Listening	Watchkeeping, record-keeping, ship-to-ship /shore and bridge/engine-room communication	Handover watch, technical report writing, logbook entries, role-play	DMA-approved MTIs & MTC
Management Level	Technical Writing, Oral Presentation	Understand voyage instructions, contract, reports, GMDSS, meetings, resource management	Safety radiocommunication, incident reporting, safety meetings, briefing/ debriefing, regulation interpretation, case analysis	MTIs with oversight by DMA

Examination System and Result Framework

18. To ensure consistency and reliability, MEPT shall follow a structured assessment system inspired by the IELTS and CEFR frameworks. The system includes defined examination formats, band scoring, validity duration, and performance reporting.

* **DMA-accredited Exam Centre** refers to a **Cambridge English Authorised Exam Centre**, officially approved by Cambridge English (Cambridge University Press & Assessment) to administer Cambridge English Qualifications, including digital and paper-based IELTS examinations. Only Cambridge-approved exam centres will be considered valid for MEPT Basic Level certification under the national MEPT framework.

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/find-a-centre/find-an-exam-centre/?location=myanmar>

Exam Format and Time Schedule

- MEPT will consist of four key modules: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Job-Specific Writing.
- Total duration: Approximately 2 hours.
 - Listening: 30 minutes
 - Reading: 30 minutes
 - Speaking: 15–20 minutes
 - Writing: 30–40 minutes
- Advanced levels will include SMCP oral drills and scenario-based simulation tasks (e.g., meetings, drills, reports).

Scoring and Band Levels

19. MEPT adopts the following band scoring scale, aligned with CEFR levels and benchmarked against IELTS. The breakdown is as in the following table.

Table 4: MEPT Band Scores, CEFR Alignment, and Proficiency Descriptions

MEPT Level	IELTS Band Score	CEFR Equivalent	Proficiency Description
Basic Level	4.0	A2-B1	Basic comprehension, responds to direct safety instructions
Support Level	4.5	B1 (Mid)	Handles routine dialogue, reports simple conditions
Operational Level	5.0	B1 (High)	Confident in SMCP use, logs, and operational reporting
Management Level	5.5 and above	B2 and above	Leadership, technical language, regulatory interpretation

Result Reporting and Validity

- Candidates will receive a comprehensive band score report, including individual sub-scores for each module.
- MEPT results remain valid for a period of two (2) years from the date of the examination.
- Candidates may apply for a re-test after a minimum interval of three (3) months, particularly when aiming for qualification at a higher proficiency level or seeking advanced employment opportunities.