



## Changes to private hire driver licensing requirements

This Notice sets out changes to how we assess applications for new or renewal private hire vehicle (PHV) driver licences. The changes come into effect on 1 October 2021.

The key changes are:

- The introduction of a new Safety, Equality and Regulatory Understanding (SERU) requirement
- A change to the way in which we assess a PHV driver applicant's ability to meet the existing English Language Requirement (ELR)

This Notice also includes a reminder of the introduction of an [online Safeguarding Awareness course](#), which is available to all taxi and private hire (TPH) drivers and TPH applicants who are expected to undertake it at the earliest opportunity, in line with the [Department for Transport's \(DfT\) Statutory Standards for taxi and private hire licensing](#).

The Notice also provides details of some changes to the Topographical testing process.

### **Introduction of new Safety, Equality and Regulatory Understanding (SERU) requirement for PHV drivers**

It is essential that PHV drivers have an appropriate understanding of safety, equality and regulatory requirements that apply to them. This helps ensure public safety and will also enhance customer service for passengers. These improvements were originally considered in 2016, when Transport for London (TfL) conducted a wide-

ranging review of PHV regulations. Following feedback from that review, TfL has developed a new Safety, Equality and Regulatory Understanding (SERU) requirement.

**From 1 October 2021 the SERU requirement will apply to all PHV driver applicants (including renewals).**

### **Safety, Equality and Regulatory Understanding (SERU) assessment**

To satisfy this requirement, all existing PHV drivers and PHV driver applicants, who apply for a licence from 1 October 2021, will be required to pass an assessment which will include questions on all three areas: safety, equality and regulatory understanding.

Guidance for the assessment, including example questions which help to demonstrate the format of the SERU assessment, can be found here: [tfl.gov.uk/tph-seru](https://tfl.gov.uk/tph-seru).

All questions in the SERU assessment will be based upon the content of the newly published [PHV Driver Handbook](#) ('the Handbook') which is available here. Applicants should read the Handbook and the [online assessment guide](#) prior to attending a TfL driver assessment centre to undertake the SERU assessment.

The Handbook is a working guide for PHV drivers and is an invaluable tool for both applicants and existing licensees and will be regularly updated with any new or amended information. We expect all PHV licensees to regularly review the Handbook and remain familiar with its contents (that will be kept under review and updated).

Applicants are also expected to undertake the [online Safeguarding Awareness course](#) prior to undertaking the SERU assessment. More information on the Safeguarding Awareness course is available in [TPH Notice 31/21](#).

The SERU assessment will take place at a TfL driver assessment centre and will be delivered by TfL staff. All assessments will be computer-based and further information on what to expect on the day will be provided to applicants once their assessment booking has been confirmed.

Each applicant will be given time to prepare for the assessment (see section below) and will be eligible for one re-sit, if required. There are no exemptions from the SERU requirement, however reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate e.g. for an applicant with dyslexia.

The SERU assessment will cost £36. A re-sit will cost £16.

### **SERU Transitional arrangements: 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2023**

We recognise the need for applicants and drivers to have time to prepare for any assessment. We have therefore made transitional arrangements for the implementation of the new SERU assessment, so each applicant has adequate time to prepare.

For all new and renewal applications for a PHV driver's licence made from 1 October 2021 and prior to 31 March 2023, transitional arrangements for the SERU assessment will be in place. During the transitional period, and subject to meeting all other licensing requirements, applicants may be licensed in advance of undertaking and passing the SERU assessment, to allow them time to prepare for the assessment.

TfL will be contacting applicants directly to provide a date and time for their booked assessment. Once a booking has been confirmed, applicants are expected to make every effort to attend. If for some reason an applicant is unable to attend on a particular day due to exceptional circumstances, the assessment may be rescheduled by prior agreement with TfL but failure to attend an assessment without a valid justification may lead to the driver's licence being revoked.

From **1 April 2023** the transitional arrangements will no longer be in place. From this date, all new and renewal applicants for a PHV driver licence will be required to pass the SERU assessment, as well as meet all other licensing requirements, in advance of being licensed, unless they have already passed the SERU assessment.

We reserve the right in the future to require applicants to take the SERU assessment for a second time, in the event of a significant change in the regulatory landscape.

Further information on the SERU requirement, including the PHV Driver Handbook and further assessment guidance material can be found here: [tfl.gov.uk/tph-seru](https://tfl.gov.uk/tph-seru).

### **Changes to the way in which we assess a PHV driver's ability to meet the English Language Requirement (ELR)**

It is essential for public safety that all licensed PHV drivers are able to communicate in English at an appropriate level. Last year, the DfT published its [Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards](#) which recommended that all licensing authorities should consider whether an applicant for a licence is able to communicate in English orally and in writing with customers. The standards are intended to protect children and vulnerable adults and by extension the wider public.

In October 2016, we introduced a regulatory requirement that all applicants for a London PHV driver's licence must be able to demonstrate that they can speak, listen, read and write in English at an appropriate level. This is known as the English Language Requirement (ELR).

[TPH Notice 12/20](#) provided information on the previous ELR arrangements, that were in place until 30 September 2021. As a reminder, anyone whose application for a London PHV driver's licence (including a renewal) that was received by TfL on or after 14 October 2016 had **until 30 September 2021** to satisfy TfL that they comply with the ELR.

### **New approach to assessing the ELR**

From 1 October 2021 the way in which we assess whether an existing PHV licensee or a new PHV driver applicant satisfies the ELR has changed.

From 1 October 2021, it is no longer possible to satisfy the ELR by providing documentary evidence of a qualification or by providing a certificate from one of TfL's appointed Secure English Language Test providers<sup>1</sup>.

Instead, we are using two separate assessments: the outcome of the SERU assessment will be used to determine an applicant's ability to read and write in English to the appropriate standard and a new speaking and listening assessment is being introduced.

Both assessments will need to be passed in order for an applicant to demonstrate that they can communicate in English at an appropriate level.

The appropriate standard, which is equivalent to level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for reading, writing, speaking and listening, will remain the same.

All existing PHV drivers and all PHV driver applicants where applications were received on or before 30 September 2021 who did not provide satisfactory evidence will now be required to demonstrate compliance with the ELR by passing the new assessments (see below).

### **Speaking and listening assessment**

From 1 October 2021 a new speaking and listening assessment will be introduced. The assessment will consist of a 15-20 minute conversation that will take place at TfL's offices.

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<sup>1</sup> Save that Transport for London will accept a certificate in respect of Secure English Language Tests provided to it no later than 28 October 2021, provided the test was taken on or before 30 September 2021.

The assessment will be undertaken by a secure video or telephone link within TfL premises to our service provider, PeopleCert, a global leader in the assessment and certification of professional skills.

The speaking and listening test will cost £36. Re-sits will cost £16.

### **Assessment of reading and writing skills**

From 1 October 2021, TfL will use the SERU assessment to assess whether PHV driver applicants and existing drivers are able to read and write in English to the appropriate standard.

### **Evidence provided to satisfy English Language Requirement**

Any PHV driver who has provided documentary evidence, by 30 September 2021, to satisfy the English Language Requirement which is **not** accepted by TfL will be contacted and will be required to undertake and pass both the SERU assessment and speaking and listening assessment by no later than 31 March 2023.

Any PHV driver who **did not** provide documentary evidence, by 30 September 2021, to satisfy the English Language Requirement will be contacted and will be required to undertake and pass both the SERU assessment and speaking and listening assessment by no later than 30 September 2022.

Please note: any evidence submitted after 30 September 2021 **will not** be accepted<sup>2</sup>.

**We will be writing to all existing PHV driver licensees and applicants to provide the details of the assessments we require them to undertake and pass and the timescales for doing so.**

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<sup>2</sup> Save that Transport for London will accept a certificate in respect of Secure English Language Tests provided up to 28 October 2021, provided the test was taken on or before 30 September 2021.

Further information on how these changes apply to applicants and existing drivers will be published in the form of future TPH Notices and / or published on our dedicated website. We will also provide detailed scenarios to help drivers determine which assessments will be required and the next steps.

More information on these changes can be found here: [tfl.gov.uk/ph-language](https://tfl.gov.uk/ph-language).

### **Introduction of online Safeguarding Awareness course**

[TPH Notice 13/21](#) confirms the introduction of a [Safeguarding Awareness course](#).

The course has been specifically designed for all taxi and private hire licensees/applicants who are in a unique position to identify and help take steps to prevent the abuse, exploitation or neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

We expect all licensees to undertake the Safeguarding Awareness course at the earliest opportunity and we also encourage staff working for PHV operators and taxi booking platforms to undertake this training.

The course can be completed on a laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone. It is free for any user to access and can be undertaken as many times as required.

Given the importance of Safeguarding, more information is also included in the [PHV Driver Handbook](#) and will be an area that PHV licensees and applicants will be assessed on as part of the SERU assessment.

### **Topographical testing**

From 1 November 2021, all Topographical testing will be undertaken at TfL's driver assessment centres at Baker Street and West Kensington.

The centres are operating with appropriate safety measures in place, including: social distancing markers, hand sanitiser stations and personal protective equipment for staff. Applicants must wear a face covering when attending our assessment centres unless exempt. These measures will be kept under review.

The TfL Topographical test (if taken on or after 1 November 2021) costs £36 and a re-take costs £16.

Further information on Topographical testing is provided here:

[tfl.gov.uk/topographical](https://tfl.gov.uk/topographical).

Graham Robinson

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**Taxi and Private Hire**

**Transport for London**

**1 October 2021**

*For previous Notices and additional licensing information, please visit [tfl.gov.uk/tph](https://tfl.gov.uk/tph)*