

Maintaining Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers

Gordon JOHNSTON, United Kingdom

Key words: Education; Hydrography; Standards; hydrography, nautical charting, education, training, competence

SUMMARY

Hydrographic technology is quite advanced and requires a broad band of competencies and skills. Prior to 1977, the training institutions were largely on their own to develop curricula, programmes and syllabi for an optimal education, if there was training or education offered at all. Many specialists in this field used to acquire their skills and expertise by a “training on the job” experience. This was not ideal and shortcomings represented risks, so, the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) established a joint board for creating and maintaining international standards in this field, “The International Advisory Board on the Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors”. In 2002 another set of standards was created: “The Standard of Competence for Nautical Cartographers”, and the International Cartographic Association (ICA) joined the Board. For the benefit of the entire hydrographic profession the Board has the task to maintain and update the two Standards, which are made available on the Website of the International Hydrographic Bureau in Monaco. Further, the Board examines education and training course proposals for recognition and awards certificates to the respective institutions. There has been a growing demand for an internationally consistent system of individual competence. Organisations seeking hydrographic services and hydrographic service providers seeking employees, have a compelling need to know if the provider or individual being engaged has the necessary competence to adequately complete the desired assignment. Recently the Board developed standards for national or regional “schemes” of individual recognition. The schemes are charged with the competence to award these certifications provided the Standards are respected. In this context, four important elements have been identified: education and training, experience, demonstration of practical proficiency as well as continuing professional education and development. This paper provides an overview of the workings of the Board and of the most recent developments relating to the ongoing competency of practising individuals