

The Driver CPC qualification has been causing much angst since its introduction and is still the subject of urban myths. John Kendall clarifies exactly what is needed to comply and where to get it

Dedicated

The CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) tag has been responsible for several urban myths, so it is important to outline what the certificate is and what drivers must do to comply.

Driver CPC was introduced for bus and coach drivers on 10 September 2008 and for truck drivers on 10 September 2009. Basically, the requirement is for drivers to undergo 35 hours of periodic training in the five years since then – representing seven hours (or one day) training per year.

For new drivers, there's a bit more to it. Any driver at the start of their training for PCV or LGV after the introduction dates is required to pass the Driver CPC's initial qualification, theory and practical tests. They must also pass the theory and practical tests for their licence. Then they must complete their first 35 hours of periodic training in the next five years.

The initial qualification theory and practical tests form modules two and four of the new driver tests; modules one and three are those that must be passed to obtain the licence. The theory test is computer-based and typically takes 90 minutes to complete. It relates to case studies that drivers can expect to come across in their working lives and answers may involve multiple choice or clicking on part of an image on screen. Drivers will be quizzed on around seven case studies, each with six to eight questions.

The 30 minute-long practical examination is designed to test driver knowledge in five subject areas: ability to load the vehicle following safety rules and proper vehicle use; security of the vehicle and contents; ability to prevent criminality and trafficking in illegal immigrants; ability to assess emergency situations; capability to prevent physical risk and demonstrating ability through a physical walk round of the vehicle. LGV drivers may also be asked to demonstrate their ability to secure loads.

Certificate clarification

Although existing licence holders are exempt from the initial theory and practical tests, this is where some urban myths start. They aren't exempt from 35 hours of periodic training – so existing bus and coach drivers have until 9 September 2013, and truck drivers until 9 September 2014, to complete that.

Licence holders who have literacy problems have nothing to worry about: there are no examinations to complete and no compulsory written work. The law requires simply that they attend the training sessions.

The trainer will record their attendance and the information will be passed to the Driving Standards Agency (DSA), which keeps records of training completed by each driver. Once they have completed the 35 hours, they will be issued with a Driver Qualification Card (DQC).

Without the card, drivers will not be able to renew their PCV or LGV driving licence after 9 September 2013 for bus and coach licence holders, or 9 September 2014 for truck licence holders. Existing licence holders who have not completed the training by the required date will not be able to continue driving for hire or reward.

One more point: the requirement for periodic training is ongoing. Completing the initial 35 hours will entitle drivers to keep driving for a living for five more years. After that, they will need to complete another 35 hours' periodic training every five years.

Training timetable

So what do you need to be trained in? According to the DSA leaflet, there are three main subject areas: safe and fuel-efficient driving; legal requirements; and health and safety, service and logistics.

There is a great deal of information on course content on the Internet. The Government Business Link website is a good place to start, as it lists all UK training centres, with a search facility by region.

Any training organisation listed on the site must be approved by the Joint Approvals Unit for Periodic Training (JAUPT). This is effectively run by the two training standards setting bodies for PCV and LGV drivers. For information, talk to: established driver training organisations with a track record in freight and passenger transport training; national bodies, such as the FTA (Freight Transport Association) and RHA (Road Haulage Association), and the truck manufacturers.

Manufacturer support

All the major truck manufacturers are offering courses, usually through training partners. If you are in regular contact with your local truck dealer, this is probably a good place to start.

Transport for London is also offering courses and has introduced a Safer London Driving module for its LGV Driver CPC course, designed to make drivers more aware of cyclists between truck and kerb alongside a vehicle, turning left at a junction.

Yorkshire-based TIR Training Services has launched two Driver CPC courses, based on the


drivers

company's driving simulators. Driving Down Risk focuses on manoeuvring at low speeds and in restricted spaces, to reduce accidents. Driving for Change is designed for fuel efficient driving. According to TIR commercial manager Tim Watson, simulator-based courses in the US have improved fuel efficiency by 4–6% and reduced avoidable accidents by 20–44%.

DAF Trucks is running a number of Driver CPC courses. How are existing drivers responding? "There's a huge variation," admits the company's marketing director Tony Pain. "People that we come across most tend to be from the medium to larger fleets that are very aware of it and generally have a plan. The people who haven't got their heads around it will find, come 2013/2014, that they have to take somebody off the road for a week."

Scheme success

Derek Broomfield is managing director at Novadata, an established transport training organisation. "We've been interested in how slowly it has started," he comments. "But, all of a sudden, we're getting a big influx for the passenger Driver CPC." Broomfield says that, from the statistics he's been reading, only 65–70% of PCV drivers have started and just 20% of LGV drivers. "If you do a curve, with a five-year plot, and ask: 'How many LGV operators did anything in year one?', you'd get a small percentage," he suggests. "Ask: 'How many are doing anything in year two', and it's a small percentage, too. So, if there are half a million drivers in the UK, how many are going to have to be trained in 2013 and 2014? VOSA is saying there will be a £30 to £60 fine for the driver and £1,000 for the operator, if the driver is caught driving without a DQC card then."

"I took a course recently for 15 drivers, who were very aggressive," says Broomfield. "They asked: 'What have I got to do this for?'. I said that in every industry you have to do some form of training. So are you saying that, as a trucker, once you've passed your test, there should never be any ongoing training? That's why they brought it in – for ongoing professional development. Take drivers' hours as an example: it's amazing how many drivers don't understand the law." 



For further information on technology and suppliers, visit www.transportengineer.org.uk

Course providers

DAF Trucks

Operates a broad range of courses that can be provided at dealer or operator premises

Mercedes-Benz

Operates a broad range of courses through Mercedes driver training centre at Wentworth Park, near Sheffield. <http://www.mercedes-benzdrivertraining.co.uk>

Scania

Offers a wide range of courses through the in-house driver development operation - www.scania.co.uk/drivercpc

Volvo Trucks

Runs a comprehensive range of initial and periodic Driver CPC courses - www.volvotrucks.co.uk/driverdevelopment

Other training providers

AA DriveTech

Established driver trainers, with extensive fleet experience. A range of CPC courses and broad experience with lighter vehicles. Training can be delivered nationwide through existing centres. Became part of the AA in 2009. www.AA drivetech.com

Novadata

Established transport training provider. Training providers at a range of centres to suit operators. Saturday and Sunday courses www.novadata.co.uk

Peak Performance

Established driver trainers, with extensive fleet experience. Active for over 20 years. A range of CPC courses. Broad experience with lighter vehicles and LGV defensive driving courses. www.peak.performance.net

TIR

A range of courses, including truck simulator-based training. <http://www.t-i-r.com/>

IAM Drive and Survive

Established driver training and risk management course provider. LGV and PCV Driver CPC courses. www.iamdriveandsurvive.co.uk

