

Cullen Scholarship: A Maritime Education and Training Framework for Ireland (MSc Award)

Background

Ireland is an island on the eastern seaboard of the Atlantic, one of the World's great oceans. The Atlantic borders Ireland to the north, the west and the southwest. To the southeast is the Celtic Sea and to the east, lies the Irish Sea. We are surrounded by incredibly resource rich, powerful and also challenging waters.

Ireland's surrounding seas have in many ways shaped our economy and society throughout history, acting at different times and in different contexts as a resource, as an opportunity, as an escape and as a barrier.

Because of a complex interplay of geography, meteorology, history, politics & culture, today Ireland has a relationship with the sea that is unusual for an island. While many of Ireland's coastal communities exist symbiotically with the sea, those living even only a short distance inland and the majority of those living in all our major cities, remain today very detached from the sea. That all of Ireland's major cities are on the coast, only adds to the oddness of the situation.

For the purposes of this proposal, we introduce a term "sea-goer". It is intended to capture everyone who has developed a competence and is safe and confident in engaging in activities at sea, regardless of the reasons why. Sea-goers includes a wide array of professionals, volunteers and hobbyists who between them engage in a bewildering array of activities out to sea for many different reasons. Sea-goers include Ireland's professional seafarers both civilian ("merchant") and naval, they are the professional fishers who work both inshore and offshore around our coasts, they are the volunteers in the Irish Coast Guard and the RNLI. Sea-goers includes those who work in offshore energy – be it oil & gas or renewables, they are those who work in aquaculture, those who sail, row, surf, powerboat and fish for leisure off our coasts or use the sea as a context to educate, to inform, to mend or to heal – organisations like Sailing into Wellness and Sail Training Ireland, for example.

One consequence of Ireland's national detachment from the sea is while the country has "sea-goers" among its population, there are always too few of them. This national shortage of sea-goers means as an economy and a society we are constantly challenged to find competent, experienced and knowledgeable individuals to fill key marine & maritime roles be they in the commercial, regulatory, safety, societal or leisure spheres. As Ireland becomes more dependent on the sea for our sustainable future through offshore renewable energy and low emissions maritime transport links, for food through fishing and aquaculture and societal wellbeing through water based leisure activities, Ireland will need many more sea-goers than currently exist.

While sea-goers have a wide range of mission specific skills as there are varieties of sea-goer, they also all share certain basic instincts and competencies that are common to all who work or play at sea. These skills include for example how to stay safe, how to read the sea and the weather, basic vessel handling skills and so on. For the purposes of what follows, we will refer to these shared instincts & competencies

as “sea sense”. Sea sense has one attribute that’s important for what follows; it’s best acquired (many would argue it can only be truly learned) by starting young.

The central intent of this proposal is for a Master’s student to explore in detail by intensive engagement with all potential stakeholders nationally, how a national maritime education and training framework could be established to create an inclusive, collaborative, structured environment in Ireland where as many young people as possible from an early age are given the opportunity to be exposed to seagoing in all its forms.

The first goal of such a framework would be to capture their interest and imagination. Next, for those who show an interest, the objective becomes to support them to develop their seagoing interest and skills as they grow up, supported all the while by a national framework that enables them to find their seagoing niche, whatever that may be; fishing, naval seafaring, workboats, sailing, sea angling, power boating, merchant seafaring, aquaculture, voluntary service in sea rescue and so on. The framework would involve all professional, sporting, leisure and voluntary organisations that are involved in seagoing in Ireland. The framework will ensure that as many young people as possible are exposed to seagoing in the first instance (however that happens), that they are then supported to develop sea sense and, critically, as their seagoing interest evolves and develops, to move between seagoing activities until they find their niche, all the while bringing their acquired skills with them in a way that’s recognised and transferrable.

Proposal

We propose a **structured two-year Master’s project** on a full-time basis to identify how a national maritime education and training framework could be established to create an inclusive, collaborative, structured environment in Ireland where as many young people as possible from an early age are given opportunity to be exposed to seagoing in all its forms with a view to increasing the number who later choose to enter careers working with the sea. The project will aim to:

- Understand, document, categorise and analyse all of the current activity that is being undertaken by sectoral Irish Governmental, public, NGO and private sector organisations to attract sea-goers into their respective areas.
- Examine best practice across the EU and internationally in terms of attracting young people into sea-going pathways & careers across key sectoral areas i.e. professional seafaring (both civilian & military), commercial fisheries, offshore energy, particularly renewable energy, leisure, voluntary sea-focused organisations, etc.
- Engage intensively with potential stakeholders to understand their needs, wishes, foci and with Government and other public sector entities to understand, document and analyse current supports, structures, policies and legislative requirements.
- Develop a roadmap for the establishment of a national maritime education & training framework for Ireland.

Location of Scholar

The Master's student will be based in their host Higher Education Institute (HEI) and in the Marine Institute in Dublin (split circa 50/50 in modules of time as agreed between the HEI and MI supervisors).

Outcome

The student will undergo a two-year training period learning new research methodologies resulting in a Master's degree thesis. The expected outcomes of the project will be:

- The validation of current approaches to attracting young people toward careers working with the sea, new proposals for innovative, collaborative approaches by stakeholders in the sector to increase the overall number of young people in Ireland choosing careers working with the sea.
- A roadmap based on detailed analysis of current activities brought together in a collaborative manner and structured on best practice from other sectors and internationally.

Links with Marine Institute Strategic Plan 2018-2022

This proposal falls principally under Strategic Focus Area 4 - Ireland's Ocean Economy.

Specific Requirements

The scholar should have a primary degree in a policy, organisational, economics, legal or business discipline. It will be an advantage if candidates have gained experience or have background knowledge of education & training and/or maritime activities and affairs.

Financial Details

Scholarships will be up to €27,500 per annum (maximum funding of €55,000 over two years). This amount comprises a maintenance award of €18,500 (Irish Research Council rate effective 1-Jan-21) to the student as well as payment of fees to the host higher education institution (HEI). The maximum fees payable to the HEI will be €6,000 per annum. The scholarship award also includes a budget of up to €3,000 per annum for eligible research costs (travel & subsistence, publication costs, consumables and other costs e.g. laptop) for the sole use of the student, and are payable on a reimbursement basis direct to the host institution where the postgraduate student (scholar) is registered. There are no overheads payable on the scholarship. Publication costs are intended to cover publications on which the scholar is listed as first author and are published under Open Access. Scholars can also apply for additional funding under the [Marine Institute's Networking Initiative](#), which is an annual call.

Marine Institute Co-Supervisor

Liam Lacey, Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) liam.lacey@imdo.ie

Alternative contact for queries funding@marine.ie