

Field Staff Online Assessment

(AECO's Online guideprøve)

Background

To increase awareness about laws and regulations, AECO guidelines and other relevant issues for considerate tour operations in the Arctic, AECO's Field Staff Online Assessment (FSOA) was developed for launch for the 2018 season. SpeedExam was used as software.

In a workshop late 2017, questions were developed for relevant areas, included Svalbard legal framework and AECO's guidelines. Questions related to legal framework was later reviewed and approved by the Governor of Svalbard.

The test was launched in the spring of 2018 and AECO members could sign up staff for free tests. Non-members can also take the test for a fee.

After finalizing and passing the test, the candidates would receive a certificate.

2018

The FSOA was a volunteer assessment in 2018. Nevertheless, six AECO members decide to make the test mandatory for their staff

During 2018 altogether 446 candidates attempted to pass at least one of the tests. This generated more than 300 emails from staff members to the secretariat and the consultant used for this project.

The numbers reflect great support for this initiative from both members and staff alike.

2018 Evaluation

After the 2018-season, AECO asked the members to evaluate the FSOA. The feedback was mostly positive, except for a few technical issues and some questions that were debatable. Also, there was a need to give more clear instructions and access to sources of information (where the answers can be found).

All findings from the evaluation have been addressed.

Mandatory test

In October 2018, AECO's members decided that the FSOA will be mandatory for all staff working for AECO's members. A new test must be taken every season. AECO's secretariat and the consultant used in this project prepared for a higher number of tests in 2019.

2019

In 2019, per August 15, AECO has registered 1042 individual candidates that have completed 1291 individual tests in the FSOA.

Way forward

The FSOA is now implemented as a part of operations in AECO, and costs for operations will be carried over ordinary fiscal budgets. There are still areas that may be developed, such special tests for other personnel than field staff (e.g. bridge officers and marketing staff), and opportunities will be researched. "

Also, we the number of guidelines continuing to increase and with potential changes in Acts and regulations, the FSOA will need continued updates and new questions will be developed.

Result

This project has been developed in accordance with plans and with a high success, even earlier than hoped for. The FSOA is a proactive step from the expedition cruise industry to ensure competence among staff members. Competent staff is key to sustainable operations.

