

## Road Transport Qualifications and the Modern Workforce – a Growing Trend

### Why qualifications are becoming popular with transport employers

**Today's qualifications can be a minefield of NVQs and VRQs for the employer. Gareth Phillips, Director of Sales and Business Strategy at EDI, looks at some of the major qualifications and explains why they are becoming so popular with transport employers.**

Firstly, one should distinguish between a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and a Vocationally Related Qualification (VRQ).

The NVQ is purely competence based and is achieved in the workplace. The candidate is assessed against nationally recognised standards developed by employers. Assessments normally comprise observations by a trained assessor of the candidate carrying out day to day work duties. In addition evidence of the candidate's competence can be supplied by his/her Manager, a customer or other source. The assessor judges whether the candidate has met the standard required by the qualification. The whole process is quality assured by an external verifier appointed by the awarding body.

VRQs test an individual's knowledge and understanding of a subject and can form part of an apprenticeship, complementing the NVQ. EDI's VRQs generally take the form of a short theory based course followed by a multiple choice test. EDI leads the way with innovative online testing for a range of VRQs.

EDI's most popular transport qualification is Road Passenger Transport (Passenger Support). This covers Levels 2 and 3 and includes sections on customer service, ticketing, fares and managing itineraries.

There are a number of issues that these qualifications address for this industry. A key problem for employers can be the sheer number of new EU directives that the transport industry has to take into account every year. EDI's qualifications are continually updated to meet the requirements from employers so that they can focus on the very latest reviews including drivers' hours and the need for a Certificate of Professional Competence. They also fulfil a number of important criteria including the requirement for Passenger Carrying Vehicle drivers to take continuing professional development to allow them to maintain their professional PCV driving licences.

By encouraging employees to undertake these qualifications, transport companies can influence staff turnover rates, reduce absenteeism, improve communications and boost staff morale. The employer will

also ultimately save money as the workforce is well trained with more appropriate skills and knowledge for their roles.

GoSkills, the Sector Skills Council for passenger transport, supports development of vocationally related qualifications. To encourage younger people into the industry and to provide them with opportunities for career progression, there is a need to develop and formally recognise their skills. At the moment a high level of the UK's passenger transport workforce is highly skilled but has no formal recognition of skill levels. NVQs and VRQs provide a mechanism by which skills within this industry can be formally recognised.

One company that EDI has been working with very successfully is Arriva. Part of Arriva's contract for new drivers is that they must complete the Road Passenger Transport (Passenger Support) NVQ to develop their customer service skills. Michelle Drummond, Arriva's NVQ Scheme Co-ordinator explains: "We need to put the right people in the right jobs and offer excellent customer service. NVQs have enabled us to comply with our mission statement that we are committed to delivering a better service to our customers."

It is clear that transport companies are becoming more aware of the benefits of an appropriately qualified workforce. By motivating staff through an investment that leads to an accredited qualification, employers see tangible and measurable benefits. EDI believes that the general uptake in transport qualifications will continue to rise over the next decade, as qualifications truly reflect the needs of employers and employers capitalise on their benefits.



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