

Master technician

Ahead of the launch of the Master Technician licence at the CV Show, John Challen investigates latest developments in the world of irtec

2013 heralds the next step in the life of the ITRE's national technician accreditation scheme irtec, with the arrival of the Master Technician qualification. Having undergone its trial period, with several high-profile operators testing the assessment on their own technicians, the new level will be officially launched at this month's CV Show (9–11 April 2013, at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham).

To recap, until now irtec licences have been awarded at Service Maintenance, Inspection and Advanced Technician levels. With the addition of the Master Technician irtec licence, there will be another level of excellence, and more opportunities for career progression for technicians involved in the bus, coach and freight transport sectors.

One of the parties in the Master Technician trials process has been Scania. Gary Power, the company's retail service operations manager, says its involvement with IRTE, alongside its own training programme, has been invaluable. "I'm making sure we get the delivery of accredited technicians to our marketplace, further underpinning the quality training we already provide, from a manufacturer's point of view," he states. "From our customers' perspective, they will also see that we have fully licensed technicians with independent irtec accreditation. It is sometimes difficult to get the message [of validated competence] across with a manufacturer's qualification."

Double certification


For Stephen Brown, Scania's technical services manager, the plan is to place the firm's people on the irtec Master Technician programme after they have completed their in-house qualifications. "Our approach is designed to give technicians recognition for their hard work, by getting not only Scania qualifications, but also the irtec licence."

Another string to Scania's bow comes from the fact that the manufacturer's training centre in Loughborough has now gained irtec assessment centre status. Not only is this beneficial for the 1,267 technicians in the network, but it also gifts the truck manufacturer an opportunity to offer

training for irtec qualifications to the wider transport industry.

Meanwhile, John Parry, a member of irtec's expert working group, hopes that, with Scania signed up, many more truck manufacturers and their dealerships will soon follow. "We are talking with MAN, Isuzu, Mercedes-Benz, Iveco and DAF," he reveals. "The plan is to have a further 1,000 technicians licensed [across all grades] in 2013, on top of the 1,000 from 2012."

The expert group, explains Parry, is also looking at new irtec modules to add into the assessment – the goal being to keep it fresh and relevant, in line with the advancing technology used on today's vehicles. "We will be looking at electric and hybrid vehicles, for example, as well as off-site working, and the area of pet regs and ADR," he confirms.

Parry doesn't say when we can expect to see these further additions to irtec, but it is clear that no stone is being left unturned in ensuring that technicians are up to the task of keeping the UK's transport industry moving. 

The irtec message spreads

Iveco piloting irtec

Iveco has piloted irtec, with the aim of gaining around 100 irtec-licensed Inspection Technicians by the end of 2013. "I am a firm believer that, in our industry, we need to have a recognised qualification that sets the standards of competence for all," states Kevan Woodier, Iveco's training manager. "Iveco sees irtec as a major step forward in the development and recognition of the skills levels for all our dealer technicians."

Calor investing in people

Calor considers irtec to be a vital part of the company's overall training strategy and in 2012 went into partnership with The Manchester College, providing all of its vehicle technicians with the opportunity to gain accreditation. As a result, every Calor candidate is now an irtec licence holder, boosting Calor's high standards and the credibility of the company's repair and maintenance operations.