



*The practical voice of shipping*

# BIMCO ACADEMY

## Agency and Port Operations

### Supporting Organisations



Date: 30 November - 4 December 2026  
Venue: Panama City

 **BIMCO TRAINING**

## Introduction to BIMCO Training Academies

BIMCO Training Academies are intensive, five-day, face-to-face programmes designed for professionals who require a deeper understanding of key shipping disciplines. Covering core areas such as operations, chartering, maritime law and ship management, each Academy provides a comprehensive learning experience that goes beyond short seminars or online sessions.

The in-person format allows participants to engage in detailed case studies, practical exercises and interactive discussions with industry experts and peers. This immersive approach supports not only the development of hands-on knowledge but also the exchange of commercial perspectives and operational experience across organisations and sectors.

## Overview of content

The BIMCO Academy on Agency and Port Operations is a five-day advanced programme designed to position the port agent as a modern, structured, risk-aware professional operating at the intersection of trade, transport, and regulation. The Academy goes beyond operational routines and examines how commercial contracts, documentation, port realities, and dispute processes converge at the port call.

The programme follows a deliberate thematic progression across the week:

### Day 1 – The Agent in the International Trade Chain

Participants examine how risk, cost, and control shift between the sale contract, the charterparty, and the bill of lading. The focus is on authority, neutrality, and the structural tension that arises when agents are expected to manage risk without corresponding contractual control.

### Day 2 – Charterparties at the Port

The emphasis moves from structure to execution. Charterparty clauses are tested against port realities, exploring NOR validity, laytime, congestion, safe port issues, and evidentiary discipline. Participants analyse how operational conduct can preserve - or undermine - contractual rights.

### Day 3 – Bills of Lading and Cargo Documentation

Attention shifts to documentary risk. The programme examines how bills of lading, letters of indemnity, letters of credit, and electronic documentation systems shape commercial behaviour and liability. The agent's role in documentation under pressure is critically assessed.

### Day 4 – Infrastructure and Operational Context (Panama)

Through site visits to advanced simulator facilities and a transit of the Panama Canal, participants gain first-hand insight into the technical, infrastructural, and operational constraints that influence vessel performance and port operations.

### Day 5 – Claims, Disputes, and the Future Agent

The Academy concludes by positioning the agent as a professional partner in incident management and dispute handling. Focus is placed on evidence, reporting discipline, escalation protocols, and the evolving role of agents in an increasingly digital and transparent environment.

Across the week, structured case studies connect each theme, following a transaction from sale contract to claim file. The Academy equips participants not merely to manage port calls, but to operate with contractual awareness, documentary discipline, and professional defensibility in complex international trade environments.

**Fees:**

BIMCO members and members of the supporting organisations: EUR 2205.

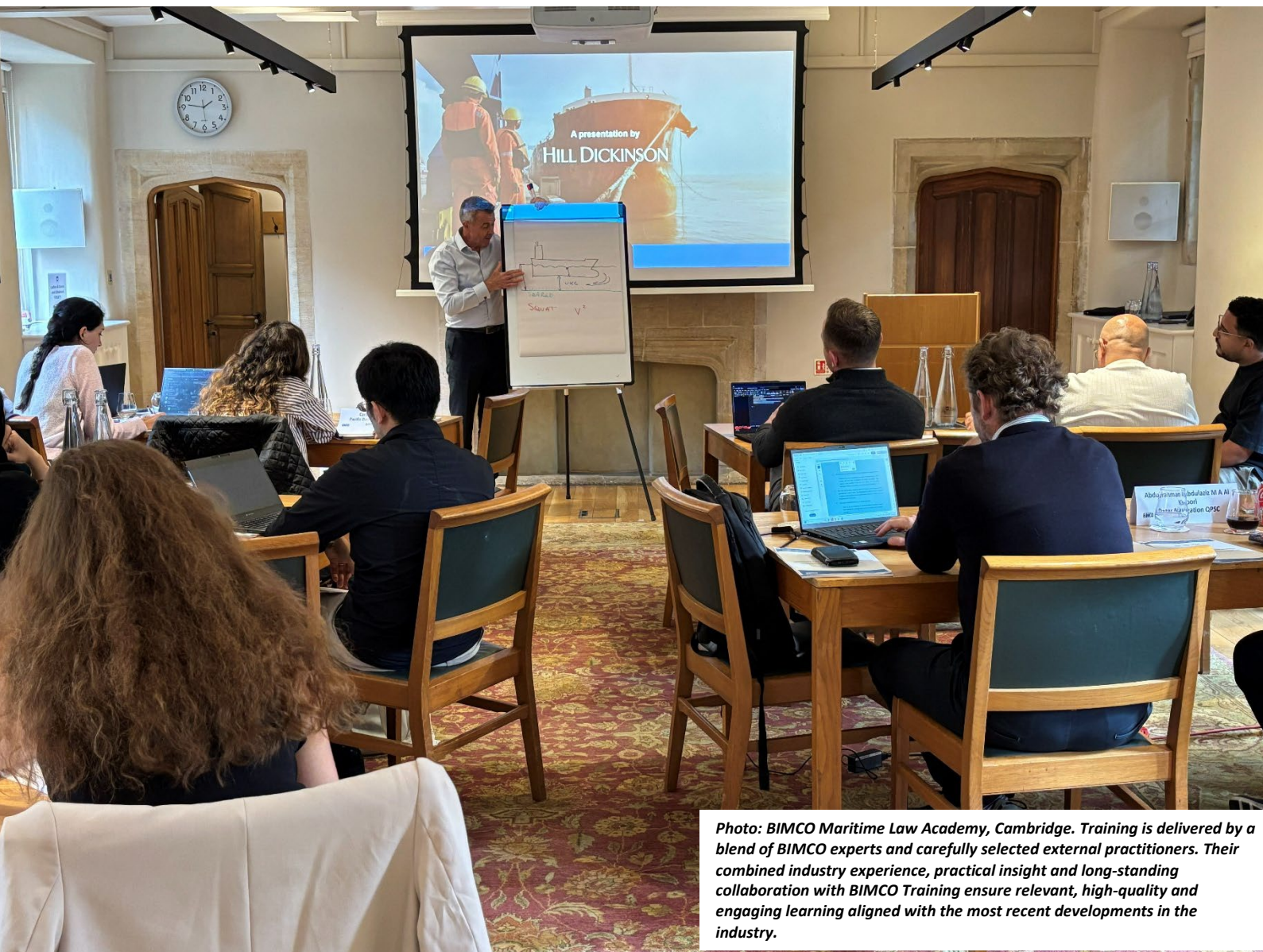
Non-members: EUR 2940:

**What is included?**

The course fee covers five days of tuition, company visits, teaching materials, lunch, and coffee breaks, as well as a joint dinner for all participants on day 4.

Taxes such as value-added or other indirect taxes applicable in any country are not included.

Accommodation is not part of the course package.



*Photo: BIMCO Maritime Law Academy, Cambridge. Training is delivered by a blend of BIMCO experts and carefully selected external practitioners. Their combined industry experience, practical insight and long-standing collaboration with BIMCO Training ensure relevant, high-quality and engaging learning aligned with the most recent developments in the industry.*

## Day 1 – The Agent in the International Trade Chain

### Theme: Role and authority to act on behalf of third parties

Day 1 establishes the Academy's foundation by positioning the port agent within the international trade and transport chain, rather than treating agency as a stand-alone service function. The day focuses on the agent's role and authority to act on behalf of third parties, and the structural tension that arises when agents are expected to manage operational risk without corresponding contractual control.

Starting with the commodity trade chain, we will examine how risk, cost, and control shift between the sale contract, the charterparty, and the bill of lading - and where those shifts are often misunderstood in practice. Attention is given to CIF and FOB sales, and to the implicit assumptions made by commercial parties when disputes arise.

The programme then moves to the legal and practical limits of agency authority, addressing appointment, instruction, payment, neutrality, and conflicts of interest. The day concludes by testing contractual design against port and terminal realities, before applying all concepts in a structured case study that mirrors the pressures agents face from shippers, receivers and principals during port operations.

#### 09:00 – 09:30 | Welcome and framing the Academy

- The role of BIMCO as a practical organisation serving both owners and agents
- The position of the port agent as a contractual and operational interface rather than a purely service-based function
- Framing the problem of agents managing risk without corresponding written contractual authority

#### 09:30 – 10:45 | The commodity trade chain

- The practical structure of the commodity trade chain and the roles of key commercial actors
- How Incoterms® and especially CIF and FOB sale terms allocate risk, cost, and control in theory and in practice
- Examples of how contractual risks shift in relation to the cargo sale contract, the charterparty and a bill of lading.
- Discussion on the implicit expectation and risks when an agent tries to bridge possible operational misalignments between the sale contract and the charterparty when there are disputes

#### 10:45 – 11:00 | Break

#### 11:00 – 12:30 | Agency appointment, authority, and neutrality

- The distinction between appointment, instruction, and payment in agency relationships
- The scope and limits of an agent's authority, including the risks of implied authority
- Disclosure duties and conflicts of interest arising from multi-principal environments
- Discussion on how agents can maintain neutrality while operating under commercial pressure from multiple stakeholders

#### 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch

#### 13:30 – 15:00 | Port reality vs. contractual design

- The contrast of charterparty assumptions compared with port and terminal realities
- What happens when local regulations and/or terminal rules override the contractual stipulations in the charterparty?

- How regional export structures and the influence of local and international traders can impact port operations

**15:00 – 15:15 | Break**

**15:15 – 16:45 | Case Study 1 – *The Sale Is Done. The Agent Is Appointed.***

- Apply Day 1 concepts to a realistic trade, chartering, and agency scenario
- Identify misaligned expectations across sale contracts, charterparties, and agency appointments
- Test the agent's actual authority against operational demands
- Anticipate pressure points likely to emerge during port operations and the documentation process.

**16:45 – 17:00 | Day wrap-up**



*Photo: BIMCO Operations Academy, Athens. Visit to the Minerva Training Center for all participants. Excursions to local maritime companies and facilities form an integral, practical component of the Academy programmes.*

## Day 2 – Charterparties at the Port

### Theme: When chartering terms meet operational friction at the port

Day 2 focuses on the point at which chartering terms are tested by port realities, and where the port agent serves as the practical interface between contractual rights and operational constraints. The day examines how charterparty provisions - often negotiated far from the port - translate into concrete actions, decisions, and risks once a vessel arrives.

The programme begins by identifying charterparty clauses under both voyage and time chartering that have immediate operational consequences for agents, including NOR validity, laytime definitions, berth versus port concepts, and the treatment of waiting, shifting, and congestion. The emphasis is on why agents must understand the underlying charterparty, even when they are not contractual parties, and how certain clauses, legally and practically, determine who controls terminals and stevedores.

Attention then turns to time, money, and evidence, highlighting the differing commercial priorities of owners and charterers during port operations. We will explore the agent's critical role in creating various evidence - through Statements of Facts, time sheets, and port logs - that may later determine the outcome of laytime, demurrage, or cargo disputes. Reporting discipline is addressed as a core risk-management function, not an administrative exercise.

The day concludes by examining operational limits imposed by draft, weather, labour, infrastructure, and fragmented port governance, before applying these issues in a case study involving congestion, conflicting instructions, and NOR risk.

#### 09:00 – 10:30 | Charterparty obligations that directly affect agents

- Examples of charterparty clauses under voyage and time chartering that have immediate operational consequences at the port, and why knowing the terms of the underlying charterparty is important for the agent
- How NOR validity, laytime definitions, and berth vs. port concepts translate into agent actions
- How shifting, waiting, and congestion are treated contractually versus operationally
- Charterparty clauses which, in practice, control terminals and stevedores - and how this affects the agent's role

#### 10:30 – 10:45 | Break

#### 10:45 – 12:30 | Time, money, and evidence

- Discussion on the owners' and charterers' commercial priorities during port operations
- The agent's role in creating and maintaining critical evidence for cargo claims
- Examples of how Statements of Facts, time sheets, and port logs are used in laytime and demurrage disputes
- Discussion on the importance of internal reporting discipline as a service and risk-management tool benefiting the principal, rather than an administrative task

#### 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch

#### 13:30 – 15:00 | Port constraints and operational limits

- What draft restrictions, weather, labour availability, and infrastructure impact contractual performance? Discussion on "Safe Port" concepts
- How fragmented port and terminal governance can disperse control and accountability, creating operational risk that charterparties do not fully anticipate and how the agent may try to navigate conflicting interests

- Develop approaches for managing expectations upstream without creating implied agency commitments

**15:00 – 15:15 | Break**

**15:15 – 16:45 | Case Study 2 – Arrival, NOR, and Congestion.**

- Apply charterparty concepts to a congested port arrival scenario
- Determine appropriate agent actions when berth availability and the owners' instructions conflict
- Decide what should be formally recorded to protect principals' positions
- Identify statements and actions that should be avoided to prevent unintended liability

**16:45 – 17:00 | Day wrap-up**



*Photo: BIMCO Shipmanagement Academy, Copenhagen. All BIMCO Academy programs combine focused classroom lectures, practical group work, and selected visits to local maritime companies, ensuring a balanced, applied learning experience.*

## Day 3 – Bills of Lading and Cargo Documentation

### Theme: When documents drive commercial behaviour and risks

Day 3 examines how cargo documentation - particularly bills of lading - shapes commercial behaviour, allocates risk, and creates exposure well beyond the charterparty framework. The focus is on the point at which operational decisions at the port crystallise into legal and financial consequences under the commodity sales contract and the charterparty.

The day begins by revisiting the three core functions of the bill of lading as receipt, evidence of the contract of carriage, and document of title, and by contrasting the “charterparty world” with the separate and often unforgiving “bill of lading world”. Particular attention is given to the agent’s practical involvement in the preparation, signing, and release of bills, and to how routine operational assistance can unintentionally create legal exposure.

Attention then shifts to the commercial pressures that drive documentary risk, including demands for clean, backdated, or switched bills, the widespread use of letters of indemnity, and the interaction between bills of lading and letters of credit. The session also addresses the growing use of electronic bills of lading, and how digital platforms alter timing pressure, control of documents, and the agent’s role in facilitating documentary flows.

In the afternoon, documentary risk is examined through the lens of different cargo types and regional trade patterns, highlighting why certain trades are particularly sensitive to discrepancies. The day concludes with a high-pressure case study in which cargo condition, banking deadlines, LOIs, and e-bill workflows collide. Day 3 reinforces a central message of the Academy: documents do not merely record events - they actively drive risk, behaviour, and liability.

#### 09:00 – 10:30 | Bills of lading: function and pressure points

- Revisit the core legal functions of the bill of lading as receipt, evidence of the contract of carriage, and document of title
- Contrast the “charterparty world” with the “bill of lading world” and the consequences for agents
- Port agent involvement in the preparation, signing, and release of bills of lading
- Identify where operational customer-friendly assistance can slide into unintended legal exposure for the agent

#### 10:30 – 10:45 | Break

#### 10:45 – 12:30 | Commercial pressure on documentation

- Discussion on the commercial drivers behind demands for clean, backdated, or switched bills of lading
- The legal and practical risks associated with letters of indemnity in a chartering and documentary context
- Examine how current documentary practices interact with letters of credit and bank/finance procedures
- The emergence of electronic bills of lading (e-bills), and how digital platforms change timing pressure, control, and agent involvement
- Discussion on situations where agents must resist commercial pressure to avoid personal or corporate exposure

#### 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch

#### 13:30 – 15:00 | Cargo Types, Trade Patterns, and Documentary Risk

- Examine how different cargo types create distinct documentary risk profiles
- Assess the sensitivity of agricultural bulk, mineral/mining cargoes, and project cargoes to documentary discrepancies

- How regional trading practices amplify pressure on agents during documentation
- How agents may be exposed to claims despite lacking contractual privity under the bill of lading

**15:00 – 15:15 | Break**

**15:15 – 16:45 | Case Study 3 – *The Bill of Lading Crisis.***

- Apply documentary risk principles to a high-pressure port scenario
- Determine what actions are legally and operationally permissible when the cargo condition is disputed
- Evaluate the risks associated with LOIs, time pressure, banking requirements, and e-bill workflows
- Develop defensible strategies for protecting the agent while maintaining operational continuity

**16:45 – 17:00 | Day wrap-up**



*Photo: BIMCO Chartering Academy, Singapore. Participants come from a wide range of professional backgrounds and experience levels, creating valuable and diverse learning perspectives.*

## Day 4 – Local tour of Maritime Panama

### Theme: Infrastructure, Systems, and Operational Reality

#### **09:00 – 12.00 Center for Simulators and Applied Technologies (CSTA), UMIP – Panama**

As part of the five-day programme, participants will visit the Center for Simulators and Applied Technologies (CSTA) at the Universidad Marítima Internacional de Panamá (UMIP) in La Boca, Panama. The visit is designed to complement the Academy's contractual and operational focus by providing insight into how technical, operational, and human-factor decisions are trained, tested, and evaluated in a controlled environment.

The CSTA was inaugurated in 2006 and includes a full-scale engine room simulator based on a post-Panamax container vessel, donated by the COSCO Group. The simulator is an exact replica of the engine room of a large container ship and allows instructors and trainees to prepare machinery for operations, monitor and control systems, diagnose faults, and optimise plant performance under realistic operating conditions.

In addition to the main engine room simulator, the centre hosts a wide range of specialised laboratories and simulators covering electrical systems, hydraulics, mechatronics, pumps, boilers, navigation, liquid cargo handling, GMDSS communications, and ECDIS. These facilities subject participants to realistic visual and auditory conditions, enabling the verification of procedures and decision-making without exposing personnel, vessels, or cargo to risk.

For participants in the BIMCO Academy on Agency and Port Operations, the visit offers a practical perspective on how shipboard limitations, system failures, and operational constraints can shape the decisions that agents must manage ashore.

#### **12.00 - 13.00 Lunch**

#### **13:00 - 17:00 Visit to the Panama Canal by boat**

As part of the programme, participants will take part in a boat transit of the Panama Canal, offering a unique opportunity to experience first-hand one of the world's most significant pieces of maritime infrastructure. For anyone working in shipping, the Canal represents a critical junction in global trade, linking the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and shaping vessel deployment and routing.

During the transit, participants will be able to see first hand the scale and complexity of canal operations, including lock transits, traffic management, pilotage, tug assistance, and the coordination required to move vessels safely and efficiently through the highly regulated waterway. The visit provides a practical view of the physical constraints, engineering solutions, and operational discipline that underpin daily canal operations.

Beyond its technical and operational aspects, the Panama Canal is also a landmark in maritime history and global commerce. Experiencing a transit by boat offers insight that cannot be gained from charts or schedules alone and provides valuable context for understanding why the Canal continues to play a central role in international shipping today.

#### **18:00 - Dinner for all participants and faculty**

## Day 5 – Claims, Disputes, and the Future Agent

### Theme: The Agent as a Risk Manager and Dispute Facilitator

Day 5 examines how port agents become involved in cargo claims, delay disputes, and regulatory investigations - and how their conduct can either protect or weaken their principals' positions. The focus is on structured incident handling and professional risk management rather than defensive reaction.

The day begins by analysing how disputes arise in practice: cargo discrepancies, laytime and demurrage disagreements, documentation issues, and regulatory penalties. Participants explore how routine operational involvement can later be scrutinised in arbitration or court proceedings, and why it is essential to distinguish between contractual liability, operational participation, and reputational exposure.

Attention then turns to evidence and damage control. The programme highlights what arbitration tribunals, insurers, and P&I correspondents typically examine in disputes, and why accurate records, clear reporting lines, and disciplined de-escalation procedures are decisive. Managing incidents early - and documenting decisions based on information available at the time - is a core professional skill.

In the afternoon, the discussion broadens to the evolving role of the port agent in a digital and transparent environment. As documentation systems, e-bills, and shared data platforms reshape expectations, agents are increasingly required to demonstrate value through compliance awareness, documentation discipline, and structured risk management.

The final case study traces a transaction from a sale contract to a claim file, consolidating the week's themes.

#### 09:00 – 10:30 | How agents become involved in disputes

- How cargo claims arise from discrepancies in condition, quantity, contamination, or documentation
- The agent's role in delay-related disputes, including laytime, demurrage and detention
- Exposure to regulatory penalties, including customs, environmental, port state, and safety violations
- How routine operational assistance can evolve into evidentiary scrutiny in arbitration or court proceedings
- The difference between contractual liability, operational involvement, and reputational exposure

#### 10:30 – 10:45 | Break

#### 10:45 – 12:30 | Evidence, reporting lines, and damage control

- What arbitrators, courts, insurers, and P&I correspondents typically look for in disputed port events
- The importance of contemporaneous records, structured reporting, and clear escalation lines
- Statements of Facts, email trails, instructions, and internal logs as dispute-critical evidence
- Managing early-stage incidents to prevent escalation into formal claims
- Avoiding hindsight bias: documenting decisions based on information available at the time
- The role of disciplined communication in protecting principals and the agency

#### 12:30 – 13:30 | Lunch

#### 13:30 – 15:00 | The evolving role of the port agent

- How digitalisation, shared data platforms, and transparency requirements reshape agency services
- The implications of e-bills, digital port systems, and integrated reporting tools
- Moving beyond "local presence" toward structured risk management and advisory functions
- Demonstrating value through compliance awareness, documentation discipline, and expectation management

- Professional positioning in a market where principals demand both efficiency and transparency

**15:00 – 15:15 | Break****15:15 – 16:45 | Final Case Study – *From Sale Contract to Claim File.*****Session Topics:**

Participants revisit the full transaction examined throughout the week, tracing it from the initial sale structure through port execution to dispute crystallisation.

Focus areas include:

- Identifying where contractual risk allocation failed in practice
- Assessing what the agent controlled, influenced, or merely observed
- Determining which issues should have been escalated earlier and to whom
- Evaluating how documentation, communication, and neutrality affected the outcome
- Formulating contractual and operational safeguards to reduce future exposure

**16:45 – 17:00 | Programme conclusion and key takeaways**

*Photo: BIMCO Maritime Law Academy, Cambridge. Group work and case studies are key elements of the training experience. At the Maritime Law Academy, participants apply five days of intensive preparation in a mock arbitration hearing, testing their ability to argue cases and handle disputes.*



**For more information, please contact:**

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