**Input paper: [[1]](#footnote-1) VTS57-10.2.1**

**Input paper for the following Committee(s):** **Purpose of paper:**

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ARM  ENG  PAP  Input

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**Agenda item** [[2]](#footnote-2) 10.2

**Technical domain/ Task number** 2 Task 3.8.8 – VTS English Language Competency Test (Tentative Title)

**Author/Submitter** IG 3.8.8

Report of the Intersessional group on Task 3.8.8 – VTS English communication Competency TESTing

# background

The IALA VTS Committee is progressing towards the development of guidelines for assessing the English communication competency of VTS personnel, with the aim of completing this work by VTS58, having reached consensus on the provisional Title of Guideline: *VTS English Communication Competency Testing*.

# Discussion

The Task Group held several meetings between VTS56 and VTS57. The Task Group continued preparing the draft Guideline on *VTS English Communication Competency Testing*.Key components currently under development include:

1. **Testing Methods**

The Task Group has updated the testing methods to incorporate both traditional and technology-driven approaches for assessing VTS communication competency.

Traditional testing methods, including interactive interviews, role-playing exercises, listening tasks, and written communication assessments, offer valuable insights into verbal, interpersonal, and written communication skills. However, these methods are resource-intensive, prone to evaluator bias, and lack scalability for large-scale assessments.

To address these challenges, the following technology-driven methods have been highlighted:

* **Computer-Based Testing**: Standardized questions with systematic response recording ensure objectivity, consistency, and transparency, making it suitable for efficient large-scale assessments.
* **AI-Based Automated Evaluation Systems**: Real-time analysis of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency using predefined criteria reduces bias and enhances scalability, with securely stored results for future verification.
* **Simulation-Based Automated Evaluation**: Simulates real-world scenarios to assess practical communication and problem-solving skills, while automated recording ensures objective validation and reliable post-assessment review.

These updates emphasize the importance of combining traditional and technology-based methods to ensure fairness, efficiency, and adaptability to meet the operational needs of VTS providers and training organizations.

1. **Weight**

The weight assigned to each evaluation item highlights its importance in the overall assessment and ensures consistency across tests. It emphasizes critical aspects of VTS communication, such as message structure and standard phraseology, to align with international protocols like IMO SMCP. These weights provide a framework that can be tailored to specific training objectives or regional operational contexts.

1. **Test Questions**

Test questions are designed to align with the test objectives and ensure a fair, comprehensive assessment of communication skills. They integrate key elements such as evaluation criteria, question complexity, and the use of diverse media formats like text, audio, images, and video to reflect real-world VTS operations.

Questions progress in difficulty to evaluate both foundational and advanced skills while balancing cognitive load and maintaining focus on critical competencies like message structure, delivery, interpretation, and adherence to standard phraseology. This progression ensures a thorough yet practical evaluation that remains relevant to operational VTS scenarios.

1. **Pilot Testing**

Conducting a pilot test with a small, representative group is recommended to identify potential issues and refine the test structure and content. Pilot testing helps resolve ambiguities, enabling the test to be fine-tuned for accuracy and reliability.

The pilot testing process includes administering the test, gathering feedback on clarity and relevance, analyzing performance data, and refining the test based on the findings. These steps improve the test's quality, ensuring it reliably evaluates the intended communication skills in a practical and user-friendly manner.

1. **Test Implementation**

Effective implementation of a competency test requires careful planning and consideration of key factors to ensure fairness, consistency, and reliability.

A controlled test environment should minimize distractions and ensure all participants are evaluated under standardized conditions. Clear instructions, detailed guidance, and practice materials are essential to prepare participants effectively. During the test, proper monitoring and real-time support help address technical or procedural issues promptly.

The use of technology, particularly in online or computer-based assessments, requires pre-testing of equipment, stable internet connectivity, and technical support to ensure a smooth and seamless process. These measures collectively support a fair and accurate assessment.

1. **Assessment Process**

The assessment process involves a systematic approach to ensure transparency, reliability, and fairness while providing clear guidelines for result handling and record management.

After the test, responses are collected, verified, and securely stored to ensure data integrity. Evaluation strictly adheres to standardized criteria, with performance summaries including both quantitative scores and qualitative feedback to guide candidates’ future development. Results and feedback are delivered confidentially, highlighting strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable recommendations.

Protocols for data retention, confidentiality, and issue resolution ensure compliance with privacy standards, while regular reporting and process enhancements maintain alignment with best practices and evolving standards.

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to note attached draft Guideline GNNNN on *VTS English Communication Competency Testing* in progressing Task 3.8.8 at VTS57.

# attachment

* VTS57-n.n.n Draft Guideline on VTS English Communication Competency Testing

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Leave open if uncertain [↑](#footnote-ref-2)