



STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Concerning the Washington State Marine Pilot Exam

Qualifications

What are the new requirements for master/mate time?

These requirements have changed since the 2018 exam, providing more flexibility in counting time as a mate. The new requirements (see [WAC 363-116-0751](#)) for the Ship Assist category calls for 2 years as master or 4 years sailing as a mate/master with a minimum of 1 year as master. In the ATB category, the new requirement calls for 4 years sailing as a mate/master with a minimum of 1 year as master. If you have specific questions about your qualifications, please contact the BPC.

Based on the varying sea time requirements for different types of vessels, how is sea time calculated if an applicant's sea time is on various vessel types?

A combination of an applicant's sea time is reviewed to make sure that the breadth of experience meets the qualifications. Applicants should feel free to contact the BPC if they are unsure about their qualification time.

How did widening the requirement for tugs increase the State's exposure to a more diverse pilot group when a number of future good hires are available in the lower ranks of unlimited tonnage vessels.

We are always looking at ways to broaden the applicant pool while maintaining our high standards for safe pilotage.

With the new qualification requirement of combined barge/tug capacity, how can applicants represent that in their sea time letters? Will a list of the barges the company uses suffice?

Make sure that employer-confirmed sea time includes the tonnage of the barge/tug in question.

Application

When applying for the exam, does an applicant pay the application fee immediately? When are the written exam and simulator evaluation payments due?

The payment instructions will be included with the application package published on our website on November 16, 2020. Only the application fee is due with the application. The written exam fee is due 10 days after an applicant is notified that they have been approved by the Board to sit for the written exam. If an applicant is successful in the written exam and moves on to the simulator evaluation, they will pay for the simulator evaluation at the simulator orientation, which takes place after the written exam.

Is the reference from our employer mandatory, or can one just submit references from professional colleagues? Not all applicants may want their employer to know they are considering a different line of work.

We are currently reviewing the reference instructions and if changes are made, they will be reflected in the documents issued on November 16, 2020.

In what format should sea time be submitted? In a company letter from HR?

We do not require a standard format. Please note, however, that we do confirm sea time and must be able to decipher what is submitted.

If Grays Harbor is an applicant's first choice but the Port is at their maximum for pilots, are applicants able to maintain their call position for Puget Sound?

Applicants can choose to train in either district and have the option to decline whichever district they receive an invitation from to await an invitation for the other district.

Exam - General

How will COVID-19 affect the exam and what contingency plans have been made?

The BPC is prepared for a safe setting for the written exam and simulator evaluation, and appropriate social distancing. We are aware that people are concerned about what might happen if they get COVID ahead of the exam. We encourage aspirants to quarantine ahead of time to avoid possible exposure.

What is the likelihood of there being another exam after this one if an aspirant does not have the necessary masters time by April?

The BPC must hold an exam at least every 4 years. We will be better able to predict when the next exam would need to be held after we see how many applicants pass the written exam and simulator evaluation and are ranked on the trainee list.

How does a pilot aspirant find out about taking an exam prep course?

The BPC does not recommend any specific prep course.

How can applicants make themselves available for study groups?

You can always contact the BPC. However, this year on the application form, there is an option to release your information for contact with other applicants.

How many trainees do you expect to take on after the 2021 exam?

There is no set number of how many trainees can make the list as long as you pass the cut score for both the written exam and simulator evaluation.

Are there two separate tests, one for Puget Sound and one for Grays Harbor?

No, there is one test with the option to apply for either Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, or either district. The test is not location specific and is not a test of knowledge of local waters.

Can aspirants or applicant visit with Puget Sound Pilots or the Port of Grays Harbor prior to the exam?

Although we absolutely encourage visits, with COVID-19 restrictions there may be some limitations on access, such as no visits to the pilot station at this time. We encourage you to reach out to each entity or Board staff to see what their restrictions include.

What are the prospects of a position becoming available in the Grays Harbor Pilotage District?

Unlike Puget Sound, which has several openings currently, Grays Harbor is not currently seeking another pilot trainee. However, they have two possible pilot retirements within the next decade.

With a smaller amount of annual movements in Grays Harbor, how many pilots will be required moving forward?

Grays Harbor is currently authorized for 3 pilots and is engaged in expanding port operations.

Is there a recency sea time requirement once placed on a waiting list?

Not for the Board. However, an applicant's MMC must be in valid status upon commencement of the training program.

If an applicant passes written exam and simulator evaluation, and they don't get called into the training program within 2 years, will they need to retest?

Per the Pilotage Act, [RCW 88.16.190\(4\)](#), the Board cannot issue a training license more than four years after an exam. Historically, all successful candidates have been called into the training program prior to

the four-year deadline.

Is there another way, besides the application, for an applicant to get their name on the study group list? If for example, one could be at sea and unable to submit the application immediately but would like to get studying in a group sooner.

BPC can connect applicants with study groups. Please contact Jolene Hamel.

Written Exam

Will the written exam be multiple choice or written answers?

The written exam is multiple choice.

Most of the references from the 2018 reading list include offshore mooring information. Will that be covered in the exam?

The 2021 exam reference list will be available on November 16, 2020 on our website. We recommend reviewing that list as opposed to looking at previous exam references.

When will the Reference List for the 2021 Exam be released/distributed?

Exam reference materials, along with the application package, will be available on the BPC's website on November 16, 2020.

Visit <https://pilotage.wa.gov/exam-information.html>.

How many applicants do you expect to sit for the exam?

We really do not know until applications are received. For the 2016 and 2018 Exams, we had about 25 applicants.

Is there a good practice quiz BPC would recommend?

The BPC cannot recommend any specific practice quizzes. The references list we will provide on November 16, 2020 will provide the right material(s) to study.

Will applicants be allowed to bring a calculator to the written exam or will there be calculators available? What other tools should an applicant bring? Protractors, triangles, etc.?

A list of instructions will be distributed prior to the written exam and simulator evaluation. Calculators, if needed, have been provided during past exams.

Simulator Evaluation

Does the simulator evaluation incorporate local knowledge?

No. The simulator evaluation does not test local knowledge.

Should applicants living out of state expect to be available all days April 12-15 for the simulator evaluation or can specific dates be scheduled ahead of time?

If an applicant is successful in the written exam, they will advance to the simulator evaluation.

Successful applicants will be given their time slot during the simulator orientation session held the week of the written exam. The applicant will only need to be in Seattle during their time slot the week of the simulator evaluations.

Does the BPC recommend a certain simulator for practice purposes?

While the BPC cannot recommend any specific simulator, a list of simulators around the United States is available on our website. The simulator evaluation for our exam will take place at Pacific Maritime Institute in Seattle, WA.

Is there any chance the simulator exam will run more than four days?

The amount of days devoted to the simulator evaluation will be based on how many applicants qualify. An applicant's specific time slot will be provided on orientation day.