



## Private Hire Vehicle Drivers Topographical Skills Assessments

There is a statutory requirement for private hire vehicle (PHV) drivers to satisfy TfL that they have an appropriate level of knowledge of London and general topographical skills.

As part of the application process, applicants are required to take a TfL topographical skills assessment at a centre approved by TfL.

We currently allow a small number of concessions for applicants who can demonstrate that they already satisfy the topographical skills requirement.

The current concessions are:

- previously licensed PHV drivers who have passed a TfL topographical skills assessment
- licensed London taxi drivers – both All London and Suburban;
- professional London tourist guides (e.g. Blue Badge Driver Guide); and
- an individual who can provide TfL with evidence of a relevant vocational qualification in road passenger transport e.g.
  - NVQ Level 2 Certificate in Road Passenger Vehicle Driving (Taxi and Private Hire)
  - BTEC/VRQ Level 2 Introduction to the Role of Professional Taxi and PHV Driver which includes a route planning component.

Any other concessions are considered on a case by case basis.

### **The submission of 'relevant vocational qualifications'**

The 'relevant vocational qualification' concession was introduced so that experienced drivers who could demonstrate that their experience of working as a PHV driver had been formally assessed, did not have to take a topographical skills assessment. This was particularly relevant when the topographical skills assessments were introduced in 2006, as PHV licensing was new in London and many drivers already working in the industry had obtained qualifications through on-the-job assessments.

Recent experience has shown that some applicants are now obtaining relevant vocational qualifications without any previous experience of working as a PHV driver which was not the purpose of the concession. We have therefore reviewed the relevance of this concession and after careful consideration have decided that the reason for it originally being allowed is no longer applicable.

Moreover, concerns have been raised recently as to how some of these qualifications are being obtained and we cannot be totally satisfied that all drivers are being licensed with a level of topographical skills that match our specification, and drivers may therefore not be meeting the legislative requirement.

In the circumstances the 'relevant vocational qualification' concession will be removed from **1 February 2020**.

All other concessions will be retained for the time being.

### **Applications received prior to 1 February 2020**

All applications for a PHV driver's licence received before 1 February 2020 and accompanied by evidence of a relevant vocational qualification will be considered for the concession. However, if we have any concerns regarding the validity of a vocational qualification certificate, we reserve the right to refuse the application or require the applicant to take a TfL topographical skills assessment.

### **Applications received from 1 February 2020**

For all applications received on or after 1 February 2020, applicants will be required to demonstrate topographical skills competence by taking a TfL topographical skills assessment or by qualifying for one of the approved concessions.

Further information about the topographical skills assessment and approved centres can be found on the taxi and private hire pages of the TfL website.

### **Vista Training Solutions**

The BBC's Inside Out London programme recently featured fraudulent activity taking place at one specific college – Vista Training Solutions – and alleged that certificates were being presented to candidates who had not completed the required training.

While issues around the qualifications are a matter for the relevant examination board - Pearson - and the qualifications regulator, Ofqual, we were extremely

concerned to learn that certificates could be obtained in this manner and used as part of an application to become a private hire driver in London.

As a result of these concerns, we have now revoked the licences previously issued to the 143 licensed private hire drivers who obtained their qualification from Vista Training Solutions. Similarly, all new applications received with a certificate issued by Vista Training Solutions have been refused.

Since the BBC programme, we have not been provided with any evidence of concern about other colleges providing a similar service. However, should any further instances be brought to our attention we will consider the appropriate licensing action.



Graham Robinson  
**Interim General Manager**  
**Taxi and Private Hire**  
**Transport for London**

03 December 2019

*For previous Notices and additional licensing information, please visit [tfl.gov.uk/tph](http://tfl.gov.uk/tph)*