

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Entry Requirements of Taxi Drivers and Taxi Driver Pre-service Training Programme

Purpose

This paper sets out the Administration's proposals to revise the entry requirements of taxi drivers and the scope of the written test for taxi driving licence with a view to improving the quality of taxi services. Members are invited to give their views and comments on the proposals.

Background

Existing Arrangements

2. At present, taxi driving licences are issued to candidates who have passed a written test ("the Taxi Licence Test") conducted by Transport Department ("TD"). The Taxi Licence Test covers areas relating to the Road Users' Codes, street names and locations in Hong Kong and traffic regulations governing taxi operation. Persons who meet the following criteria are qualified to take the Taxi Licence Test -

- (a) aged 21 or above;
- (b) holder of a valid full private car or light goods vehicle driving licence for at least 3 years; and
- (c) no conviction of offence under section 36 or section 39 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Chapter 374) during the 5 years immediately preceding the application viz. dangerous driving causing death or driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

3. Examination-oriented short courses are offered by individual organisations to prospective taxi drivers. These short courses generally cover the scope of the Taxi Licence Test only. Separately, individual taxi

owners and associations also organize ad hoc and voluntary training for their new taxi drivers. The training is done mainly by experienced taxi drivers to give some practical guidance to new taxi drivers and explain to them the common practices in the taxi trade.

Transport Advisory Committee's Review

4. In 1998, a working group set up by the Transport Advisory Committee to review the taxi licensing system recommended inter alia that, as measures to raise the standards and performance of taxi drivers, applicants for taxi driving licence should attend a mandatory taxi driver pre-service training programme and the scope of the Taxi Licence Test should be expanded to cover other important areas for quality taxi driving, including proper driving attitude, map reading, and basic Putonghua and English. The working group also considered that, with the above new requirements on pre-service training and more stringent Taxi Licence Test, those who have held a valid full private car or light goods vehicle driving licence for at least one year, in lieu of three years, should be allowed to apply for a taxi driving licence so as to facilitate the supply of properly trained taxi drivers.

Overseas Practice

5. TD has studied the practices adopted in 18 overseas countries/cities and Mainland cities. It is noted that 15 of them require applicants of taxi drivers to attend mandatory pre-service training of duration ranging from two hours to one month full-time. The contents of the training courses cover taxi regulations, customer service skills, knowledge of places, routeings and tourists spots, language proficiency and basic vehicle maintenance skills. Six countries/cities including New York, Sydney and Singapore allow applicants holding a basic driving licence for at least one year only to apply for a taxi driving licence, whereas seven cities including London, Seattle and Shanghai allow applicants without a driving licence to directly apply for a taxi driving licence.

Taxi Passenger Opinion Surveys

6. To take the matter forward, TD has commissioned a taxi passenger opinion survey to gauge public views. Of the some 3,500 taxi passengers interviewed, about 65% of them considered professional training

for taxi drivers an effective means to enhance the performance of taxi drivers and the quality of taxi services.

The Proposals

7. Having regard to the above considerations, it is proposed that -
- (a) all applicants for taxi driving licence should be required to attend a mandatory taxi driver pre-service training programme before they qualify for a taxi driving licence;
 - (b) the scope of the Taxi Licence Test should be expanded to cover proper driving attitude, map reading skills, Putonghua and English listening tests; and
 - (c) persons who have held a valid full private car or light goods vehicle driving licence for at least one year, in lieu of three years, should be allowed to apply for a taxi driving licence.

There will be no change to the minimum age requirement for obtaining a taxi driving licence.

Pre-service Training Programme

8. It is proposed that after an applicant for taxi driving licence has passed the Taxi Licence Test, he/she should be required to attend a mandatory training programme. They would qualify for a taxi driving licence after they have completed the mandatory training programme and are issued a course certificate.

9. The mandatory training programme would be divided into three modules covering the following aspects -

- (a) Module 1: driving skills, proper driving attitude and behaviour (8 hours);
- (b) Module 2: basic taxi operation skills (8 hours); and
- (c) Module 3: customer service skills (4 hours).

To supplement these mandatory courses and provide additional training opportunities for candidates of the Taxi Licence Test, it is proposed that an optional training programme should also be offered to cover the following key areas which will be tested in the Taxi Licence Test -

- (d) Module 4: language skills - basic Putonghua and English (4 hours);
- (e) Module 5: routes and destinations (4 hours); and
- (f) Module 6: taxi regulations and Road Users' Codes (4 hours).

10. Altogether these courses would last for about 4 days (32 hours). The contents of individual training modules and the other relevant details of the proposed programmes are given in Annex A. The programmes are to be provided by training organisations in accordance with the course content accredited and approved by TD.

Annex A

11. Our current plan is that the training institutes should be accredited by TD. They may include the designated driving schools and the driving improvement schools. TD will make arrangements similar to the Driver Improvement Course to ensure the quality and performance of the trainers and training organisations delivering the three modules of the proposed mandatory training programme. Relevant training organisations such as the Vocational Training Council and/or the Hong Kong Productivity Council would be entrusted to organize and deliver a train-the-trainer course to ensure supply of suitable trainers. Our initial views on the qualifications of the training organisations and trainers are outlined in Annex B. The current estimate of the total amount of fees for attending the mandatory training programme is about \$1,900.

Annex B

Scope of Taxi Licence Test

12. It is proposed that the scope of the existing Taxi Licence Test should be expanded to cover other important areas and skills necessary for the provision of quality and safe taxi services, including map reading skills, proper driving attitude, and basic Putonghua and English. This would keep pace with the increasing passenger expectation of taxi service quality.

Requirement of a Valid Licence

13. Prospective taxi drivers would have to spend additional efforts and time to meet the proposed new requirements on mandatory pre-service training and the more comprehensive and stringent Taxi Licence Test. To offset this, and in line with the prevailing overseas practice mentioned in paragraph 5 above in respect of the requirement of licence holding period, it is proposed that the minimum period for applicants holding a private car or light good vehicle full licence to qualify for a taxi driving licence should be changed from three years to one year.

14. The accident involvement rate per million vehicle-kilometer of taxis is among the lowest among all public transport modes during the last 10 years. To facilitate the maintenance of the safety standard, training on safety aspect would be enhanced under our proposals by including driving skills as well as proper driving attitude in the mandatory pre-service training programme and in the expanded scope of Taxi Licence Test.

Training for In-service Taxi Drivers

15. In parallel to these proposals which would apply to new taxi drivers, TD has implemented a number of quality taxi service projects to facilitate in-service taxi drivers to enhance their performance and service quality. These include, for example, introduction of the Taxi Driver Commendation Scheme and distribution of a Workplace English and Putonghua Programme to in-service taxi drivers. Recently, TD and the Vocational Training Council have, with input from the taxi trades, developed a voluntary Skill Upgrading Scheme (“SUS”) for frontline staff and drivers of the land passenger transport industry including in-service taxi drivers. The SUS training programme is an intensive and advanced training. In-service taxi drivers amongst others would be encouraged to join the programme. It is anticipated that the SUS training programme will be launched in the latter half of 2003. Certificates will be granted to those in-service taxi drivers who complete the training.

Consultation with the Taxi Trade

16. TD has conducted several rounds of consultation with the taxi trade on the above proposals. The trade representatives indicated their general support for the proposals and the introduction of a SUS training programme for in-service taxi drivers. They strongly requested early implementation of the proposed new arrangements.

Next Steps

17. We will take into account the views and comments from Members and other relevant parties in finalising the proposals. The relevant provisions in the Road Traffic (Driving Licence) Regulations (Cap. 374) would need to be amended for implementation of the proposals.

Environment, Transport & Works Bureau
April 2003

Proposed Taxi Driver Pre-Service Training Programme

I. Compulsory Programme

- Module 1: This module is the Driver Improvement Course which aims to improve the driving attitude of taxi drivers and to enhance their knowledge on safe driving.
- Module 2: This module covers the operation of taxi meters; Octopus card reader; basic vehicle maintenance skills; on-the-road driving practice skills like entering and leaving taxi stands, picking up and setting down passengers including those with disabilities; maintaining a stable, safe and comfortable journey; speed control, overtaking, defensive driving strategies; skidding handling; expressway, tunnel and night driving, lane merging and tactics in tackling traffic jam; procedures to handle emergencies and accidents, as well as occupational health tips for taxi drivers.
- Module 3: This module covers basic customer service skills, skills to enhance service delivery, taxi service standards, skills to provide assistance to people with disabilities and tourists, as well as better communication skills including use of courteous language.

II. Optional Programme

- Module 4: This module covers Workplace English and Putonghua.
- Module 5: This module covers skills to identify routes and destinations, map reading skills and skills to use supplementary information.
- Module 6: This module covers taxi regulations, Road Users' Codes and requirements of the Taxi Licence Test.

III. Monitoring

- Transport Department ("TD") will devise a set of quality assurance measures to ensure the standard of the mandatory training programme. The measures will include routine monitoring of the performance of the trainers and the training institutes as well as regular review of the

contents of the training modules.

- Train-the-trainer course will also be developed and offered by training institutes (such as the Vocational Training Council and/or the Hong Kong Productivity Council) accredited by TD to ensure an adequate supply of qualified trainers for the training programme.

IV. Training Materials

- The following training materials will be developed and produced:
 - ◆ Course manual for the various modules. Training material for Module 1 will be adapted from Driver Improvement Course.
 - ◆ Course VCD.
 - ◆ Workplace English and Putonghua Programme for Taxi Drivers.
 - ◆ Road Users' Codes.
 - ◆ A Guide to Taxi Services in Hong Kong.
 - ◆ Trilingual Guide for Visitors.
 - ◆ Hong Kong Guide – street map published by Lands Department.

V. Milestones for Obtaining a Taxi Driving Licence under the Proposals

Steps		Expenses
1	Submit application for attending Taxi Licence Test	\$510
2 (Optional)	Attend the optional training programme	\$600 (estimate) for three modules
3	Attend the Taxi Licence Test	N.A.
4	Attend the mandatory training programme	\$700 (estimate) for Module 1 \$1,000 (estimate) for Module 2 \$200 (estimate) for Module 3
5	Obtain taxi driving licence from TD upon completion of the mandatory training programme	N.A.

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**Administration’s Initial Views on Potential Training Institutes
and Trainers**

Training Institutes / Trainers	Basic Qualifications
Training institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designated Driving Schools and Driving Improvement Schools; and ● Training organizations accredited and authorized by Transport Department (“TD”)
Trainers for Module 1 - Driver Improvement Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Existing Driving Improvement Schools accredited by TD for organizing the Driver Improvement Course
Trainers for Module 2 - Basic Taxi Operation Skills	<p><i>Taxi Operation Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals with suitable taxi operation experience (i.e. experienced taxi drivers with at least 5 years of taxi driving experience and good driving record); or ● Holders of valid driving licence for 10 years with good driving record. <p><i>Basic Vehicle Maintenance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certified mechanics with qualifications recognized by the Vocational Training Council and Electrical & Mechanical Services Department; and ● Attendance of train-the-trainer course.
Trainers for Module 3 - Customer Service Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individuals with 5-year experience in the relevant industry or possessing Diploma in Travel and Tourism or above in academic qualifications; and ● Attendance of train-the-trainer course.