

# So you want to be a transport manager?

**T**here are two types of operator licence for commercial vehicles: one for freight and one for passengers. Moving goods for hire and reward needs an HGV operator licence if the vehicle used has a gross plated weight of more than 3,500kg, or an unladen weight of more than 1,525kg (where there is no plated weight). Ferrying people in a vehicle that can carry nine or more passengers for hire or reward, or operating a smaller passenger vehicle but charging separate fares for the journey, requires a PSV operator licence.

To be granted an operator licence, a business needs a designated transport manager with a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC). The current CPC syllabus contains civil, commercial, social and fiscal law, business and financial management, access to the market, technical standards and aspects of operation, and road safety. Introduced on 1 January 1978, the requirements exempted some existing transport managers under grandfather rights certificates authorised by traffic

**There are several routes to becoming a transport manager. While the only legal requirement is a Certificate of Professional Competence, there is a growing focus on continued vocational development, discovers Kevin Swallow**

commissioners. On 4 December 2013 the rules changed again; grandfather rights became 'acquired rights' to comply with Article 9 of EC regulation 1071/2009. Since then, individuals who enjoyed grandfather rights, who have left and then returned to the industry, can no longer gain acquired rights on an operator licence application. They must take a CPC course.

One route to becoming a qualified transport manager is to go back to school. Birmingham's Aston University offers the bachelor of science (BSc) in logistics with transport management, a three-year course with the option of a placement year. The course, accredited by CILT, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, touches on aviation, maritime, rail and road transport, and is backed by several supermarket chains and logistics road

transport giants. Standard annual tuition fees apply for UK and EU-based students of £9,250, increasing to £1,250 during the placement year.

Says lecturer Dr Lucy Rackliff: "Students on this particular programme are self-funded. There is a huge (and growing) demand for transport professionals. We now have graduates in very senior roles within the transport industry. Its focus on passenger transport, close links to industry, and its mix of engineering and management content certainly make it very unusual."

By law, businesses that run fleets of more than 50 vehicles need more than one person to cover the work (though not every one of them is required to have a CPC). To help out the transport manager, employers might use transport clerks or supervisors, and provide them with on-the-job training. For example,

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Nick Denton



Framptons Transport in Shepton Mallet, Somerset employed 10 people covering operation and compliance for the fleet, recalls former employee Richard Fry, who worked as general manager and then MD for 25 years prior to 2015 (and has since set up consultancy RJF Associates and Transport). He recalls: “We recruited through apprenticeship schemes and externally, but always tried to develop staff from within. We put three or four of the transport team that were in control of legal parts of the transport business through the CPC.”

In any case, much shorter spans of training than university courses cost proportionately less. Most popular are self-funded training in the classroom or at home. Classroom-based courses cover the entire syllabus over five days immediately prior to pre-set exams. Prices for these courses, and exams, vary from £1,200 to £1,800 (plus VAT) across the industry.

MDR Training (UK) of Leicester offers classroom, distance learning and home study options. The manager of the transport training side of the business, Richard Dunbavan, argues that face-to-face teaching achieves the best results. “If you’ve not set foot in a classroom since school, trying to do the course from home is difficult. It’s cheaper, but the pass rate is less than half of those who do the classroom-based course. Many defer the exams and some don’t even take them.” Home study packs cost £150-£300, plus VAT and exam fees.

Also, as course attendees are from different industry sectors, their experiences provide learning opportunities for the other students. He adds: “The tutor presents the information; and, as well as the detail, will tell you what to expect in an exam.”

In addition to classroom and home study options, distance learning is rising in popularity. A halfway house between the two, it’s priced at around half the cost of a classroom-based course, with

exams included. “Distance learning gives you access to a tutor and is more successful than home study packs. It spurs people on to do each stage of the syllabus, knowing there is a tutor there for support,” according to Dunbavan.

**ENFORCEMENT**

The operator licensing scheme is managed by DVSA on behalf of traffic commissioners. New operator licence holders will need to attend a seminar within six months of its issue, as will anyone who switches from sole trader to limited company status, because the financial parameters are different.

Fall foul of the operator licensing laws, and the named transport manager may well be asked by a TC to attend a ‘refresher’ course run by the private sector, likely to be held over two days and costing up to £500 (plus VAT).

Dunbavan has witnessed transport managers signing up to refresher courses after entanglement with a TC. “We had one who still wrote

maintenance schedules on Post-it notes,” he says.

Stephen Corner, transport manager of heavy haulier Corner’s Transport in County Durham, chose to take a refresher course last year. “I did the Road Haulage Association’s transport managers’ course. I caught up with changes to drivers’ hours, because it’s something our drivers don’t push. Our issue is more likely to be the spread over the working day,” he explains.

He believes that mandatory periodic CPC training could tie in with driver CPC and keep many hauliers out of trouble.

Those credentials might come in handy. TCs can now scrutinise the transport manager independently of a company’s senior management, following a change in the law in 2011. Now a transport manager is viewed as a decision-maker of equal weight to senior management.

West Midlands TC Nick Denton argues that transport managers should have to complete additional training after obtaining their initial CPC, just as lorry drivers are required by law to do 35 hours’ training every five years. He says: “It is my experience, over many public inquiries, [that] transport managers with CPC qualifications dating back to the 1980s and 1990s all too frequently seem to have made little or no effort to keep up with changes in legislation and best practice.”

Under EU legislation, provision exists for member states to promote CPC periodic training at 10-year intervals. But, when queried, a spokesperson for the DfT told the author that it has no plans to mandate ongoing CPC training for transport managers at this time. **TE**



*Preston-based haulier Christopher Pattman also favours mandatory periodic CPC training*

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

*Operators offer D-CPC courses – <https://is.gd/etomey>*

*TC guidance on transport manager competence – <https://is.gd/tadeje>*

*Studying to be a DGSA – <https://is.gd/xoxini>*