

Transport Planning Society

Professional Development and Qualifications for Transport Planners

Some Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

November 2013

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The Transport Planning Society provides a Professional Development Scheme for transport planners and, together with the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT), it awards, the Transport Planning Professional qualification (TPP).

Here we seek to answer the most frequently asked questions about the TPP qualification, the Professional Development Scheme (PDS) and their inter-relationship, starting with the TPP.

What is the TPP qualification?

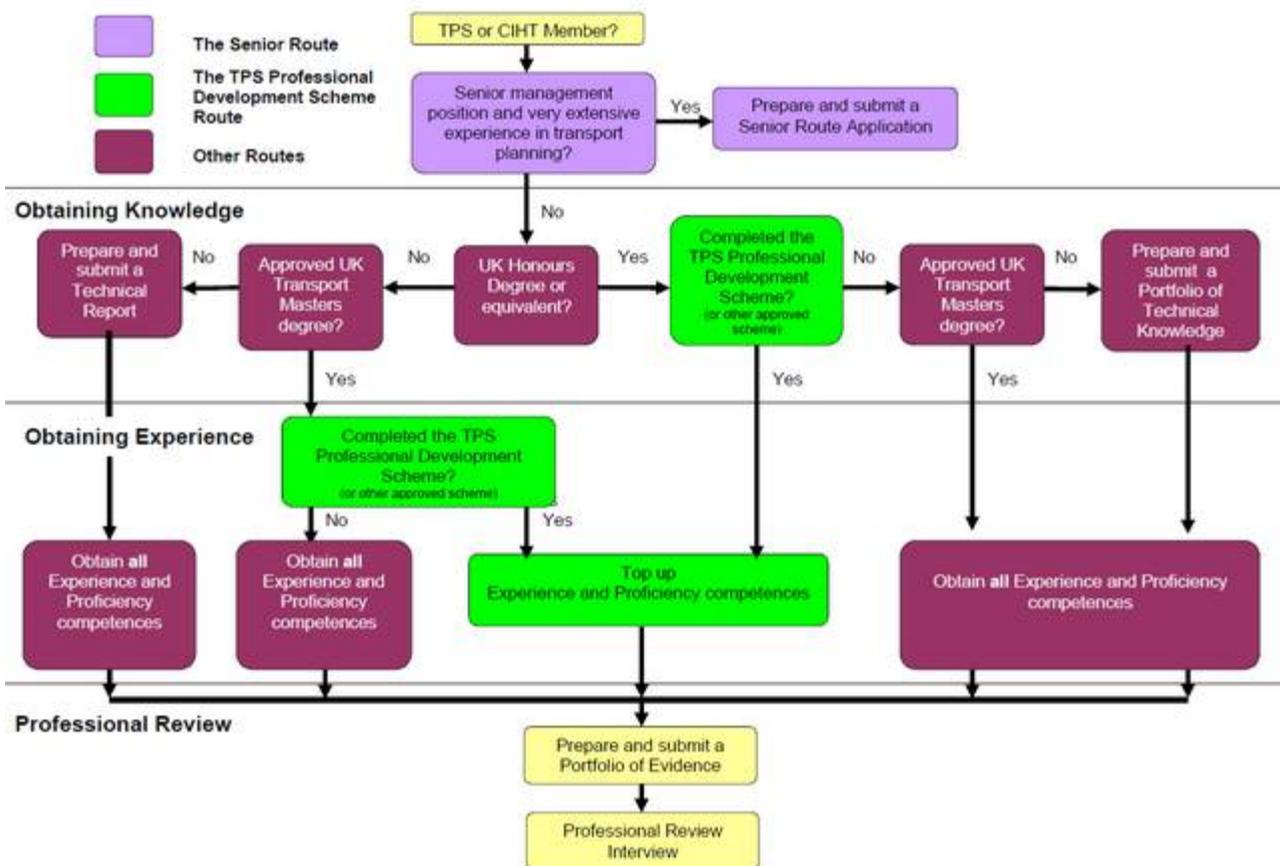
The TPP is a qualification for transport planners, designed to give them professional recognition, in the same way that membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute recognises professional town planners and being a Chartered Engineer identifies professional engineers.

How do I get the TPP qualification?

There are three key stages:

- learning, gaining the knowledge that underpins a professional career;
- obtaining the experience required to work as a professional transport planner and to be able to supervise other transport planners
- demonstrating you have the professional competence through a professional review interview.

Transport planners come from a wide range of educational backgrounds and can follow a variety of career paths. To reflect this, there are several routes to the TPP, illustrated below. The Senior Route is for transport planners with senior management experience in transport. All the other routes follow the three key steps of learning, experience and professional review.



Do I need a UK degree to get the TPP qualification?

No. If you do not have a degree you can follow the Technical Report route, shown on the left of the diagram. If you have a degree, but not from a UK university, it is likely to count if it is equivalent to a UK Honours degree. You can e-mail education@ciht.org.uk to find out.

How much experience do I need to get the TPP qualification?

It depends very much on the time it takes you to obtain the breadth and depth of experience required. A small proportion of transport planners may be ready for professional review within five years of starting work in transport planning, but most will take longer.

Who recognises the TPP qualification?

The TPP qualification is becoming increasingly widely recognised both by employers, through career opportunities and, in some cases, bonus awards as well as by organisations when awarding commissions to consultants. Transport Scotland, for example, does both.

What are the benefits of having the TPP qualification?

Award of the TPP defines you as a true professional, with a wide range of technical and management competences. As the number of those with the TPP qualification grows, so employers and organisations commissioning transport planning work are increasingly likely to show a preference for those with the TPP qualification, particularly for those planners giving evidence in public on transport planning policies and plans.

Will the TPP qualification become a Chartered qualification?

Chartered is just one of the ways in which professionals are identified, and although engineers and surveyors can be “Chartered”, it is a description that is not applied to many others, including lawyers, and doctors. What matters is that they have satisfied their professional body that they have the knowledge and the experience, the competence, to be recognised as a true professional. That’s what the TPP qualification does for transport planners. Further, the use of “Chartered” is controlled by the Privy Council, which limits its use. So, although the Institution of Highways and Transportation was awarded Chartered status, its members cannot describe themselves as Chartered Highways and Transportation Engineers. Also, before the Privy Council will grant a qualification Chartered status, it requires a relatively large number to hold it, and obtaining Chartered status is expensive.

Do I have to be a member of TPS to apply for the TPP qualification?

To be able to apply for the TPP qualification, you must be a member of at least one of TPS or CIHT.

What is the TPS Professional Development Scheme?

The TPS Professional Development Scheme, the PDS, provides a structure to help transport planners, whether recent graduates, career changers or those with an established career, develop (and keep a record of) the competences they need to become a truly professional transport planner. It has been developed by the Transport Planning Society working closely with employers and is based on the National Occupational Standards for Transport Planning.

How does the TPS PDS help me get the TPP qualification?

The PDS provides a structure for your professional development, helping you and your employer ensure that you obtain the breadth and depth of experience required for the TPP qualification. If you do not have a UK transport Masters degree, it also provides a structure for obtaining the underpinning knowledge. Without such a structure, you will probably take longer, possibly quite a lot longer, to obtain all the knowledge and experience required.

As I have a TPP approved transport Masters, do I need to do the TPS PDS as well?

If you have an approved TPP Masters, you will have satisfied most, if not all, of the PDS knowledge requirements and your TPS PDS mentor will be able to sign them off. However, as a key principle of the PDS is that experience should be based on knowledge, there might be some elements of the PDS for which you need to extend your knowledge. Crucially, though, even when you have satisfied the TPP knowledge requirements you still need to obtain the experience required for the TPP qualification, and to become a competent professional transport planner. The PDS provides a structure which helps ensure you have both the breadth and depth of experience required for the TPP qualification, and obliges your employer to do their best to provide the necessary opportunities.

Isn't it easier to do a TPP Portfolio of Technical Knowledge than complete the TPS PDS?

The TPP Portfolio of Technical Knowledge only establishes that you have the knowledge required for the TPP qualification. You still need to obtain, and demonstrate that you have, the necessary experience, as well as the competence to supervise other transport planners. Although you do not have to follow a structured development scheme, it is likely to take you longer to obtain the necessary experience if you don't. The PDS also provides a clear structure for recording your experience as you obtain it, which will make completion of your TPP Portfolio of Evidence easier. Also, being committed to the PDS obliges your employer to seek to ensure you have opportunities to obtain the breadth and depth of experience required for its completion.

Why are some PDS Units Mandatory?

When both the TPP and PDS were being developed, employers made it clear that competence in some units is essential for someone identified as a Transport Planning Professional. So, completion of some of the PDS (and TPP) units is mandatory, with Proficiency being required for Data. That is because with data being central to much of transport planning, it is essential that all transport planners understand the weaknesses that can exist in both data collection and analysis procedures, an understanding they are more likely to gain when they have been responsible for such work.

How long will it take me to complete the TPS PDS?

It depends very much on the opportunities you have to move between projects, and thus to obtain the breadth and depth of experience required, but it is likely to be about five years.

What happens when I complete the PDS?

TPS operates a PDS Review Process to ensure that all those on the PDS are obtaining the necessary support from their mentor and employer, that they are making good progress and that their mentor is helping ensure they satisfy the Society's PDS requirements. When the TPS PDS Reviewer is content that you have met all the PDS requirements, TPS will award you a Certificate of PDS Completion.

Can I submit an application for the TPP qualification as soon as I have completed the TPS PDS?

That might be possible, but it is unlikely. For the TPP qualification you need a higher level of professional competence than is required to complete the PDS. This is quite common with professional development schemes and professional qualifications. So you will probably need another year or two of experience after completing the PDS.

Does the TPS PDS help me get any other qualifications?

Yes. CILT will recognise completion of the PDS as demonstrating you have the experience required for Chartered membership and, if your higher education satisfies the Engineering Council's requirements, completing the PDS will help you satisfy many of the CEng competence requirements. But you will need to extend your experience to satisfy other CEng requirements, including work relating to engineering principles as well as further health and safety work.

How do I join the TPS Professional Development Scheme?

You have to work for one of the many employers that have a PDS licence. A list of these is at www.tps.org.uk/main/professionaldevelopment/ If your employer is not on the list, you should encourage them to adopt the PDS, and to contact the Society at pds@tps.org.uk for more information.

What does it cost to join the TPS PDS?

There is no charge for you, as an individual, to join the PDS, but you must be a TPS member and your employer must be a Stakeholder member of TPS and have a PDS licence,

What happens if I change jobs before I have completed the TPS PDS?

If you join another employer that operates the PDS, you simply take your partially completed PDS record with you, and continue where you left off with your previous employer. If your new employer does not operate the PDS, you should encourage them to adopt it and to contact the Society at pds@tps.org.uk for more information. Otherwise, you will not be able to continue to complete the PDS, and will have to work out with your new employer how you can obtain the remaining competences required for award of the TPP.

Will the requirements of my new employer be the same as my last?

The Society's PDS Review Process ensures consistency of standard across employers.

Do I have to be a member of TPS to be on the TPS PDS?

Yes.

How do I get further information?

For information on the TPS PDS go to www.tps.org.uk/main/professionaldevelopment/ where some documents, including a TPS PDS overview, can be downloaded, or it can be obtained by e-mailing pds@tps.org.uk. You can get further information on the TPP qualification from www.tpprofessional.org or by e-mailing education@ciht.org.uk.

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