



# Improving minimum standards of the Marine Mammal Observers used during offshore activities



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## BACKGROUND

- MMOs have been deployed since the late 1990s to mitigate offshore industrial activities (JNCC 1998)
- Aspects of these guidelines have been criticised based on increasing scientific knowledge, however, little has changed over the last 25 years.
- Some key shortcomings include: observation protocols that often result in a low likelihood of detecting marine mammals and the **lack of experience and expertise** expected from MMOs to mitigate potentially harmful activities<sup>1</sup>.

## CONCERNS

- Newly certified MMO's often lack proved marine mammal (MM) field experience.
- Is mitigation really implemented with inexperienced observers?
- Is there any preference for new observers to avoid interruptions?
  - How many individual MM are not sighted?

**Dedicated MMO's with relevant marine mammal experience prior to becoming MMO's had better detection skills than those without prior experience**

Stone 2015 (JNCC)<sup>2</sup>

Table 1. National/regional requirements to become an MMO<sup>3</sup>.

Country	MMO course	Specific to country	Academic	Previous MM experience	
				Required	Time
Spain	Y	N	N	Y	12 months
Brasil	Y	Y	Y	Y	6 months
NZ	Y	Y	N	Y	4 months
USA (BOEM)	Y	Y	Y	Y	3 months*
Israel	N	N	N	Y	3 surveys
Ireland	Y	N	N	Y	6 weeks
Accobams	Y	Y (regional)	Y	Y	30 days
Australia	N	N	N	Y	NA
Greenland/ DK	N	N	NA	Y	NA
Canada	N	N	N	NA	NA
<b>UK (JNCC)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>NA</b>

\*tier dependent

## OBSERVATION

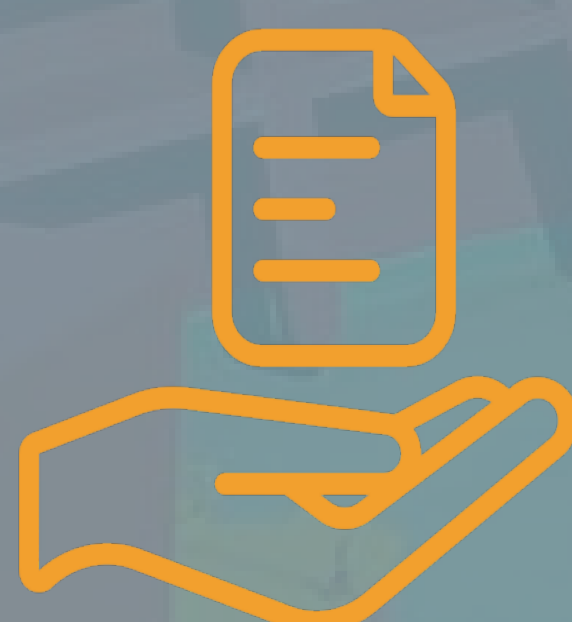
Some countries have their own standards (Table 1), however, the most demanded certificates elsewhere are JNCC approved, which consists of a freely open theoretical one-day course with negligible ground truthing of the observers' skills at detecting or identifying marine mammals.

## ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

1. We propose to create a committee within the ECS to certify the minimum practical experience to become a professionally recognised observer.
2. We propose the minimum requirements based on scientific knowledge and aim for genuinely dedicated and expert observers for this role:
  - ✓ BSc in relevant degree or equivalent time spent in a related job position
  - ✓ Minimum of 9 months of field experience with marine mammals prior to mitigation roles
  - ✓ An officially recognised MMO course (Accobams, BOEM, JNCC...)
  - ✓ Implement levels of expertise to avoid shortage of offshore observers

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## SUPPORT



- If you would like to read the full requirements Proposal and support this initiative, please scan the QR code or sign at [https://form.jotform.com/guaitanatura/ECS\\_2023](https://form.jotform.com/guaitanatura/ECS_2023)
- Working towards effective mitigation

