

News story: 2019 financial levels confirmed for commercial vehicle operators

The Office of the Traffic Commissioner has today (4 December 2018) confirmed the levels against which applications and continuations will be processed from the start of 2019.

Applicants and existing operators under standard licences will be asked to produce evidence meeting the revised criteria in preparation for the 1 January 2019 deadline, when the new financial standing levels come into force.

Standard national and international licence applicants will be required to demonstrate £8000 (previously £7950) for the first vehicle and £4450 (previously £4400) for each additional vehicle they request to be authorised.

Operators making variation applications will be required to demonstrate financial standing for their existing fleet and any additional authorisation against the new levels.

Any applicant or licence holder appearing at public inquiry before a traffic commissioner after 1 January 2019, where evidence of financial standing is requested, will be required to satisfy the new levels.

There will be no change at the current time to the rates of finance, which must be available to support a restricted licence or application (£3100 for the first vehicle and £1700 for each additional authorised vehicle).

The Senior Traffic Commissioner's statutory guidance document on finance will be amended to reflect the new rates.

Press release: £8 million funding scheme for customs intermediaries and traders open

HM Treasury and HMRC grants for training and IT improvements ahead of UK leaving the EU

[Press release: £8 million funding scheme for customs intermediaries and traders open](#)

Customs intermediaries and traders completing customs declarations can now apply for grants to support training and IT under a £8 million investment from government, as applications open today (4 December).

The government has engaged extensively with industry bodies and key providers of customs broker services – including freight forwarders, fast parcel operators and independent customs brokers – to better understand the challenges they face in supporting existing and new clients.

Based on this useful engagement, HM Treasury and HMRC announced a one-off investment of £8 million to support broker training and increased automation in September, which will help increase capacity of the sector ahead of March 2019.

This includes £3m HMRC is investing to increase training provision in this area. They have worked with learning service provider Knowledge Pool who are engaging with training providers to increase the number of courses available in the short term, as well as investing in the development of new courses which will be available over the coming months to support customs broker training.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

Following extensive engagement with the customs intermediaries sector, we have listened to their concerns about how they will satisfy the extra demand for customs broker services.

I'm really pleased we are investing £8m to support the sector and help them expand their capacity as we prepare to leave the EU on 29 March 2019.

As part of this investment, £5 million in funding is now available to help businesses, based in, or with a branch in, the UK to meet the costs of employee training and IT improvements. Businesses who will benefit from the funding are encouraged to apply early. Applications will close on 5 April 2019, or earlier once all the funding is allocated.

Businesses can apply for one or both grants:

- There is £2 million available to fund training for intermediaries and

traders completing customs declarations (or intending to complete customs declarations in the future). The grant will provide funding for up to 50% of the cost of training staff.

- There is £3 million available in IT improvement funding, available to small and medium sized employers in the customs intermediaries sector currently completing customs declarations on behalf of importers and exporters. The grant will fund investment in packaged software that increases the automation and productivity of completing customs declarations.

PwC is administering the grants on behalf of HMRC as an accredited grant administrator. Businesses who wish to apply for funding should not contact HMRC and can apply online. More information, and a link to the online application page are available on GOV.UK.

Who can apply? A businesses or sole trader that completes customs declarations, this includes customs brokers, freight forwarders and fast parcel operators. Customs intermediaries or sole traders need to meet certain requirements, depending on which grant is being applied for, and they must be based in, or have a branch in the UK. Businesses can apply for just one of the grants, or both.

Training grant

IT improvements grant

To apply for the training grant, customs intermediaries or trades must either:
1.) Complete customs declarations for themselves or someone else (or intend to in the future) import from. 2.) Export to the EU and complete customs declarations (or intend to complete customs declarations in the future)

To apply for the IT improvements grant, customs intermediaries must:
1.) Currently complete customs declarations on behalf of importers and exporters. 2.) Have 250 employees or less. 3.) Have an annual turnover of £50 million or less

What must you use the grants for? You must use the funding towards upfront training costs for the training grant and/or buying software for the IT improvements grant.

Training

IT Improvements

The grant will provide funding for up to 50% of the cost of training that provides your employees with skills to: complete customs declarations; facilitate other businesses to use import and export procedures; and carry out the technical processes of customs procedures. The training does not have to lead to a formal qualification.

You must use the funding to buy software that's a packaged solution and is used to increase the automation or productivity of your business in completing customs declarations. The funding can also be used: to buy hardware that's needed for the software to run; to install and configure the software and hardware; for the first year license; and for training employees to use the software.

Training

It cannot be used towards the existing costs of current training or for other unrelated training

IT Improvements

It cannot be used to commission bespoke software or for unrelated networking costs.

News story: Change of Governor of St Helena, Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha

2018 to 2019 The Confederation of Service Charities, Director of Governance Support, London (secondment from Ministry of Defence) 2014 to 2018 Ministry of Defence, Chief Officer & Deputy Administrator (Deputy Governor), Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri & Dhekelia and Command Secretary, British Forces Cyprus 2013 to 2014 Cabinet Office, National Security Secretariat, Foreign and Defence Policy Directorate, Programme Implementation Director, Afghan Interpreters UK Resettlement Programme 2011 to 2013 FCO, Turks & Caicos Islands, Governor's Office, Deputy Head of Mission and Director of Strategy, Government Reform and Economic Recovery Programme 2008 to 2011 Home Office, Deputy International Director, International Directorate 2008 UN/World Health Organisation, Specialist Advisor in Darfur, Sudan (secondment from Cabinet Office) 2007 to 2008 Cabinet Office, Service Director, Departmental IT Development Programme 2005 to 2007 HM Treasury, Office of Government Commerce, Review Director, Organisational Reform Review and Divisional Director, Knowledge, Innovation, Standards and Skills Division 2001 to 2005 Cabinet Office, Head, Public Sector Reform Team 1993 to 2001 UN/World Health Organization, Europe Region, Regional Advisor for Environment and Health, Nancy, France and Rome, Italy 1992 to 1993 Bechtel Limited, Senior Specialist, Environmental Engineering Management Unit, London 1990 to 1992 Gibb Environmental, Principal Consultant, Oxfordshire 1982 to 1990 UK Atomic Energy Authority, Waste Research Unit and New Ventures Team, Harwell Laboratory, Oxfordshire

News story: Further intervention on student mental health

Higher education representatives have been told to take action on student mental health by the Education Secretary today (4 December). He has called on universities to do more to reach out to students' emergency contacts when it is clear that they are at risk of a mental health crisis.

Damian Hinds has written to Julia Buckingham, who is chairing a roundtable on student mental health, asking the sector to maintain the focus that has been built up in recent months following the Student Mental Health Summit that was held at the University of the West of England in June 2018.

The event, hosted by Universities UK (UUK), will aim to develop advice for universities on consent for the disclosure of information about severe student difficulties to third parties. Giving universities clear guidance on this issue will ensure young people struggling at university will have every possible chance of receiving help from someone in their domestic support network. This is particularly important for students studying away from home, who may have a reduced support group.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Ensuring that university students, many of whom will be leaving home for the first time, are supported is a key challenge for my department and the higher education sector as a whole.

Our universities are world leading in so many areas and I want them to be the best in the world for support and pastoral care as well. Ensuring that universities get better at reaching out to family members if a student is struggling with mental health is a big step along the road to delivering that ambition.

I've made clear to the sector how important this issue is and now I want them to work together to find a clear way forward so young people can get support from every person and organisation best able to give it.

In a recent Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) survey, 75% of applicants to higher education expected universities to contact a parent or guardian in situations where they are faced with serious challenges relating to their mental health.

The new UUK advice will need to build on this by giving 100% of students every possible opportunity to choose to receive care from families and trusted friends alongside the support they get from student welfare teams and the NHS.