

Vessel Traffic Services

A Vessel Traffic Service is a marine traffic monitoring system designed to improve safety, improve efficiency, and protect the environment. VTS stations are established in ports and coastal areas around the world with the approval of the competent authority. Gaining the VTS Operator (VTSO) qualification allows candidates to seek employment at VTS stations all over the world. Candidates for VTS courses come from both marine and non-marine backgrounds.

At South Shields Marine School, we offer eight IALA VTS courses that are MCA approved

New entrants (VTSO):

For new entrants to the VTS industry there are two different routes to becoming a qualified VTS Operator (VTSO).

Route 1 – For those from a non-marine background it takes around 6 and a half weeks to be fully qualified. Candidates need the following qualifications or equivalent: VTS VHF (2 days), VTS Nautical Knowledge (3 weeks), VTS Radar/ARPA (1 week), VTS Induction (1 week), VTS Operator (1 week).

Route 2 – For those from a marine background with a Deck OOW unlimited or equivalent it takes two weeks to become fully qualified. Candidates need the following qualifications: VTS Induction (1 week), VTS Operator (1 week).

Keeping your VTS qualification valid (VTS Refresher):

Holders of VTS qualifications need to undertake regular training to keep their certification valid. For this there are two options. Please note these are UK rules so they may vary in different countries.

Option 1: Revalidate every three years by attending a VTS Refresher course (3 days)

Option 2: Revalidate every five years by attending a VTS Operator course (5 days).

Career progression (VTS Supervisor & VTS OJTI):

Once qualified as a VTS Operator (VTSO) there are a further two courses for career and professional development.

1. **VTS Supervisor** - a two-week course which enables a VTSO to become VTS Supervisor
2. **VTS On the Job Training Instructor (VTS OJTI)** – a three-day course designed to equip those in charge of training at VTS stations the tools to create effective training packages.