

# THE BRAINS TRUST



**W**ORK on harnessing the best brainpower to help set shipping back on a viable financial course is afoot in the world's second largest business school.

If there ever was a time to stop and think before you leap, this is it. Not just for thinking, but for deep thought ahead of action. During the last few years of easy credit and buoyant freight rates, strategy seemed to be devised in automaton mode by many of the top people in the shipping industry. But this approach no longer works.

With the shattering of hopes and dreams of a never-ending boom it is time for a reassessment of the game plan, and a maritime initiative that has matured in a leafy district of Copenhagen could hardly be more timely.

Copenhagen Business School's Executive MBA in Shipping and Logistics programme, or the Blue MBA as it is more commonly known, is to capitalise on its accumulated talents and resources by launching the Research Centre for Maritime Transport, Management and Logistics.

It might be argued that the maritime industries are well served by current research professionals, but the new centre aims to mobilise an unrivalled skills cluster to enable companies and organisations within shipping to make the best judgements on how to invest, or perhaps conserve, their money for the medium and long term.

The research centre will be able to draw on the expertise of neighbouring departments in such fields as information technology, financial risk management, relations between enterprises and consumers, political contexts, and regional specialisms, including Europe and the Americas.

The latest meeting of the Blue MBA advisory board confirmed that the centre would be organised in three segments. Peter Lorange will be responsible for strategy and management. Professor Lorange was president of the International Institute for Management Development for 15 years until April 2008, and holds the Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Chair of International Shipping, having held appointments at many schools of management.

Economics and markets research will be co-ordinated by Phil Rogers, head of consultancy at Icap Shipping, who until recently was research director at rival shipbroker Galbraith's.

Logistics and supply chain management will be supervised by Jan Mouritsen, a professor and head of the Department of Operations Management at the Copenhagen institution.

Much of the research work will be carried out by students, but these are no immature teenagers. The majority of participants in the Blue MBA courses are experienced practitioners in various areas of shipping and trade who are keen to sharpen their understanding of the wider field around their own businesses.

Programme director Irene Rosberg makes much of the diversity of the students being part of the strength of the course.

"This makes it challenging for the lecturers and professors and adds to the market knowledge and overall knowledge within the group," she says.

This diversity is reflected in the nationality, professional background, culture, and gender of the participants. In the class that graduated in September 2007, one in four was a woman.

**At Copenhagen Business School's Blue MBA programme, some of the finest minds in shipping are being focused on the development of a research centre that will mobilise an unrivalled skills cluster. James Brewer reports**

"This by itself has been revolutionary, and we feel that it is a great achievement to have such a good number of female participants within such a male-dominated industry," Ms Rosberg says.

The current class comprises 35 students from 16 countries and represents all segments of the industry. Dr Rogers, associate dean of the programme, says:

"The cohort is not a traditional MBA grouping. Many of them hold extremely senior positions in the industry: chairmen, chief executives, chief financial officers, presidents and vice-presidents. Their professions are related to the maritime industry, and that is one of the key strengths."

The newly established research centre is seen as helping meet current and anticipated needs of the industry, but will also serve as the research base for the MBA programme.

Given the broad scope of departments at the business school, the centre can benefit from the expertise within those departments and from international industry experts to address sponsored research from outside bodies, and ad hoc analysis.

This will go alongside the underlying programme of the Blue MBA, which consists of eight one-week modules plus a final thesis, which involves students making three presentations, which as far as possible are focused on a problem related to their own company.

Christer Karlsson, dean of the Copenhagen Business School executive and chairman of the Blue MBA advisory board, is giving strong backing to the development, emphasising the close collaboration between the business school researchers and the stakeholders.

"In order to achieve this and to fundamentally change the way industry realises the business benefits gained from successful research, it is intended that the research be done in an iterative manner," Professor Karlsson says. "This will provide for more interaction between researchers and the players in the maritime industry which will in turn bring more diverse feedback, paving the way to achieve full potential of research projects."

Ms Rosberg sees a generational shift at work in the

Pictured above, the Copenhagen Business School Blue MBA Maritime Advisory Board: from left, Jan Mouritsen, head of operations management; Mette Heileskov Bülow, chief specialist, Transport Strategy, External Relations, Vestas Americas, US; Andreas Nordseth, director, Danish Maritime Authority; Peter Lorange, professor/module captain, the Blue MBA; Edel Seidenschur, director, Danish-French Maritime Foundation, Denmark; Erik Bastiansen, managing director, MSR-Consult ApS, Denmark; Christer Karlsson, professor and dean, CBS Executive; Irene Rosberg, director, the Blue MBA; Søren Stig Nielsen, head of sales, Maersk Line/Maersk Logistics, Denmark; Jens Søndergaard, senior vice-president, J. Lauritzen, Denmark; Philip Rogers, head of consultancy, research department, ICAP Shipping, UK associate dean, Executive MBA in Shipping and Logistics, CBS, Denmark; Arild Iversen, chief executive, Wallenius Wilhelmsen Logistics, Wilhelmsen Group, Oslo, Norway.

shipping industry, and a growing consciousness of the international nature of the business. She says that the graduates are a dynamic group dedicated to the improvement of different aspects of the maritime industry.

The advisory board of senior individuals from go-ahead companies meets regularly to monitor the programme.

One of their number, Søren Stig Nielsen, senior director for health, safety, security and environment at Maersk Line, supports the endeavours at the School — and the links between his company and several other leading universities — because of the need for closer integration between business and academia. "If shipping companies are to remain competitive and innovative in their approach, also in relation to their environment, we will have to partner in new ways compared to the past," he says.

"There is an opportunity to bring the art of academic research together with the more practical side of business in shipping. If you bring that together and take the best of both, I am quite sure it will benefit both sides."

He says it is important that the business school is "not doing research for the sake of research, but making sure it is applicable to the real world and relevant to international shipping and logistics. I think that is where Copenhagen Business School is doing a good job and has reached out to business. They [the school's maritime professors and alumni] want to be challenged and put their minds together to contribute to a commercial agenda.

"But I also see the need for the shipping industry to play a more visible role."

Will the fruits of such research be hidden because of confidentiality considerations? "There is a difference between doing the research, and coming to conclusions," says Mr Nielsen.

"If you do that well, it is not a threat to share it with anybody else. This will not just be clinical research; it will leverage the total student base. So you will get input that you will not get elsewhere. People who do not necessarily have a shipping background will provide a different type of participation.

"I think this will create a positive symbiosis, and a recognised path towards greater social responsibility."



Framework for learning: a study area at the Business School.

Copenhagen Business School/Tao Lytzen