

# irtec evolves

After consultation with the transport industry, development work is nearing completion on irtec's service maintenance technician and inspection technician licences. By John Challen

The announcement in June that the IRTEC and Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) would be jointly developing irtec technician licensing has now led to the development of a new-look scheme. John Hay, accreditation development manager at IMI, says it's all about providing a more streamlined structure, more tightly focused on the needs of technicians.

The service maintenance technician (SMT) route is now being offered to the large commercial vehicle, bus and coach, and trailer sectors, while areas covered by the inspection technician (IT) route are being restricted to large commercial vehicles, as well as the bus and coach industry.

"Testing and trials for both levels are currently ongoing and feedback from the irtec centres, industry and the candidates has been positive," reveals Hay. "One of the main demands has been for the assessments to better reflect what actually happens in the workplace," he adds.

A theoretical examination – known as the underpinning knowledge (UPK) test – will now be applicable on all routes and levels, in addition to the practical assessments. The aim here, explains Hay, is to ensure that technicians all possess sufficient knowledge and understanding of their craft.

Hay confirms that, last month, the irtec Expert Working Group (EWG) agreed that candidates should pass the UPK test before they can be assessed on practical tasks. As for where the test can be taken, he says: "An irtec candidate can sit the UPK test at any IMI Awards approved centre, although there may be an additional cost."

However, after successfully completing the theory part of the scheme, practical assessments will have to be taken at irtec approved centres – although Hay confirms that they can also be conducted in the workplace,

under controlled conditions, by an approved irtec assessor. "We have structured the testing this way, as we think it will reduce the amount of non-productive time for candidates," he explains.

Currently, there are seven assessment centres approved by IMI Awards for the delivery of the irtec assessments and take-up for the revised scheme is looking good. Some have provided forecasts of irtec candidate registrations for 2011, predicting an initial 500 technicians going for the certification.

Those figures are likely to rise, as the seven centres grow in number. The FTA (Freight Transport Association), for example, is currently in the process of becoming an irtec assessment centre specifically for the irtec inspection route, while Kingsway College, Scunthorpe, has just received conditional approval for centre status, from IMI Awards.

"Both institutions remain committed to continual development and evolution of the irtec licensing scheme, to meet the requirements of operators, technicians and the transport industry as a whole," confirms Ian Chisholm, head of operations and communications at the SOE. 

