



Memorandum from:

The Motor Schools Association of Great Britain

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INTRODUCTION

1. The MSA is the national trade association for driving instructors and schools founded in 1935. Members of the association are in the main Driving Standards Agency Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs) we also represent the interests of a number of large goods vehicle driving instructors, some driving school proprietors, together with a small number of bus/coach instructors and motorcycle instructors.

THE COMMITTEE'S QUESTIONS

Q How effective are the existing practical and theory driving tests at identifying safe driving skills and behaviour? Has the hazard perception test achieved its objectives?

2. The practical driving test does identify safe driving skills but does not measure attitude or behaviour and does not do enough to encourage comprehensive practical training.
3. One of the most common reasons for practical test failure and for accidents amongst inexperienced novice drivers is turning right from a busy major road into a side road. Research has shown that because of time restraints caused by pressure from pupils and very often their parents, to train new drivers as quickly and cheaply as possible instructors spend little time teaching their pupils to perfect this skill. However, on a practical test the candidate may only carry out one turn of this type and may be fortunate that traffic volumes are low or they happen to get it right on that occasion.
4. The theory driving test and the hazard perception test have both failed to achieve their objectives
5. The introduction of a multiple choice theory test along with the publication of the questions, correct answers and distracters, without the need for any training in understanding the subject matter, has meant that by reading the questions and answers pupils are able to retain enough knowledge to reach the required pass mark.
6. The theory test pass mark is thirty correct answers out of thirty-five questions. Most novice drivers are able to score over twenty-five correct

answers with no training or preparation whatsoever. They then read the question bank and are able to retain enough knowledge to answer correctly the extra half dozen questions they need to achieve a pass mark. The problem is that they have demonstrated knowledge but not understanding.

7. The research that backed the need to introduce the hazard perception test (HPT) was based on a mixture of classroom and in car training. The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) with the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) developed an excellent classroom based theory package for new drivers and distributed it free of charge to ADIs. Research showed that “training can improve the performance of novices to match that of experienced drivers.”¹ However, few of these packages were ever used as the word quickly spread amongst novice drivers that this test was little more than another computer game that, with a little practice, was relatively easy to pass.
8. A number of organisations including DSA developed hazard perception software for home computer use but learner drivers are rarely using the training element of HP software choosing to practice the test or as many see it the game, a few times before taking and passing the test.

Q Could changes to driver education and testing help to make novice drivers safer? Such changes might include: new pre-test requirements, such as a minimum number of hours’ or miles’ driving, or a minimum period between obtaining a provisional license and taking the test; compulsory professional tuition; or additional training for motorway driving or night driving

9. It is generally accepted that attitude is difficult to measure successfully, although various pieces of research suggest that attitude change can be brought about by training. It is therefore logical to suggest a system or changes to the system that will encourage or require prospective new drivers to take proper training.
10. The introduction of a separate theory test was a long campaigned for addition to the driving test in the UK. This association had hoped that the test questions would be phrased in such a way that young people would be encouraged into classrooms in order to study for it. In this way their training could extend beyond the actual requirements of the test and training courses could include peer group discussion on attitudes towards driving, such as speed, alcohol, risk taking etc. We hoped that the addition of HPT would include a training element but this has clearly not happened.
11. **We ask the select committee to consider compulsory group theory training for all learner drivers.**
12. Most learner drivers have some driving lessons but many do not have enough to pass the driving test at the first attempt. Driving instructors do

¹ The Development of Hazard Perception Testing. G B Grayson and B F Sexton. TRL Report TRL558 First Published 2002

their best to encourage all learner drivers to have sufficient lessons to cover the whole of the DSA recommended syllabus for learner drivers. However, the attitude of many learners and sadly their parents is that they wish to keep the number of lessons to the minimum required just to pass the driving test.

13. **We ask the select committee to consider that all learner drivers should be required to undertake a structured programme of training, covering the DSA recommended syllabus, with an ADI before taking a practical driving test.**
14. The introduction of minimum learning periods has become much talked about recently, however we feel that imposing particular time periods that a new driver has to hold a provisional licence for or a particular number of hours of training or miles driven is impractical and is likely to be insufficient for some and an unnecessary burden for others. We consider a properly structured training programme would be far more useful.
15. The MSA has fully supported Pass Plus training since its conception however like most other individuals and organisations involved we have been extremely disappointed with the number of newly qualified drivers taking the course.
16. Most learners and their parents support the idea of post-test training but once the test is passed the attitude of the vast majority is “I can’t be bothered” or “I need the money to buy a car.” It is frightening to consider the number of new drivers that never have any professional training on motorways.
17. **We ask the select committee to consider that all newly qualified drivers should be required to complete a Pass Plus course.**
18. **We ask the select committee to consider that all learner drivers be allowed to drive on motorways with an ADI prior to taking their practical driving test.**