

Licensed to skill

Martin Richards answers your questions on the new professional development package

On 3 March TPS, in partnership with IHT, launched the new Transport Planning Professional, TPP, qualification designed to provide transport planners with a qualification of equal standing to that of other professions, including Chartered Engineer and full membership of the RTPI.

Then on 28 April TPS will be launching its Professional Standards and Professional Development Scheme, designed to provide transport planners and their employers with a structured scheme for developing the range and depth of skills they need as professionals.

The TPP Qualification

What is the TPP Qualification?

It is a professional qualification, designed to be of comparable standing to Chartered Engineer (CEng) or full membership of a professional institute.

How has it come about?

To meet a need for a professional qualification specifically designed for transport planners, providing them with recognition as a professional. Such a qualification will enhance the standing of transport planning as a career, helping to attract high quality new entrants.

Who awards it?

TPS and IHT have formed a partnership to manage and award the qualification. It will be awarded by TPS to TPS members, and by IHT to IHT members.

Will it be recognised by employers?

That is the intention, and some, including the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland (the Scottish government's executive arm) have both declared their support for the qualification. The interest shown by many other employers suggests that it will readily become widely recognised.

What transport planning skills does it cover?

It covers the broad range of skills transport planners are expected to have. Research as part of the Transport Planning Skills Initiative was the first step in identifying what both employers and transport planners see to be the core and broad range of skills. This work was then taken further through the consultation processes associated with the development of the National Occupational Standards for Transport Planning. That work was undertaken by TPS and GoSkills, the sector skills council. The skills are divided into technical, covering such areas as data, modelling and public engagement, and management, covering the essential key generic skills.

Do I have to be a TPS member to apply?

The qualification is only available to fully paid-up members of TPS or IHT. TPS members with the qualification are required to become Designated members, paying a higher subscription, to cover the costs TPS incurs in awarding and managing the qualification. The annual fee has yet to be set, but is likely to be about £95. In addition, there will be an annual registration fee for both TPS and IHT members; that fee, too, has yet to be finalised but could be similar to the £28 those with a CEEng have to pay.

Do I need a degree to apply?

No, but a UK Honours degree, combined with either a Transport Masters or completion of a structured transport planning training scheme, avoids the need for what is called a Technical Report. Those without a degree or who have neither a Transport Masters nor completed a structured transport planning training scheme will have to complete and submit one of these which will be assessed by a panel of trained assessors to determine whether they have the necessary knowledge and learning skills.

How much experience do I need?

There is no specific requirement, however, it is unlikely that many with less than five years' experience will have gained the breadth and depth of experience required. These requirements include a need to be able to work alone and supervise others in some key areas, such as data.

How do I prove my experience?

You will be required to submit a Portfolio of Evidence, which will be reviewed by two trained reviewers, both transport planners, who will then interview you for about 75 minutes, during which time you will be invited to make a short presentation about a project you have worked on.

Once I have the qualification, do I have any ongoing obligations?

Those with the qualification have to continue as members of either IHT or TPS, to undertake at least 25 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) a year and to conform to the TPS or IHT Code of Ethics. Anyone who fails to comply with any one of these requirements will be removed from the Register and will no longer be able to use the qualification.

What will it cost?

For the first year, when the qualification is being piloted, the registration fee will be £150; in addition, there will be a fee yet to be determined for those candidates who have to submit a Technical Report. The first batch of candidates of those participating in the pilot will consist of those with a UK Honours degree and who have a Transport Masters or completed a structured transport planning training scheme. Those participating in the pilot who have been required to submit a Technical Report will be included in the second batch of candidates in December.

How do I apply?

Applications for the 2008 pilot scheme are now closed. If you wish to apply for 2009, or would just like some more information, email sue.stevens@iht.org

The TPS Professional Development Scheme

What is the TPS Professional Development Scheme?

It is a structured professional development scheme, designed to provide the breadth and depth of skill – knowledge and practical abilities – a professional transport planner needs.

Who decided what those requirements are?

Research as part of the Transport Planning Skills Initiative was the first step in identifying what both employers and transport planners see to be the core and broad range of skills. This work was then taken further through the consultation processes associated with the development of the National Occupational Standards for Transport Planning. That work was undertaken by TPS and GoSkills, the sector skills council.



Martin Richards launches the TPP qualification on 3 March

Why has it come about?

There are three main reasons. The first was a need, identified in Transport Planning Skills Initiative research, for what became known as a core common set of post-graduation experience requirements for full membership of the four professional bodies that support TPS – CILT, ICE, IHT and RTPI. The second was a recognition that developing professional development schemes is expensive, and that a model scheme that could be readily adopted by employers would enable many more to provide such schemes. And that leads on to the third reason: an industry standard scheme could achieve recognition that individual employer schemes could not.

Who is it for?

Anyone seeking to obtain the range and depth of skills a professional transport planner needs. Whilst many joining a TPS based scheme will be recent graduates, just starting a career in transport planning, others will be career changers, moving into transport planning, and some will be people already working in transport planning but wanting to acquire the breadth and depth of skill needed for professional recognition.

Who will be adopting it?

The scheme is available to any employer who is a Corporate or Stakeholder member of TPS, and who signs a licence agreement. It is hoped – and expected – that it will become widely adopted over the next year or so – certainly there has been much interest among employers.

What will it cost?

It will only cost employers their annual TPS Corporate or Stakeholder membership fee. Employers do not usually charge their staff for inclusion in a professional development scheme, but do expect them to undertake some of the necessary work in their own time.

Can employers change the scheme?

Provided they do not change the core TPS Scheme, employers can add sections that are specific to their corporate requirements and still describe the scheme as a TPS Scheme. Whilst they can also change the core TPS scheme, if they do so they can't describe it as the TPS Scheme.

How does it relate to the TPP qualification?

Anyone who has completed the TPS Scheme, and has met the TPP educational requirements, should be able to satisfy all the TPP requirements.

Will it be recognised by the professional bodies, like CILT and ICE?

CILT intend to accredit schemes that incorporate the TPS scheme, and TPS is working to identify additional requirements which would enable those transport planners with the necessary education to satisfy the CEEng post-graduation experience requirement, which can be awarded by either ICE or IHT. The requirements of RTPI are very specific and it has not been possible to identify a common set of requirements.

What does it cover?

It covers the broad range of skills transport planners are expected to have. Research as part of the Transport Planning Skills Initiative was the first step in identifying what both employers and transport planners see to be the core and broad range of skills. TPS and GoSkills, the sector skills council, then did further consultation.

How long will it take to complete?

There is no specific requirement. However, it is unlikely that anyone could complete it in less than three years, and satisfying those elements that require an ability to work alone and supervise others may take longer.

Do you have to be a member of TPS to join the Scheme?

No, the membership obligation is with the employer.

How do I apply?

Through your employer. If they do not yet have a professional development scheme, you should be actively encouraging them to adopt the TPS Scheme.

Where can I get more information?

info@tps.org.uk

An acknowledgement of The Society's work on TPP and Professional Development has been made possible by funding provided through GoSkills and by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund.

For further information contact us at info@tps.org.uk