

## English language skills assessment

We expect all licensed taxi and private hire drivers to have a sufficient command of the English language, so that they can communicate freely and clearly with passengers and officials, including in stressful and emergency situations. Drivers are also expected to be able to identify situations where there may be passenger safeguarding concerns and to possess sufficient communication skills to report those concerns. The ability to converse effectively in English also helps avoid job related misunderstandings such as wrong directions, fare disputes, collecting the wrong customer and misunderstanding a customer's assistance needs. Applicants for private hire vehicle or hackney carriage drivers licences are therefore required to undertake an assessment of their communication skills, for which an additional fee will be payable. Candidates who can demonstrate that they have previously completed an English-language qualification at a suitable level will be exempt from the additional assessment - see below for further details on previous qualifications.

In addition to new applicants, any current licensed driver may be required to undertake the assessment where the Licensing Service believe there are reasonable grounds to require assessment. Reasonable grounds would include instances where authorised officers have identified through enforcement activity or substantiated complaint that a driver may have insufficient command of the English language.

Candidates failing the assessment are permitted to retake the assessment at their own expense, however the Council would encourage the candidate to take steps to improve their English language skills in the first instance. Existing licensed drivers who fail the assessment may have their licence suspended or revoked.

The assessment consists of a 20-minute exercise, taken by telephone from our offices, during which candidates will be tested on various aspects of their speaking and listening ability. The assessment is provided by a specialist education and testing company, and consists of five sections:

1. Reading several sentences from a printed list in the order instructed
2. Repeating back sentences that are read to you over the phone
3. Answering simple questions asked over the phone
4. Constructing sentences from fragments read to you over the phone (sentences divided into three or four parts)
5. Answering open questions asked over the phone (speaking for up to 30 seconds per question)

The test is entirely automated, and questions will be asked by a variety of voices. All of the questions will relate to normal life and your day-to-day activities, and there are no trick questions, although some will require you to think and compose an answer in a short space of time.

At the end of the test, a report will be produced (a copy of which will be provided to you), with a score indicating your overall ability. You will also be graded separately on sentence usage, vocabulary, fluency and pronunciation, all of which will contribute to the overall score.

For licensing purposes, we will require candidates to score at least **56 out of 80**. This indicates a good overall ability in use of the English language (equivalent to level B2 on the CEFR scale), where candidates will be able to speak fluently on a range of everyday topics, and be able to give and understand most instructions.

### **Previous qualifications**

Candidates who can demonstrate (by producing the original certificate and/or examination transcript) that they have previously passed a relevant English-language qualification at a suitable level, which was assessed by a recognised and accredited qualification awarding body, will not be required to take the additional speaking and listening assessment. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of all the qualifications that will be accepted - however, typical examples may include:

- GCSE or GCE O-level (grade C or higher) or Scottish Intermediate 2
- GCE A-level or Scottish Higher
- NVQ, BTEC, City and Guilds or similar vocational qualification (level 2 or higher)
- Higher education award (for example a degree, HND or HNC)
- qualification equivalent to any of the above, issued by a recognised examining body in an English-speaking country other than the UK
- a TOEFL, IELTS or ESOL qualification at CEFR level B2 or higher (or equivalent)

Technical or IT-related qualifications are unlikely to be acceptable for this purpose. We will be looking for qualifications which include a significant amount of verbal or written content in the English language.

In all cases, the licensing service's decision as to whether to accept a qualification not listed above will be final. If a candidate does not hold one of these qualifications, or cannot produce acceptable evidence of the qualification, they will be required to undertake the speaking and listening assessment.