

# DP Operator

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*Dynamic positioning (DP) is a means to automatically control vessel movement, keeping it in a desired location and heading or on a specific track, solely through the use of thrusters. It is a technique used extensively in the many branches of the offshore oil and gas industry, including diving, ROV operations, survey and marine construction, all over the world.*

*IMCA was formed in 1995 from the merger of the DP Vessel Owners Association (DPVOA) with the Association of Offshore Diving Contractors (AODC) and dynamic positioning remains a central activity for the majority of IMCA members.*



## Education and Qualifications Required

Dynamic positioning operators (DPOs) will typically start out as a watchkeeping deck officers. However, given appropriate supervision, other appropriate personnel can aspire to the position. Senior DPOs are always watchkeeping officers.

## Skills and Training Required

DP operator training and certification is internationally administered by the Nautical Institute in London, a recognised professional body with an international remit. Certification of DP operators is through a specified and regulated training programme. This programme is intended to apply to bridge watchkeepers already qualified by means of a certificate of competency as a deck officer. The training programme is four-fold, as follows:

- Phase 1** A DP basic/induction course providing an introduction to the functions and use of a dynamic positioning system, at an approved training centre or organised onboard; or as a trainee DPO with on-board training under the supervision of a senior DP operator.
- Phase 2** Documented practical experience in the use of DP systems on DP vessels for a minimum period of 30 days as a trainee DPO after the completion of the basic/induction course.
- Phase 3** Attendance at DP simulator courses at an approved training centre, or onboard the vessel, where the course will provide training in the use of DP systems, including simulator exercises and emergency operations.
- Phase 4** Following completion of the above, documented confirmation (from the Master or OIM) of a minimum of six months supervised DP watch-keeping will result in the issue of a DP certificate from an approved body.



All of the four phases above are witnessed and recorded by entries in a Nautical Institute DP logbook which is held by the trainee. Personal logbooks for recording of DP work carried out are issued by the Nautical Institute and IMCA – see below.

In addition, to work offshore in any capacity it is usually necessary to complete a basic offshore safety induction and emergency training (BOSIET) course. This generally includes first aid, safety at sea, the basics of fire and fire fighting and helicopter underwater escape training (HUET). In many regions, someone who has not successfully completed a course of this nature will not be permitted to work offshore.

## DP Logbooks

Nautical Institute (green) logbooks are specifically designed for the use of DP operators and bridge watchkeeping officers during their DP operator training programme. Space is provided to record details of vessels served upon, tasks completed and relevant DP experience. Entries are signed by the Master and a record of sea-time is kept. Space is also provided to verify attendance at the shore-based courses comprising phases 1 and 3 of the training scheme. After the training scheme is complete, a testimonial or assessment is provided by the Master to verify the suitability of the officer concerned to carry out DP operations and keep a bridge DP watch. DP operator certificates are issued by the Nautical Institute on the strength of evidence contained within this logbook.



IMCA logbooks are intended to be used by all key DP personnel, including NI-certified bridge DP watch-keeping officers. They are intended as a continuous record of DP service. A section is provided to show details of training courses attended, as well as a section for competence assessments in line with IMCA guidance.

## Medical Fitness

In many areas of the world, potential offshore workers must undergo and pass a special medical examination. These requirements may vary from country to country, but usually involve a medical leading to a certificate which may be valid for one or more years. The requirements are not unduly onerous for fit and active people but certain common conditions, or previous injuries, can be a cause for failure. If in any doubt, interested persons should seek out a doctor knowledgeable about offshore standards before they seek work or embark on a course of training.

## Working Conditions and Prospects

Dynamic Positioning Operators can expect to travel overseas and to be away from home anywhere between 2 weeks and 3 months at a time. They have to be resourceful, resilient and be able to work in a team environment. Due to the highly responsible nature of the role of the DPO, it is not work for the faint hearted, and candidates will also have to be self-motivating and good communicators.

## Further Information

An introduction to the basic principles of dynamic positioning can be found at [www.imca-int.com/divisions/marine/reference/](http://www.imca-int.com/divisions/marine/reference/)  
IMCA members likely to be involved in dynamic positioning are listed at [www.imca-int.com/members/marine.html](http://www.imca-int.com/members/marine.html)