

**For discussion on
19 May 2023**

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

**Requirements for physical fitness certification of
driving licence applicants/holders**

Purpose

This paper reports on the Government's review of the requirements for physical fitness certification of driving licence applicants/holders and seeks members' views on the recommendations to enhance such requirements.

Background

2. The physical conditions of drivers are of vital importance to ensuring the safety of road users. The Government has all along been concerned about the health conditions of drivers and has been closely monitoring the physical fitness requirements of drivers and related issues, as well as strengthening publicity efforts on road safety. In view of the ageing population in Hong Kong and the year-on-year growth in the number of aged holders of driving licences, the Transport Department (TD) commenced a review of the requirements and mechanism for physical fitness certification of driving licence applicants/holders under the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B) (the Regulations).

Existing legislative requirements and arrangements

3. At present, the Regulations stipulate that a driving licence applicant shall make a declaration as to whether or not he/she is suffering from any disease or physical disability specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations (see **Annex 1** for details), or any other disease or physical disability which would be liable to cause the driving by him/her to be a source of danger to the public. If it appears to the Commissioner for Transport (the Commissioner) that the applicant is suffering from the disease or physical disability specified in the First Schedule, the Commissioner will refuse his/her application. Furthermore, even though a driving licence holder did not suffer from any specified disease or disability during the application procedures, he/she shall, after he/she becomes aware of such disease or disability, forthwith give notice in writing of

such fact to the Commissioner. Upon receipt of the written notice, the Commissioner will require the driving licence holder to provide a medical report or authorise the TD to enquire about his/her medical fitness with his/her attending doctor for ascertaining whether the holder is suffering from any disease or disability specified in the First Schedule. If the medical report proves that the holder is suffering from a disease or disability specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations, the Commissioner shall cancel the driving licence of the holder.

4. The Regulations also provide for that when a person aged 70 or above applies for a full driving licence of any class of motor vehicle, his/her application shall be accompanied by a medical examination certificate (TD256) completed and signed by a registered medical practitioner who is acceptable to the Commissioner on a date not earlier than four months before the application to prove that the applicant is medically fit to drive and control any vehicle in that class¹. Unlike general driving licences which are valid for ten years, the validity period of the driving licences issued to applicants aged 70 or above is one year or three years, depending on applicants' choices.

5. In addition, the TD receives from time to time cases in which drivers are suspected of having health problems ("suspected cases"), including those referred by the Hong Kong Police Force. Under the existing legislation and mechanism, if the drivers concerned refuse to authorise the TD to access their medical reports, the latter will not be able to immediately assess whether the drivers are medically fit to drive but can only request them to provide the relevant medical reports for follow-up until renewal of their licences.

6. There is no definition of commercial vehicles in the existing legislation. For the purpose of classifying driving licences, taxis, private light buses and public light buses, private buses and public buses, franchised buses, medium goods vehicles, heavy goods vehicles, articulated vehicles and special purpose vehicles are generally regarded as "commercial vehicles". As drivers eligible to drive "commercial vehicles" must possess corresponding qualifications for driving "non-commercial vehicles", any driver who is eligible to drive a "non-commercial vehicle" and possesses the

¹ The medical examination certificate must be completed by a registered medical practitioner. The form lists out areas which the registered medical practitioner may have to consider during the medical examination conducted for the applicant. Such areas include eyesight, mental state, skeletal and muscular system, balance and co-ordination, hearing and other aspects. The registered medical practitioner should also exercise his professional judgment to conduct any other test which he thinks appropriate and include whatever test on the applicant as necessary in order to obtain adequate information to facilitate his completion of the conclusion of the report.

qualifications to drive any of the above “commercial vehicles” will be defined as a “commercial vehicle driver”.

Objectives of the review and the work involved

Objectives of the review

7. In order to assess the medical fitness of commercial vehicle drivers and aged drivers in a more efficient manner for enhancing road safety, further protecting road users and responding to the views of the public, the TD has actively reviewed the requirements for medical examination of drivers. Having drawn reference from the requirements for medical examination of driving licence applicants and relevant practices in other jurisdictions, analysed the traffic accident statistics in Hong Kong and consulted relevant bureaux and departments, the key objectives of the review are as follows:

- (i) to review the diseases or physical disabilities with which an applicant’s application for a driving licence of relevant class of vehicles should be rejected by the Commissioner (i.e. the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations); and
- (ii) to review the content and requirements of the medical examination certificate so as to facilitate assessments made by registered medical practitioners for ascertaining whether an applicant is medically fit to drive and control any vehicle in the vehicle class that his/her driving licence involves.

Work involved in the review

8. To take forward the review, and having considered that it is a professional issue as to under what health conditions is a driver fit to drive, the TD invited consultants and experts in the medical sector to assist in reviewing the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations, the existing content of the medical examination certificate and the arrangements of medical examination of drivers, etc., and to provide professional advice from medical perspective on relevant matters for the Government.

9. The TD engaged a consultant team from the School of Public Health, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong (consultant team) in the second quarter of 2022 to conduct in-depth studies, offer professional advice from medical perspective to the TD and offer support to the conduct of the consultation and legislative amendment work. The TD officially set up an expert panel in June 2022. In addition to representatives from the TD, other members of the expert panel include representatives from the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Hong Kong Academy of Medicine (with respective representatives from the Hong Kong College of Family Physicians, the Hong Kong College of Physicians, the Hong Kong College of Community Medicine and the College of Ophthalmologists of Hong Kong). The membership list and the terms of reference of the expert panel are at **Annex 2** and **Annex 3** respectively.

10. The professional support provided by the consultant team from the University of Hong Kong for the TD in respect of the review include conducting literature review and exploration to understand and compare the physical fitness requirements and examination items for driving licence applicants in other jurisdictions; conducting studies and data analyses on the local situation to ensure that the studies will cater for the actual needs; consulting members of the expert panel on subject matters and issues in the professional medical field through discussions and exchange meetings; as well as putting forward feasible recommendations after consolidating the findings of analyses and studies and summarising the views of the expert panel. The Government held three meetings with the consultant team and the expert panel to discuss the findings of the studies and recommendations put forward by the consultant team at different stages. At the meeting held in end-March this year, a consensus in general has been reached on the key recommendations.

Review findings and specific recommendations

Literature review, exploration and analysis

Impact of ageing population on driving capability and safety

11. According to the information of the World Health Organization, the population proportion of people aged over 60 is expected to rise from 12% to 22%, accounting for an increase of nearly one-fold from 2015 to 2050. Meanwhile, some literature also point out the importance of driving to the elderly, which is closely related to their independence, mobility and productivity in the community. While age itself is not

necessarily an accurate indicator of driving ability, studies show that there is a direct correlation between old age and deteriorating functional capacity. The prevalence of chronic diseases tends to increase correspondingly with age. Studies also reveal that aged drivers' fitness to drive and safe driving are related to their physical fitness, relevant sensory, cognitive and motor functions, as well as their conditions upon pharmaceutical treatment. A systemic literature review and consolidated analysis of studies have also found that the serious injury or fatality rates of traffic accidents involving aged drivers, following calculation and adjustment on travelling distances, are higher than that of non-aged drivers. Hence, assessments of physical fitness of aged drivers is important for protecting drivers and overall road safety.

Higher risks in driving commercial vehicles than non-commercial vehicles

12. Compared with non-commercial vehicles, most commercial vehicles are larger in size, heavier in weight, and carry more passengers or goods. In addition, as commercial vehicle drivers generally drive longer hours and distances and get tired easily, the risk of traffic accidents for them is relatively higher, and more serious consequences and higher number of casualties may also be resulted in such accidents. Physical fitness of aged driving licence holders of commercial vehicles thus warrants particular attention.

Age-based risk assessments

13. In general, many jurisdictions such as the Mainland, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom adopt age-based risk assessment measures which require aged drivers to undergo a medical assessment before renewal of driving licences. Besides, having considered the above risks in driving commercial vehicles and according to information, these jurisdictions have different arrangements for drivers of commercial vehicles and those of non-commercial vehicles. For non-commercial vehicles, drivers are generally required to undergo a medical assessment before renewal of driving licences from the age of 70 or 75. For commercial vehicles, while different jurisdictions adopt different criteria, drivers are generally required to undergo a medical assessment earlier and more frequently than those of non-commercial vehicles on the whole (see [Annex 4](#) for details).

More stringent physical fitness requirements needed for commercial vehicle drivers

14. As indicated by the physical fitness requirements of drivers in other jurisdictions and relevant medical guidelines, including the clinical guidelines of the Hospital Authority Community Rehabilitation Service Support Centre, the physical fitness requirements of commercial vehicle drivers are more stringent than that of non-commercial vehicle drivers. Such requirements include **visual and hearing requirements**, and those having specific medical conditions are prohibited from driving commercial vehicles. For the requirements on visual acuity and visual field imposed on commercial vehicle drivers in different jurisdictions, details are at **Annex 5(a)-(b)**; for the incorporation of hearing standards into the physical fitness requirements and assessment items for commercial vehicle drivers in different jurisdictions, details are at **Annex 6**; for the relevant medical guidelines listing out diseases and disabilities warranting revocation of commercial vehicle driving licence, details are at **Annex 7**.

Analysis of the local situation in Hong Kong

15. In order to understand the local situation, the consultant team has analysed the data on traffic accidents and statistics on driving licence holders over the past decade. Besides, the consultant team conducted a driver's physical fitness survey at TD's Licensing Offices and driving improvement schools during the period from October 2022 to January 2023, with more than 1 000 valid driving licence holders (hereinafter referred to as "drivers") interviewed by random sampling. The consultant team is also conducting a study with the Hospital Authority Community Rehabilitation Service Support Centre to identify what conditions warrant a detailed assessment on a person's driving ability. The latest data compiled by the TD as well as the findings of the survey conducted by the consultant team and its analysis are summarised as follows:

- (i) given the ageing population in Hong Kong, the data reveals that the number of aged driving licence holders is on a year-on-year increase. Over the past decade (i.e. from 2013 to 2022), the number of valid full driving licence holders increased from 2 million to 2.35 million, and the percentage of licence holders aged 60 or above and those aged 70 or above in the total number of licence holders increased from around 12% to around 22% and from around 1% to around 4% respectively. It is also noted that while the number of valid full driving licence holders of commercial vehicles maintained within the range from 360 000 to 370 000 over the past decade, the percentage of driving licence holders aged 60 or above and those aged 70 or above surged from around 27% to around 49% and from around 3%

to around 11% respectively. In 2022, the number of valid full driving licence holders aged 65 or above (hereinafter referred to as “elderly drivers”) reached some 250 000, accounting for 11% of drivers, which were more than double of both the number and percentage in 2013 (see **Annex 8** for details). It is foreseeable that both the number of commercial vehicle driving licence holders and their proportion in the driver population will continue to increase year on year due to ageing;

- (ii) in terms of the number of licence holders, the proportion of elderly drivers holding full commercial vehicle licences in the driver population stood at 28% in 2022, which was 2.5 times of that of 2013. Among the questionnaire respondents, over 26% were elderly drivers, of which around one-third were professional drivers. Moreover, around one-third of the responding professional drivers were elderly drivers, reflecting that elderly persons are a pillar of the driving labour force;
- (iii) according to the data of the traffic accidents between 2013 and 2022, the accident involvement rate of elderly commercial vehicle drivers was about 16.6 per 1 000 drivers, which was higher than that of private car drivers (about 2.1 per 1 000 drivers). The cases involving taxi and light bus drivers were more evident. The number of elderly taxi drivers involved in traffic accidents increased from less than 400 (in 2013) to around 1 100 (in 2022) and the percentage increased from 8% to 27%; and the number of elderly public light bus drivers involved in traffic accidents also increased from 19% to 48% (see **Annex 9** for details); and
- (iv) based on the above analysis, health is just one of the factors pertaining to road safety. Meanwhile, to ensure the safety of elderly drivers themselves and road safety, it is essential that elderly drivers, especially the professional ones, should be subject to physical fitness assessment before issuance/renewal of their driving licences.

Specific recommendations

16. After taking into consideration the literature review and analysis of the consultant team, requirements and practices in other jurisdictions, findings of local studies and data analysis, as well as the discussion with the expert panel in three meetings, the Government puts forward the following six recommendations regarding

the amendment of the requirements for physical fitness certification of driving licence applicants/holders:

(1) Tightening the requirements by amending the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations -

- (i) The **eyesight requirement specified in Item 6** of the existing First Schedule to the Regulations (see **Annex 1** for details) needs to be amended for better objectivity and accuracy. Apart from that, we consider that the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the remaining Items 1 to 5 and Item 7 are still applicable and should be retained;
- (ii) Having studied the physical fitness requirements for drivers of non-commercial and commercial vehicles in other jurisdictions and relevant medical guidelines, we consider the eyesight requirement specified in Item 6 of the existing First Schedule to the Regulations (i.e. ability to read at a distance of 23 metres in good daylight (with the aid of spectacles or other corrective lenses, if worn) a registration mark) inadequate, nor does it cover any criteria regarding visual field. Hence, enhancing the requirement is needed. To this end, we propose an amendment to enhance the eyesight requirement (including the standards for visual acuity and visual field). Based on the aforesaid study findings, in particular with consideration given to the higher risks of driving commercial vehicles and more severe consequences in the event of accidents, we propose imposing higher requirements regarding the visual acuity and visual field of drivers of commercial vehicles correspondingly:

Visual acuity	1) The visual acuity of drivers of non-commercial vehicle (with corrective lenses [if necessary]): must be at least Snellen 6/12 (Snellen decimal 0.5) for both eyes
	2) The visual acuity of drivers of commercial vehicles (with corrective lenses [if necessary]): must be at least Snellen 6/9 (Snellen decimal 0.67) for the better eye and Snellen 6/18 (Snellen decimal 0.33) for the poorer eye

Visual field	1) The horizontal field of vision of drivers of non-commercial vehicles (both eyes or one eye) must be at least 120 degrees, with extension of at least 50 degrees (left and right) and 20 degrees (above and below)
	2) The horizontal field of vision of drivers of commercial vehicles (both eyes) must be at least 160 degrees, with extension of at least 70 degrees (left and right) and 30 degrees (above and below)

(iii) In addition, having studied the physical fitness requirements for drivers of non-commercial vehicles and commercial vehicles in other jurisdictions and relevant medical guidelines, a driving licence for commercial vehicle will not be issued/will be cancelled or suspended if the applicant/holder is suffering from the following diseases; however, consideration will be given to issue/retain the driving licence for non-commercial vehicle if the medical assessment is passed, and the First Schedule to the Regulations will be amended accordingly:

- 1) hearing loss of more than 40 dB measured across the lower frequencies of 500, 1 000, 2 000 and 3 000 hertz (Hz) for the better ear (with hearing aids [if necessary])
- 2) monocular vision (loss of one eye or loss of vision of one eye)
- 3) insuperable diplopia (patching on one eye is not acceptable)
- 4) nyctalopia
- 5) dementia
- 6) malignant brain tumors
- 7) implantable cardioverter defibrillator
- 8) chronic lung disease with usage of supplement oxygen

(2) Enhancing the requirements for submission of physical fitness certification by commercial vehicle drivers -

- (i) More stringent requirements will be imposed on the physical fitness certification for aged commercial vehicle drivers, including lowering the age threshold for submitting physical fitness certification from “the age of

70 or above” to “the age of 65 or above” and changing the validity period of the full driving licence from “one year or three years” to “one year” for those who have reached the age threshold; and

- (ii) The requirement for submission of physical fitness certification by drivers of non-commercial vehicles remain unchanged (i.e. only applicants who are 70 years old or above are required to submit physical fitness certification, and they can also opt to renew their full driving licence for once a year or every three years).

(3) Enriching the content of the medical examination certificate and adopting more stringent physical fitness standards for drivers of commercial vehicles

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- (i) To tie in with and implement the physical fitness standards set out under recommendation (1), it is proposed to amend the medical examination certificate so as to establish and differentiate the physical fitness standards for persons who are fit to drive commercial vehicles and non-commercial vehicles, with more stringent physical fitness standards for drivers of commercial vehicles;
- (ii) It is proposed to make eyesight and hearing tests compulsory, including the suggestion for medical practitioners to use the Snellen Chart for conducting visual acuity tests, the confrontation test for conducting visual field tests and the whispered voice test or the three-metre hearing test for hearing screening. If a registered medical practitioner suspects or finds that a person has an impairment of visual acuity, visual field or hearing from the said screening, further assessment and referral to relevant specialists will be required;
- (iii) It is proposed to include the list in the First Schedule to the Regulations after proposed amendments in the medical examination certificate for registered medical practitioners to assess whether an applicant is suffering from any disease or physical disability mentioned in the First Schedule to the Regulations, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive assessment of the applicant’s physical fitness; and

- (iv) It is proposed that driving licence applicants/holders are required to declare their health condition and indicate that they have provided true and full information for their registered medical practitioners, with a declaration signed, for completion of assessments. They are also required to authorise the registered medical practitioners to provide the relevant medical information for the TD in the future.

(4) Drawing up relevant medical guidelines -

In order to provide registered medical practitioners with clearer guidelines for conducting medical assessments and completing the medical examination certificate, we plan to draw up separate medical assessment guidelines to replace the suggested areas for examination under Part C of the existing medical examination certificate. The medical assessment guidelines will give details about items to be included in medical examinations and the points to note, including the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule to the amended Regulations; the physical fitness standards for drivers of commercial vehicles and non-commercial vehicles; the methodologies on how the screening for visual acuity, visual field and hearing is conducted, as well as the criteria for further assessment and follow-up. Relevant video demonstrations will also be provided.

(5) Empowering the Commissioner to require submission of medical reports by driving licence applicants/holders -

Drawing from TD's experience in handling "suspected cases", it is considered necessary to plug the potential loopholes in the current handling procedures. Therefore, we propose empowering the Commissioner to require a driving licence applicant/holder with doubtful health conditions to submit a medical report, and stipulating that, if a person declines to submit a medical examination report as certification of not suffering from the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule to the Regulations, the Commissioner may cancel or suspend his/her driving licence, or refuse to issue or re-issue a driving licence or renew his/her driving licence; and

(6) Imposing a more stringent age threshold for submission of physical fitness certification by driving instructors in one go -

Given that driving instructors play an important role in ensuring road safety and protecting road users, we propose that the age threshold for driving instructors to submit physical fitness certification should depend on the classes of vehicles they are allowed to provide relevant driver training with their driving instructors' licences. Same as the case of other commercial vehicles, driving instructors must also comply with the amended requirements (i.e. the age threshold is lowered from 70 to 65 for submission of physical fitness certification for their relevant full driving licences to be issued/renewed) before the issuance/renewal of driving instructors' licences for commercial vehicles.

A summary of the existing and proposed amendments of the physical fitness certification requirements for non-commercial vehicle drivers and commercial vehicle drivers is at **Annex 10**.

17. We propose to maintain the prevailing arrangement that medical examination certificates must be completed by registered medical practitioners. To make it more effective and convenient for driving licence holders/applicants to select registered medical practitioners who may conduct physical fitness assessments, we plan to add a list of medical practitioners on TD's website. Registered medical practitioners who are eligible and interested to provide the stipulated medical examinations for drivers may have their names and practice information registered with the TD for the latter to publicise and update the list.

Outcome assessment

18. We stress that the Government's proposal to impose more stringent requirements for physical fitness certification of commercial vehicle drivers is not aimed at stopping those who have reached the specified age from continuing working in the trade. Instead, it is our hope to facilitate, through the above-mentioned measures, regular medical check-ups for these drivers as soon as possible so that they can monitor their physical conditions in a sustained manner and understand their potential health risks. In this way, they can ensure early prevention/treatment of diseases that may affect their driving ability and adopt a healthy way of living, thereby extending the safe driving years on a conditional basis.

19. As we are still at the consultation stage, examination items requiring amendment have yet to be finalised. As the next step, the TD and the consultant team will need to formulate the medical guidelines for the amended medical examination certificate

for reference by medical service providers when assessing which examination items are required. Thus, the actual amount of fees cannot be determined at the current stage. We will further consult relevant stakeholders on examination fees after finalising the examination items.

20. The Government understands that the affected driving licence holders, especially commercial vehicle drivers, will be concerned about the level of medical examination fees after the tightening of the relevant requirements, and that they may expect the Government to consider providing subsidies. The Government will, after formulating the medical guidelines and obtaining more specific information about the level of fees, consider the feasibility of providing drivers with subsidies for medical examination, having regard to the views of the trade and other stakeholders. As the provision of subsidies involves recurrent expenditure, we must carefully consider and study in order to prevent abuse.

21. While the medical check-up requirements for driving licence applicants/holders, especially commercial vehicle drivers, will be tightened under the new measures, it does not necessarily mean that the occurrence rate of traffic accidents will be significantly reduced. According to data analysis, the occurrence rate of traffic accidents directly related to diseases and physical conditions of drivers is relatively low. Nevertheless, having considered that the functional capacity of ageing drivers may affect safe driving performance, the enhancement of physical fitness assessment of aged drivers is still a vital element to ensure road safety. That said, the expert panel cautioned that physical fitness assessment should not be over-emphasised as it is just one of the many factors that affect driving ability. Other factors including road conditions, surrounding environment, driving attitude and skills of drivers, effect of drugs, weather and vehicle performance may also lead to traffic accidents.

Other considerations

Setting an age cap for commercial vehicle drivers

22. Preliminary studies on the current practices in other jurisdictions (see **Annex 4**) show that age caps have been set for drivers of certain classes of commercial vehicles in the Mainland, while Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom do not have such restriction. Taking into consideration the adoption of different practices in these jurisdictions, inadequate medical and accident data in support of a definite correlation between drivers' age and occurrence of traffic accidents, as well as the impact on the

manpower of local transport trade, the Government proposes to first enhance the requirements for physical fitness certification of commercial vehicle drivers instead of setting an age cap across the board.

Exploring the introduction of simulated driving tests

23. In order to assess more comprehensively the driving ability of aged drivers, we have explored the practices in other jurisdictions and learnt that in places like New South Wales in Australia and Singapore, aged drivers of certain types of non-commercial or commercial vehicles are required to take road tests, but not in the Mainland, Canada and the United Kingdom; while in South Korea ², there is a plan to introduce from 2025 a simulated driving test for aged drivers of age 65 and above.

24. With reference to different practices in other jurisdictions and the local road traffic situation and conditions, the Government does not propose to require aged drivers to take road tests for the time being. However, we are exploring the feasibility of applying technology to introduce a simulated driving test for testing local aged drivers' ability to drive and respond in different scenarios. Compared with road test, this form of test is easier to control and standardise. Latest technology can also be applied to simulate various specified road situations, surrounding environment and driving conditions, such as driving on highways and unexpected incidents, so that aged drivers' ability to drive and respond under different circumstances can be tested. More in-depth studies and test data for analysis are required to determine the criteria for ensuring reliability of assessment, as well as the equipment, cost, service provider involved, etc. We will further explore the feasibility of applying innovative technology and artificial intelligence to simulated driving test technology for future application in the assessment for renewal of driving licences.

Timetable for the review and legislative amendments

25. Having sought the views of the Panel on Transport, we plan to consult the transport trade, the Transport Advisory Committee, the Road Safety Research Committee and the Road Safety Council on the aforesaid recommendations of the review in the second half of this year. The expert panel and the consultant team will

² According to preliminary information, the Korea National Police Agency plans to introduce a virtual reality (VR) driving simulator test for drivers aged 65 and above starting from 2025. A VR-based driving programme will be used for elderly persons in Korea since 2025. Different scenarios such as day-time and night-time driving on highways, accidents occurred under different circumstances, etc. will be applied to test the participants.

keep seeking the views of relevant stakeholders with a view to finalising specific arrangements as soon as possible.

26. Subject to the review progress and the views of relevant stakeholders, we plan to submit legislative amendment proposals on the enhancement of the requirements for physical fitness certification of driving licence applicants/holders to the Legislative Council for deliberation in the first half of 2024. Subject to the passage of relevant legislative amendments and the completion of system upgrades, we expect to implement the arrangements between the third quarter and the end of 2024.

Advice Sought

27. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and comment on the above review recommendations.

Transport and Logistics Bureau
Transport Department
May 2023

First Schedule to the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations

Specified Diseases and Physical Disabilities

Specified diseases and physical disabilities under the First Schedule to the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations include:

- (1) Epilepsy.
- (2) Liability to sudden attacks of disabling giddiness or fainting due to hypertension or any other cause.
- (3) Mental disorder for which the applicant for the licence, or, as the case may be, the holder of the licence is liable to be detained under the Mental Health Ordinance (Cap. 136) or is receiving treatment as an in-patient in a mental hospital within the meaning of that Ordinance.
- (4) Any condition causing muscular incoordination.
- (5) Uncontrolled diabetes mellitus.
- (6) Inability to read at a distance of 23 metres in good daylight (with the aid of spectacles or other corrective lenses, if worn) a registration mark.
- (7) Any other disease or disability which is likely to render him incapable of effectively driving and controlling a motor vehicle or suitably adapted motor vehicle to which such licence refers without endangering public safety, provided that deafness shall not of itself be deemed to be any such disability.

Membership List of Expert Panel

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Terms of Reference of the Expert Panel

1. To review and advise on the diseases and physical disabilities specified in the First Schedule of the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B);
2. To advise on the updating of the medical examination certificate (TD256) and formulating medical guidelines setting out the medical requirements of commercial and non-commercial vehicle drivers; and
3. To make recommendations on the arrangement of conducting medical assessment for drivers.

Annex 4

Medical assessment requirements and medical guidelines for non-commercial vehicle and commercial vehicle driving licence applicants / holders across jurisdictions³— Age and frequency of assessment

	Hong Kong	Mainland	Australia	UK	Canada
Non-commercial vehicle drivers	Aged 70 or above: Provide the medical examination certificate (TD256) for issue or renewal of their driving licence every 1 year or 3 years (depending on the length of valid period chosen by the applicant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application and renewal of driving licence: Provide health certificate • Aged 70 or above: Requires physical check every year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 75: Medical assessment, and annually thereafter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to report health status and eyesight on licence application and renewal, with no specific requirement on medical examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged 75 and 80: Medical assessment • Aged above 80: Medical assessment every 2 years
Commercial vehicle drivers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application and renewal of driving licence: Provide health certificate • Aged above 60: Prohibited to drive large coach, heavy-duty tractor trailer, city bus, medium coach, large truck, wheel loader, trolley bus and tram • Aged above 70: Prohibited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Mandatory medical assessment • Aged 60 to 70: Medical assessment every 2 to 10 years • Aged above 60 or 70: Annual medical assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Requires medical assessment • Aged above 45: Medical assessment every 5 years • Aged above 65: Medical assessment every year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application: Requires medical assessment • Aged below 45 : Medical assessment at least every 5 years • Aged above 45: Medical assessment at least every 3 years • Aged above 65:

³ Reference materials:

Hong Kong : Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B)

Mainland : Order No. 162 of the Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China: Provisions on the Application for and Use of Motor Vehicle Driving Licenses (2021 Revision)

Australia : Assessing Fitness to Drive for Commercial and Private Vehicle drivers; Austroads, Australia (2022)

Canada : National Safety Code. Standard 6: Determining Driver Fitness in Canada. Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, 2020

UK : Assessing Fitness to Drive - A Guide for Medical Professionals; Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency, UK (2021)

		to drive low-speed truck, three-wheeled vehicle, light duty tractor trailer, common three-wheeled motorcycle and common two-wheeled motorcycle	(depending on type of vehicle)		Medical assessment annually
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Annex 5(a)

Medical assessment requirements and medical guidelines for non-commercial vehicle and commercial vehicle driving licence applicants / holders across jurisdictions — visual acuity requirements (with the aid of spectacles or other corrective lenses, if worn)

Visual acuity (VA) is a measure of the clarity of vision. VA commonly declines with age due to physiological changes and increased incidence of eye diseases. Studies showed that visual screening for aged drivers are associated with reduced traffic accident fatality rates. Visual field (VF) refers to the total area that can be seen at a time when the eyes are focused on a single point. If a driver suffers from VF defects, it is potentially hazardous as the driver is unable to view the surrounding road conditions and other vehicles clearly. Similar to VA, VF may also decline along with aging as functional capacity degenerates and prevalence of eye diseases increases, hence affecting driving ability. Screening on VF defect is important as most elderly with VF loss are unaware of the defect until it becomes significant. Considering the higher risk of driving commercial vehicles and its more serious consequences, more stringent requirements are imposed on VA and VF of commercial vehicle drivers in different jurisdictions. Relevant requirements are as follows:

	HK – First Schedule to the Regulations	HK – Hospital Authority Community Rehabilitation Service Support Centre (HA CRSSC) Clinical Guidelines	Australia	UK	Canada
Non-commercial vehicle drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to read at a distance of 23 metres in good daylight a registration mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Snellen 6/12 (Snellen decimal 0.5), using both eyes together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One or both eyes at least Snellen 6/12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to read at a distance of 20/20.5 metres in good daylight a registration mark; • At least Snellen 6/12 with both eyes or one eye open 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Snellen 6/15 with both eyes open
Commercial vehicle drivers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Snellen 6/9 (Snellen decimal 0.67) in the better eye; • At least Snellen 6/18 (Snellen decimal 0.33) in the poorer eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better eye at least Snellen 6/9; • Worse eye at least Snellen 6/18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Snellen 6/7.5 (Snellen decimal 0.8) in the better eye; • At least Snellen 6/60 (Snellen decimal 0.1) in the poorer eye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least Snellen 6/9 or 6/12 with both eyes open; • Worse eyes at least Snellen 6/60 or 6/30

Annex 5(b)

Medical assessment requirements and medical guidelines for non-commercial vehicle and commercial vehicle driving licence applicants / holders across jurisdictions — Visual field requirements

	HK – First Schedule to the Regulations	HK – HA CRSSC	Australia	UK	Canada
Non- commercial vehicle drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 120 degrees, with extension of at least 50 degrees (left and right), and 20 degrees (above and below) the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 110 degrees within 10 degrees above and below the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 120 degrees, with extension of at least 50 degrees (left and right), and 20 degrees (above and below) the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 120 degrees within 15 degrees above and below the horizontal plane
Commercial vehicle drivers		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 160 degrees, with extension of at least 70 degrees (left and right), and 30 degrees (above and below) the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 140 degrees within 10 degrees above and below the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 160 degrees, with extension of at least 70 degrees (left and right), and 30 degrees (above and below) the horizontal plane	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 120 to 150 degrees within 15 to 20 degrees above and below the horizontal plane

Annex 6

Medical assessment requirements and medical guidelines for non-commercial and commercial vehicle driving licence applicants / holders across jurisdictions — Hearing requirements

Hearing impairment is also common among elderly persons. According to the information of the World Health Organization, more than 25% of elderly persons aged over 60 are affected by disabling hearing loss. While there is only limited evidence on the correlation between hearing loss and safe driving, due to the consideration of the nature and risks of driving commercial vehicles, especially the importance of hearing and the ability to communicate (during emergencies, in particular), level of hearing has been included as an assessment item in the physical fitness requirements for commercial vehicle drivers in different jurisdictions. Relevant requirements are as follows:

	HK – First Schedule to the Regulations	HK – HA CRSSC	Australia	UK	Canada
Non-commercial vehicle drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other disease or disability which is likely to render him incapable of effectively driving and controlling a motor vehicle or suitably adapted motor vehicle to which such licence refers without endangering public safety, provided that deafness shall not of itself be deemed to be any such disability (Item 7 of the First Schedule to the Regulations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific hearing requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific hearing requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific hearing requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific hearing requirement
Commercial vehicle drivers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearing loss of no more than 40 dB in the better ear (with the assistance of hearing aid as appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A person is not fit to hold an unconditional licence if the person has unaided hearing loss more than 40 dB in the better ear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proven ability to communicate in an emergency by speech or other alternatives; inability is likely to result in a licence being refused or revoked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceives a forced whispered voice at not less than 5 ft (1.5 m) (with the assistance of hearing aid as appropriate); or hearing loss no more than 40dB in their better ear

Medical Guidelines —**Diseases and disabilities warranting revocation of commercial vehicle
driving licence**

Different guidelines point out that it is very important to have assessments on drivers' medical conditions that will seriously impair their driving ability, such as epilepsy, sudden attacks of syncope, uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, psychiatric disorders and any condition causing muscular incoordination, etc. On the other hand, due to the same consideration of the risks of driving commercial vehicles, drivers having medical conditions such as monocular vision, diplopia, dementia, malignant brain tumours, implantable cardioverter defibrillators and chronic lung diseases with usage of supplement oxygen are also prohibited from driving commercial vehicles.

Diseases and disabilities	HA CRSSC Clinical Guidelines[^]	Clinical guidelines of other jurisdictions
Monocular vision	✓	UK
Insuperable diplopia	✓	Australia, UK
Nyctalopia	✓	Case-by-case assessment
Dementia	✓	Mainland, UK
Malignant brain tumours	✓	UK (except Grade 1 glioma, childhood tumour or brain metastases with 5 years after completion of primary treatment)
Implantable cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)	✓	UK, Australia, Canada (except for prevention purpose)
Chronic lung diseases with usage of supplement oxygen	✓	Canada

[^] Prohibited from driving commercial vehicles according to HA CRSSC Clinical Guidelines

Annex 8

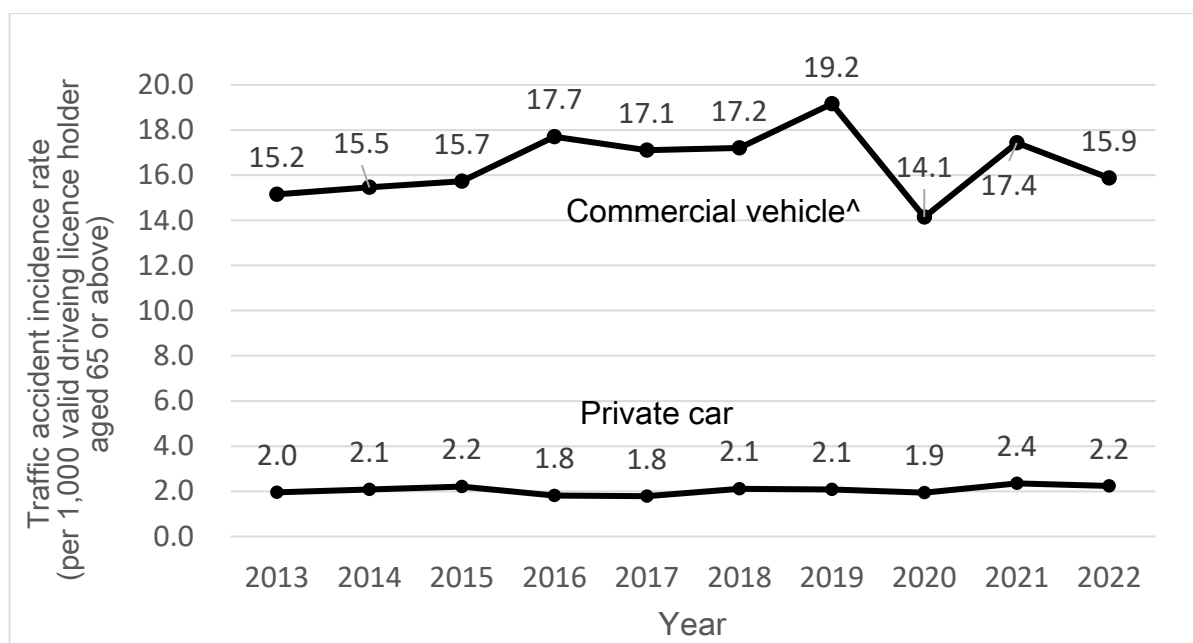
**Number of valid full driving licence (FDL)
holders aged 60 years old or above during 2013-2022**

Year	Total number of valid FDL holders	Aged 60-64 (percent of total)	Aged 65-69 (percent of total)	Aged 70 or above (percent of total)	Sum of aged 60 or above (percent of total)
2013	2 010 715	145 430 (7%)	72 565 (4%)	25 321 (1%)	243 316 (12%)
2014	2 082 274	158 735 (8%)	88 494 (4%)	28 419 (1%)	275 648 (13%)
2015	2 161 299	173 722 (8%)	105 758 (5%)	31 677 (1%)	311 157 (14%)
2016	2 229 183	189 714 (9%)	120 822 (5%)	37 271 (2%)	347 807 (16%)
2017	2 264 019	200 842 (9%)	127 249 (6%)	44 641 (2%)	372 732 (16%)
2018	2 290 097	212 175 (9%)	128 937 (6%)	54 261 (2%)	395 373 (17%)
2019	2 326 760	219 745 (9%)	132 399 (6%)	65 465 (3%)	417 609 (18%)
2020	2 314 981	227 271 (10%)	138 285 (6%)	73 358 (3%)	438 914 (19%)
2021	2 329 354	237 985 (10%)	150 737 (6%)	80 863 (3%)	469 585 (20%)
2022	2 351 926	251 681 (11%)	166 223 (7%)	88 924 (4%)	506 828 (22%)

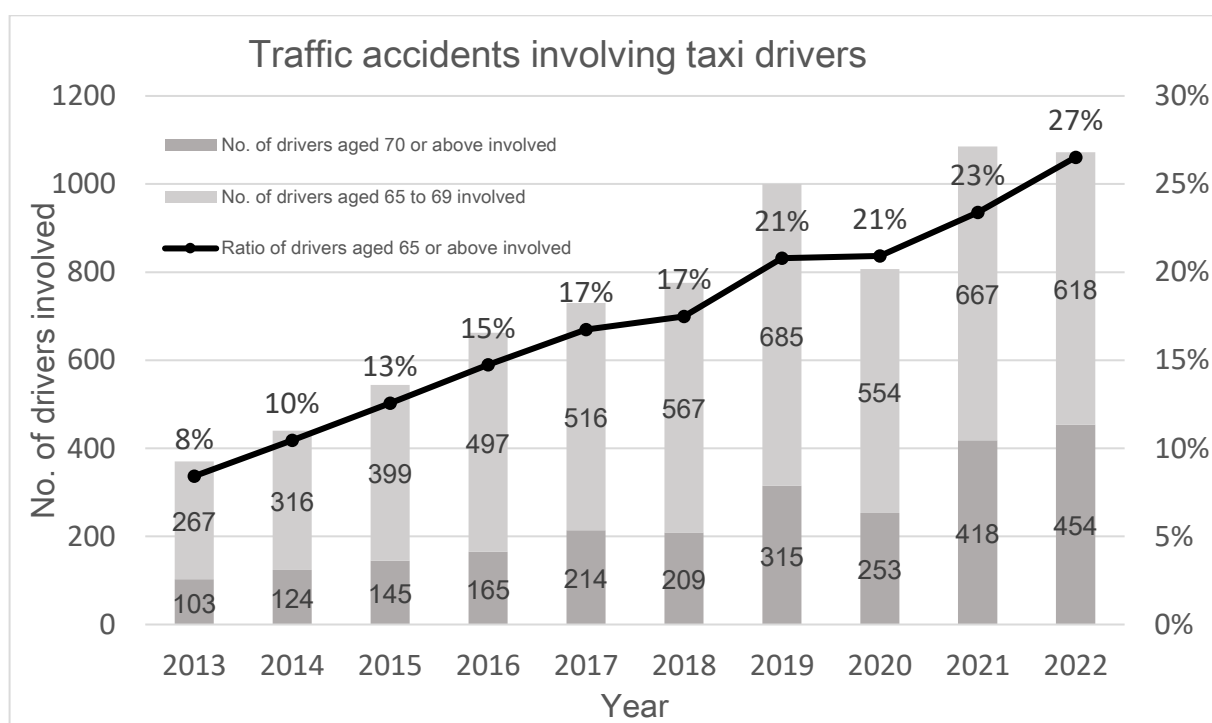
Number of valid full driving licence (FDL) holders for “commercial vehicle” aged 60 years old or above during 2013-2022

Year	Total number of valid FDL holders for “commercial vehicle”	Aged 60-64 (percent of total)	Aged 65-69 (percent of total)	Aged 70 or above (percent of total)	Sum of aged 60 or above (percent of total)
2013	369 575	56 845 (15%)	30 820 (8%)	10 484 (3%)	98 149 (27%)
2014	373 572	59 813 (16%)	37 002 (10%)	12 037 (3%)	108 852 (29%)
2015	377 513	63 026 (17%)	43 756 (12%)	13 578 (4%)	120 360 (32%)
2016	380 216	66 353 (17%)	49 362 (13%)	16 196 (4%)	131 911 (35%)
2017	374 145	68 072 (18%)	51 206 (14%)	19 622 (5%)	138 900 (37%)
2018	366 938	70 174 (19%)	51 019 (14%)	24 207 (7%)	145 400 (40%)
2019	362 932	71 214 (20%)	51 066 (14%)	29 349 (8%)	151 629 (42%)
2020	357 829	72 447 (20%)	52 731 (15%)	33 376 (9%)	158 554 (44%)
2021	359 472	73 654 (20%)	56 441 (16%)	37 179 (10%)	167 274 (47%)
2022	359 600	73 798 (21%)	60 855 (17%)	40 940 (11%)	175 593 (49%)

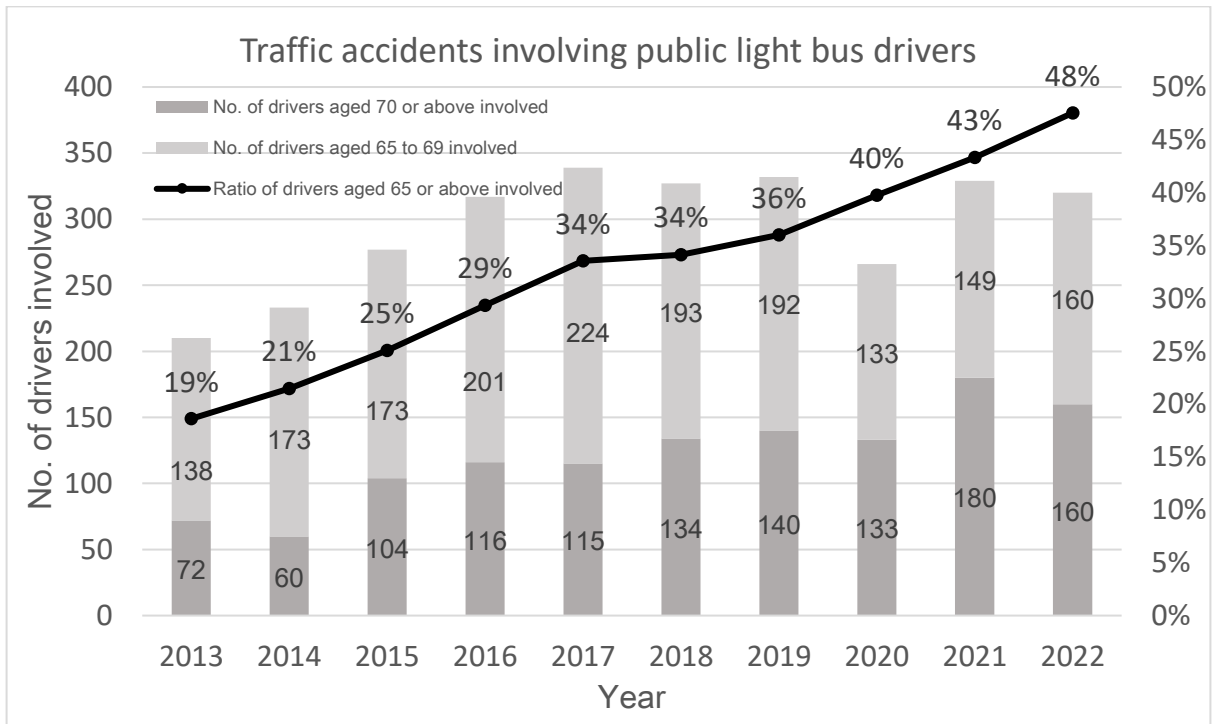
**Statistics on traffic accident involvement of drivers aged 65 or above in the
period of 2013 – 2022**



[^] Commercial vehicles include public and private light bus, medium and heavy goods vehicle, franchised and non-franchised bus, taxi, special purpose vehicle



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total no. of drivers involved	4 395	4 211	4 332	4 493	4 359	4 436	4 810	3 857	4 637	4 042



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total no. of drivers involved	1128	1085	1105	1080	1010	958	922	669	759	673

Summary on the existing and proposed physical fitness requirements of non-commercial vehicle drivers and commercial vehicle drivers

Item of Recommendation	Existing Legislation and Arrangement	Proposed Changes	
		Non-commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁴	Commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁵
Diseases and Physical Disabilities under First Schedule to the Regulations	7 items (Please refer to <u>Annex 1</u>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the diseases or physical disabilities specified in the existing Items 1 to 5 and Item 7 • Amend the existing eyesight requirement specified in Item 6 (enhance the eyesight requirement including the standards for visual acuity and visual field) 	
		-	Add 8 items : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hearing loss of more than 40 dB measured across the lower frequencies of 500, 1 000, 2 000 and 3 000 (Hz) for the better ear (with hearing aids [if necessary]) • monocular vision • insuperable diplopia • nyctalopia

⁴ Private cars, motor cycles, motor tricycles, invalid carriages and light goods vehicles are considered as “non-commercial vehicles”. Drivers who only drive these vehicles will be classified as “non-commercial vehicle drivers”.

⁵ Taxis, private light buses and public light buses, private buses and public buses, franchised buses, medium goods vehicles, heavy goods vehicles, articulated vehicles and special purpose vehicles are regarded as “commercial vehicles”. Drivers who are eligible to drive any “non-commercial vehicles” and any such “commercial vehicles” will be classified as “commercial vehicle drivers”.

Item of Recommendation	Existing Legislation and Arrangement	Proposed Changes	
		Non-commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁴	Commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁵
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dementia malignant brain tumors implantable cardioverter defibrillator chronic lung disease with usage of supplement oxygen
Age threshold for submission of medical proof	70 or above	70 or above (no change)	65 or above
Validity period of licence after reaching the age threshold for submission of medical proof	Full driving licence: 1 year or 3 years Driving instructor's licence: 1 year	1 year or 3 years (no change)	1 year
Medical examination certificate (TD256)	The form lists out the suggested areas which the registered medical practitioner may have to consider during the medical examination. The registered medical practitioner may conduct, based on his professional judgment, any test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and differentiate the physical fitness standards for persons who are fit to drive commercial vehicles and non-commercial vehicles, with more stringent physical fitness standards for drivers of commercial vehicles Make eyesight and hearing tests compulsory Include the list in the First Schedule to the Regulations after proposed amendments Require driving licence applicants to declare their health condition and authorise the registered medical practitioners to provide the relevant medical information for the TD in the future Draw up medical guidelines for registered medical practitioners which give details about items to be included in medical examinations and the points to note 	

Item of Recommendation	Existing Legislation and Arrangement	Proposed Changes	
		Non-commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁴	Commercial Vehicle Drivers ⁵
	which he thinks appropriate to facilitate his conclusion		

Note: The physical fitness requirements for driving instructors would depend on the classes of vehicles they are allowed to provide driving training with their driving instructors' licences