



Maritime education and training under the pandemic's shadow

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As an island nation, Australia is dependent upon its skilled maritime workforce to sustain its supply chains. For over forty years, the Australian Maritime College (AMC) has played a vital role in developing a skilled workforce that is able to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges in an ever-changing world.

As the national institute for maritime training, education, research and consultancy, AMC offers courses ranging from vocational certificates to postgraduate degrees, and higher degrees by research in maritime business and logistics, seafaring, and maritime engineering and hydrodynamics. AMC's maritime focussed curriculum is complemented by a suite of research facilities that are some of the most advanced in the southern hemisphere.

COVID-19 related restrictions on people's movement and association have presented a raft of challenges for education and training providers. AMC's focus for most of 2020 has been on addressing such challenges by modifying and adapting its course delivery to meet shifting demands. For some courses, seafaring in particular, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions has been particularly severe because regulatory standards require face-to-



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face, practical and/or hands-on training in many instances.

Earlier in 2020, when COVID-19 related restrictions made face-to-face training and assessment difficult, AMC staff modified course delivery patterns so that only theory content was delivered online at the height of restrictions. This meant that traditionally taught courses had to be converted for online delivery with little notice. In delivering the course content online, AMC staff had to overcome significant pedagogical challenges in modifying content with deep-rooted historical traditions and almost no precedent for online delivery.

As a result of quick and effective course transformation, students' learning remained largely uninterrupted despite many students not being able to stay in, or travel back to, Tasmania where AMC is located. When Tasmania's borders were finally opened to allow interstate students to travel to Tasmania for practical training, online delivery of courses enabled students to continue their learning while under mandatory hotel or home quarantine.

For some Australian Maritime Safety Authority regulated courses, formal assessments presented a unique challenge, as there was little option but to conduct theory exams under invigilated conditions. In a first for the University of Tasmania, formal exams were conducted online under remote proctoring to enable students to undertake exams from their homes.

While border controls have eased in recent days, many restrictions still remain in place. AMC continues to conduct practical training under strict social-distancing and hygiene

standards. Although the impact of the pandemic on demand for maritime courses in 2021 remains uncertain, AMC is seeing strong demand for its postgraduate programmes, in particular the Master of Logistics Management and the Master of Maritime Engineering, which offers specialisations in naval engineering, maritime technology management and maritime design.

Pandemic-related disruptions appear to have increased interest in e-commerce and the role of logistics. With the growing global focus on the circular economy, maritime logistics is crucial in helping to reduce waste and ensuring that resources are used effectively. Furthermore, the move towards decarbonisation of the transport sector highlights the vital role that research-led institutions, such as AMC, can perform in overcoming complex challenges of our times.

AMC is well-positioned to help build the skilled workforce required by industry to thrive into the future. As in the past, AMC will continue to innovate to ensure ongoing workforce development of the Australian maritime industry.

The AMC's strong engagement and ongoing partnership with Defence has been recognised with two accolades at the Defence Connect Australian Defence Industry Awards. AMC was named Academic Institution of the Year, and its commercial arm AMC Search won the Regional SME of the Year, at a gala event live streamed from Sydney on Friday, 27 November 2020. In addition, AMC Search was named a finalist in the category of Prime Contractor of the Year.

For 2021, AMC has refreshed its flagship Bachelor of Global Logistics and Maritime Management to incorporate contemporary ideas into the curriculum, while providing greater choice to students. The newly refreshed course will give students a choice of majors to suit their interest - Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Maritime Business Management, and Maritime Technology Management.

AMC has also been working to bring its expertise, gained through niche research and industry engagement, to a wider audience. In 2021, a Graduate Certificate in Organisational Resilience will be offered that, given recent societal experience of COVID-19 related disruption and uncertainty, will be relevant across the maritime sector and more broadly.

AMC looks forward to seeing its recent initiatives develop further in 2021. AMC will continue its strong engagement with industry, government and regulatory authorities, to ensure that Australia's maritime workforce development needs are met in 2021 and beyond. ▲





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