



# What makes A MASTER?

The IRTE's Institute of Road Transport Engineer Certification (irtec) accreditation scheme aims to set industry-wide standards for HGV and PSV technicians (see also feature, pp21-22).

The pinnacle of the irtec accreditation scheme is master technician. Available for both large goods vehicle and bus and coach technicians, "the master technician level provides recognition for individuals either in or working towards a senior position such as a supervisory role or similar within a maintenance and repair workshop environment," according to the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI).

Irtec was developed by a partnership between IRTE parent organisation the SOE and the IMI. It is managed by IMI and is delivered by IMI-accredited assessors across a network of around 500 approved colleges and training centres both in the UK and internationally.

Most people who aspire to be heavy goods and passenger vehicle technicians receive initial technical training and qualifications either

**When referring to the title 'master technician' it is easy to get bogged down in semantics. Peter Shakespeare brings some clarity to the discussion**

by enrolment in an apprenticeship through a sponsoring employer, or by attending a training centre or college. Independently validating the competence of heavy vehicle technicians is where the irtec accreditation scheme comes into play and successful candidates will gain a licence, which is valid for five years and demonstrates both the knowledge and practical level of an individual.

The title master technician also features as part some of the commercial vehicle OEM in-house career development programmes.

Aaron McGrath, head of people development at Scania GB, describes its master technician role as the culmination of its internal training programme. "As technicians follow the training curriculum, they are working towards gaining Scania master technician status, which is a Level 4 assessment of their skills and knowledge."

He continues: "Scania's route to achieving master technician status assumes the technician has completed

all Scania's Level 2 [junior technician] and Level 3 [senior technician] training courses, with Level 4 training courses being aimed at advanced diagnostics of all the systems they have, parts and workshop manuals." The technician is then assessed.

McGrath admits that Scania's qualification, although at a similar level to irtec master tech, is aimed towards working on the Scania products and vehicle systems. He explains the wider context: "Scania's master technician status is not portable, unlike the irtec equivalent, and while we offer three-year apprenticeships for school leavers up to 25-year-olds, where they gain either an IMI or City & Guilds Level 3 nationally recognised industry vocational qualification, they must then enter Scania's in-house training programme. All our technicians are trained to Scania's Level 2 standard, with some going on to Level 3 and 4 as required by the business."

He adds that in the past some technicians have gone on to also gain

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the irtec master technician licence. “We are working towards using the independent accreditation bodies such as irtec and the IMI to accredit our technicians trained on roadside recovery, alternative fuels, electrification and ADAS.”

“All the OEMs run similar in-house training for their technicians and most use the IMI and irtec to accredit some of their courses, such as vehicle inspections, alternative fuels, electric vehicles and air-conditioning system servicing, which involve legislated safety and quality requirements and specialisms. Also I am finding increasing numbers of third-party repairers are using irtec to accredit their workshops [see box] and technicians so they can benchmark against our dealer network to attract more custom.”

### **NOT A QUALIFICATION**

Picking up that theme is Dave Skelly, IMI’s awarding product specialist and the lead for the irtec accreditation scheme. He says: “What must be understood is irtec is an accreditation and not a qualification, as there are fundamental differences between these terms. The irtec scheme is focused on assessment and accreditation of someone’s competence and has no formal training delivery associated with it: an individual steps forward to one of our centres and says, ‘Can you assess my competence?’ For example, irtec master technician is a voluntary assessment which will result in a licence which shows the technician is accredited by the SOE to this level.

“This is opposed to IMI’s Level 4 International Certificate in Advanced Automotive Studies for master technicians, which is an Ofqual-regulated qualification, delivered by one of IMI’s approved training providers. The IMI Level 4 qualification has a number of pathways associated with it which include heavy vehicle and transport refrigeration.”



IMI Awarding states that technicians attempting irtec master technician should be working in the industry and ideally have at least five years’ experience or a Level 4 S/NVQ (or equivalent qualification) plus at least a year’s experience in a relevant industrial environment. This is to ensure they are familiar with the skills, knowledge and techniques required to diagnose system faults and communicate effectively at all levels.

The practical assessments for the irtec master technician licence include electrical system diagnosis; computer-based test equipment; diesel fuel and emission systems; instructional support and effective communication. Candidates have around 60 minutes to complete each module, all of which must be assessed within a 12-month period.

Irtec accreditations are developed and managed by a steering group made up of industry professionals who identify needs for standards, and they instruct an expert working group which defines the standards and how the accreditation knowledge tests should be structured. IMI then quality assures the centres that do the irtec assessments.

Skelly explains that across the automotive industry there are numerous routes to vocational qualification and in terms of the OEMs, and each takes a slightly different approach. The irtec scheme presents the opportunity for individuals to gain an accreditation that demonstrates the individual has achieved a national and international

automotive industry-recognised and -defined standard, and some OEMs require their technicians to gain irtec accreditation following qualifications and product-specific training. He adds that irtec master technician includes assessment modules that go beyond pure technical matters, such as communicating with OEMs and customers, which differentiates it.

Given the number of qualification pathways for technicians and the product-specific nature of OEMs’ training curriculums, irtec master technician stands alone in the market in terms of its independence and its industry-wide development and recognition. Along with the IMI Level 4 International Certificate in Advanced Automotive Studies (heavy vehicle pathway), it is portable, which cannot be said of an OEM master technician status. This accreditation gives experienced heavy vehicle technicians a better chance of flexible employment opportunities and enables independent workshops to offer customers the assurance that the servicing and repair of their heavy commercial vehicles is being supervised to a national and internationally recognised standard. [ITE](#)

## **WORKSHOP ACCREDITATION**

This independent audit of the workshop covers more than 59 points, including equipment, staff, technicians, planning, competences, parking, management, documentation, parts supply and management. The audit scheme is dynamic, with review meetings held twice a year to ensure that it keeps pace with technological advances. “The Workshop Accreditation scheme goes hand in hand with irtec and completes the quality package,” says SOE president John Eastman.