

Experiences running the new Belgian E-Learning Oriented IHO Cat. B Hydrography Program

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SUMMARY

A study on hydrographic education in Belgium carried out a few years ago, pointed out a shortage in hydrographic training. In Belgium, most hydrographic surveyors work in one of the main European dredging companies, where they receive additional specific hydrographic surveying training. Therefore, in 2013, a 1-year English spoken curriculum degree of "Postgraduate in Hydrography" in Belgium was accredited by the IHO (International Hydrographic Organization). Then, during 2019 and early 2020, a renewed curriculum, including extensive e-learning facilities, was established, starting in September 2021. The program (Cat-B) is a cooperation between the Geography Department of Ghent University and the Institute for Hydrography of the Antwerp Maritime Academy, which is the hosting institute. The aim is to combine the compulsory theoretical courses with on-the-job training provided by partners in the industry to ensure maximum competences. All courses are lectured in English, and can be taken up over several years to facilitate part-time work. These procedures allow for a qualitative and professional, yet accessible program. The theoretical courses are taught on two different campuses, the campus of the Antwerp Maritime Academy (HZS) and a campus of Ghent University (UGent) based on the available expertise and infrastructure, thus ensuring the quality. After running the new e-learning oriented program for the first time, important experiences and pedagogic lessons concerning the activation of the student group were learned the hard way. Also inquiring the perception of the new program by the student is important for the assessment of the program. Sharing these experiences could be of great interest for other hydrographic education programs.

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