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Engineering recognition

Like many members of the IRTE, I started in the road transport industry as an apprentice engineer and rose through the ranks to become head of fleet engineering. I am now responsible for a vehicle engineering services function, which incorporates design and specification. The calculations I undertake are both technical - including vehicle weights - and financial, meeting budgets. It is also my job to ensure the skills of my staff meet the needs of our maintenance work.

However, despite this demanding role, I currently hold Engineering Council registration at EngTech level, which I attained around 30 years ago, soon after I finished my apprenticeship. There are a number of similarly high-level road transport engineers registered at the same level.

This registration doesn't reflect our capabilities or represent our work. Even though some people have achieved higher engineering registrations (IEng and CEng), that has never been the standard route to professional engineering recognition in road transport. In the main, transport engineers have progressed by gaining vocational qualifications such as a transport manager CPC or via the old IRTE Section C route, a supervisory qualification I gained in the 1980s. The road transport industry has never incentivised people to go on to enroll in an engineering degree. (Even though, unlike some university graduates, we apply our knowledge every day.) Instead, the progress route was by internal promotion: to charge hand, supervisor, workshop manager, head or director of engineering.

Without a relevant degree or qualification, engineers like me cannot achieve an IEng or CEng registration unless we opt for the technical report route. This is not impossible but can be made more difficult to fit into an already-busy schedule.

Still, engineers like to be recognised for the work they do. Having postnominals sets you apart as a qualified professional engineer. So IRTE's new route to qualification (p23), which is based on working experience and knowledge, will interest a number of road transport engineers. And I'm one of them.



Michael Sweetmore
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