

LCQ19: Driving tests and licences

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 7):

Question:

To cope with the coronavirus disease 2019 epidemic, the Transport Department (TD) intermittently suspended the written tests and road tests of driving tests last year. Regarding driving tests and licences, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of new candidates and repeaters affected by each round of suspension of written tests and road tests and, among them, the respective numbers of those who have now completed the relevant tests, with a breakdown by type of the driving licences involved;
- (2) of the measures put in place by the TD to arrange for the affected candidates to take the relevant tests expeditiously upon resumption of the tests, and whether the TD has assessed the effectiveness of such measures;
- (3) of the latest waiting time for the written tests and road tests of the various driving tests, with a breakdown by type of candidates (i.e. new candidates and repeaters) and test venue;
- (4) given that the TD has set service performance pledges that written tests and road tests will be held respectively within 45 and 82 calendar days from receipt of applications, whether the TD will set better pledges to enable persons in need to take the tests and obtain driving licences as soon as possible; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (5) given that the period for holding a valid private car or light goods vehicle driving licence required of an applicant for a commercial vehicle driving licence has been shortened to one year since October 1, 2020, whether the TD has compiled statistics to see if the relevant number of candidates has increased as a result; if the number has increased, whether the TD has increased the numbers of tests to be held and test venues to meet the additional demand; if the TD has not compiled such statistics, of the reasons for that; and
- (6) given that starting from October 1, 2020, an applicant for a taxi full driving licence must have completed the relevant pre-service course within one year before submitting an application, of the up-to-date number of persons who have completed the relevant course; as some members of the taxi trade have relayed that the number of places offered for the course is insufficient, whether the TD will increase the number of such places; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) To tie in with various anti-epidemic and social distancing measures put in place by the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, the TD had to intermittently suspend driving tests during the period from 2020 to early 2021. The periods and numbers of affected candidates (new candidates and repeaters) (Note 1) for each suspension of written tests and road tests are set out in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively.

Table 1: Number of candidates affected by suspension of driving test (written test)

Types of written test	Periods when written test was suspended		
	(1) Jan 29 to May 25, 2020	(2) Jul 29 to Sep 13, 2020	(3) Dec 2, 2020 to Mar 14, 2021
Part A written test	7 574	13 147	27 310
Taxi written test	1 204	2 340	3 267

Table 2: Number of candidates affected by suspension of driving test (road test)

Types of road test		Periods when road test was suspended			
		(1) Jan 29 to Feb 4; and Feb 10 to Mar 1, 2020	(2) Mar 23 to May 3, 2020	(3) Jul 29 to Sep 6, 2020	(4) Dec 2, 2020, to Feb 21, 2021
Private Car	Combined test	2 920	5 074	4 817	8 260
	Part B	177	216	284	523
	Part C	1 573	2 047	2 200	3 120
Motor Cycle	Part B (Competence test)	660	1 100	915 (Note 2)	1 946 (Note 3)
	Part C (Road test)	1 011	1 766	1 447 (Note 2)	2 382 (Note 3)
Light Goods Vehicle	Combined test	3 342	6 023	4 885	9 506
	Part B	180	193	192	411
	Part C	2 399	3 143	2 913	4 871
Medium Goods Vehicle		473	544	716	1 507
Heavy Goods Vehicle		272	325	421	742

Public/Private Light Bus	24	12	24	74
Public/Private Bus	460	583	680	1 158
Articulated Vehicle	115	137	108	287

(2) Every time when driving test services were resumed, the TD had allocated additional resources to expedite the re-arrangement of affected tests, and provided extra test sessions on weekdays and Saturdays for affected candidates to take make-up tests as soon as possible.

For road tests, all the candidates affected by the several suspensions of road tests before December 2020 have already taken their make-up tests (except those who have postponed their tests for personal or weather-related reasons). Out of a total of around 34 700 candidates affected by the last suspension of road tests (i.e. from December 2, 2020, to February 21, 2021), about 27 000 of them have already completed their make-up road tests, and the remaining about 7 700 are expected to have their make-up tests taken by end August 2021.

As for written tests, all the candidates affected by the suspension of written tests have already completed their make-up written tests by May 2021, except those who have applied for postponement for personal reasons.

(3) The latest waiting situation for written tests and road tests as at June 21, 2021, is set out at Table 3 (Note 4). As a result of the earlier suspension of driving tests, a huge amount of applications have been received by the TD upon the resumption of driving test services. This, together with the fact that redeployment of resources is required to arrange the make-up tests for the affected candidates, leads to a longer waiting time for various types of driving tests at present.

Table 3: Waiting time for various types of driving tests as at June 21, 2021

Types of driving tests		Waiting time (in calendar days)			
		Non-Driving School		Hong Kong School of Motoring (Note 5)	New Kwun Tong Driving School
		Hong Kong Island	Kowloon & New Territories		
Part A written test		73		79 (Note 6)	73 (Note 6)
Taxi written test		42		N.A. (Note 7)	N.A. (Note 7)
Private Car	Combined test	191	233	297	N.A. (Note 7)
	Part B	42	108	86	116
	Part C	186	185	309	149

Motor Cycle	Part B (Competence test)	N.A. (Note 7)	N.A. (Note 7)	209	310
	Part C (Road test)	156	197	232	177
Light Goods Vehicle	Combined test	238	232	282	N.A. (Note 7)
	Part B	38	108	86	123
	Part C	178	176	309	149
Medium Goods Vehicle		99	119	81	N.A. (Note 7)
Heavy Goods Vehicle		N.A. (Note 7)	119	N.A. (Note 7)	N.A. (Note 7)
Public/Private Bus		99	116	80	N.A. (Note 7)
Public/Private Light Bus		N.A. (Note 7)	86	N.A. (Note 7)	N.A. (Note 7)
Articulated Vehicle		N.A. (Note 7)	114	81	N.A. (Note 7)

(4) The TD has to consider various factors, such as the driving test requirements, the handling capacity of each driving test centre and the preparation time of candidates, in formulating or adjusting the relevant service standards. During the period from 2017 to 2019, the average waiting time for the written and road tests arranged by the TD was within the performance pledge. In 2020, there were intermittent suspensions of driving test services due to the epidemic and a large number of make-up tests had to be arranged every time the driving test services were resumed, many tests could not be conducted within the pledged period. As the epidemic situation improves, the waiting time for driving tests will hopefully reduce progressively. The TD will also continue to closely monitor the demand for written and road tests, and explore the feasibility of allocating more test sessions, with a view to reducing the waiting time for various types of tests as far as practicable.

(5) According to the figures after full resumption of driving test services, during the period from April to May 2021, there were an average of about 2 200 applicants for commercial vehicle road tests per month, representing an increase compared to the monthly average of around 1 500 applicants during the same period in 2019 (without being affected by factors such as the epidemic). Due to the intermittent suspensions of driving test services during the pandemic, the current waiting time for commercial vehicle driving tests may not reflect the actual situation in normal times. The TD has allocated additional resources to process the applications of various types of driving tests as soon as possible, including arranging make-up tests that need to be conducted as a result of the epidemic. The TD will also continue to closely monitor the demand for commercial vehicle tests and allocate resources to meet the demand as appropriate.

(6) At present, there are a total of 12 designated pre-service training schools providing pre-service courses for taxi drivers. The TD requires that every training school offers at least one class of pre-service course for

taxi drivers per month. In other words, at least 12 classes will be offered per month, providing at least about 285 places. Given that the majority of prospective taxi drivers will enrol for the courses after passing the taxi written test, most schools have to call off the pre-service courses for taxi drivers due to under-enrolment during the suspension of taxi written test service. With the resumption of taxi written test service on March 15, 2021, the enrolment for pre-service courses for taxi drivers has increased and the number of classes offered has also returned to normal. Since the implementation of the new requirement on pre-service courses for taxi drivers on October 1, 2020, as of May 31, 2021, a total of 282 persons have already completed the courses. The TD will closely monitor the number of enrolment for pre-service courses for taxi drivers for each school and will liaise with the schools to increase the number of classes to cope with the demand where necessary.

Note 1: The TD does not keep a breakdown of the figures by new candidates and repeaters.

Note 2: Pursuant to the relaxation of anti-epidemic measures, the TD has resumed driving test services by phases during the period, starting with motor cycle road tests on August 31, 2020.

Note 3: Pursuant to the relaxation of anti-epidemic measures, the TD has resumed driving test services by phases during the period, starting with motor cycle road tests on February 1, 2021.

Note 4: The TD does not keep a breakdown of the figures regarding waiting time by new candidates and repeaters.

Note 5: Hong Kong School of Motoring comprises Siu Lek Yuen Driving School, Ap Lei Chau Driving School and Yuen Long Driving School.

Note 6: All written tests are conducted at the written test centre at 2/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices.

Note 7: The test is not available at the region concerned or the designated driving school.