



# Stamp of QUALITY

**Y**ear on year, the number of irtec inspection technician assessments is doubling at Bristol vocational college S&B Automotive Academy, according to operations director Richard Belton. He forecasts that 2023 could end up as a bumper year with four times as many candidates as 2022. A lot of the bigger transport operators are being asked for it by their customers, he reports.

The inspection technician qualification shows that a technician is competent to carry out a safety inspection or preventive maintenance inspection (PMI) to the MOT standard. SOE president John Eastman observes: "The quality of maintenance and repair depends on PMIs. That's the bit that determines what needs doing, so is key to preventive maintenance."

"Inspection technicians check the maintenance and physical capability [of the vehicle] to go on the road. They are trained to be methodical and to go round and make sure that they don't miss anything."

But that's not all that there is to the qualification. While an MOT tester is competent to pass or fail the vehicle when it is presented for test, inspection technicians are able to judge the need to replace or repair, with an eye toward keeping the vehicle roadworthy until the

**With pressure being applied on operators by DVSA and the traffic commissioners, IRTE's irtec technician accreditation scheme - and in particular its most popular qualification, inspection technician - is having a bit of a moment in early 2023. Will Dalrymple explains**

next inspection, whenever that might be.

Adds Belton: "You do have to understand the engineering principles to be able to work at that level." He continues: "Inspection is probably one of the most important skills in engineering: to locate problems. If you can do that, you can get someone else to repair them. But to identify faults, you do need to understand those systems."

Which is fine, as, despite the name, most workshop technicians holding an inspection technician card will carry out service and repair jobs regularly anyway. Vehicle assessors from DVSA and Logistics UK are certified to irtec inspection technician.

The qualification, which comes in three flavours, for large commercial vehicle, bus and coach and heavy trailer, requires candidates to take an online theory test of underpinning knowledge and then an hour's practical inspection test. The qualification lasts five years.

Eastman points out that inspection technician plays a key role in IRTE's Workshop Accreditation system, which examines an entire operation. While a

workshop new to the scheme can qualify in the first year without employing a single technician with an irtec licence, it can only do so provided it signs up to qualify at least one inspection technician (or more in the case of larger operations).

Given the rising popularity of inspection technician, S&B has started offering it at the end of its engineering apprenticeships (its apprentices and staff are pictured above). Belton reports: "A lot of operators that send apprentices to us want to keep buy-in among their apprentices to stay with them and effectively extend their apprenticeship for an additional 6-12 months, and have a longer commitment and stay in the industry."

So, taken after months of work experience, the inspection technician qualification becomes a kind of fourth year of apprenticeship - albeit unfunded. To further support customers, S&B has already developed online training for the theory component, and hopes to finish a practical training programme as well in the next three months. [IRTE](#)