1. The Nautical Institute notes the Call for Evidence from the Select Committee and the accompanying paperwork associated with the inquiry into Autonomous vehicles. While many references are clearly directed to the road transport sector, passing reference is also made to the use of vehicles in extreme environments such as deep sea. This submission relates to considerations for seagoing autonomous vehicles.

2. Question 16 examines the capability of the UK’s education system for delivering people with the right skills for the autonomous vehicles sector. In the case of the operation of autonomous marine vehicles The Nautical Institute believes there is a requirement for specialist skills to be developed further in this area. The context of the marine environment requires specific rules to be adhered to for all seagoing vessels and the application of these rules in the context of autonomous vehicles requires special attention. Autonomous marine vehicles will be sharing water space with manned vessels and a common understanding of concepts and capabilities is important.

3. The Nautical Institute is the world’s leading membership body supporting those in control of seagoing craft. The Nautical Institute has extensive experience in the control of maritime qualifications required for the operation of some specialist vessels (those utilising Dynamic Positioning equipment). This experience extends to the auditing of educational and training institutions in the UK and overseas. Members of The Nautical Institute are well placed to provide specialist technical advice related to the operation of autonomous vehicles in the marine environment.

4. The Nautical Institute submits that a visible process of providing independent third party audits of training providers and the qualifications of personnel controlling autonomous seagoing vessels will do much to reassure the public about the quality and safety of such operations.

25 October 2016