



# The 'Knowledge of London' Examination System



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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Before being licensed as a London taxi driver you will have to demonstrate that you are able to take passengers to their destination by the shortest possible route. To do this you must first learn the 'Knowledge of London' and then pass a series of examinations.

1.2 There are two categories of London taxi driver:

- All London – allowed to ply for hire anywhere in Greater London
- Suburban – allowed to ply for hire in restricted areas in the suburbs

Both All London and Suburban applicants have to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their chosen area and the following paragraphs describe in detail the examination system and explain how you progress through it. The description is supplemented by the flowchart at Appendix A.

1.3 The nine suburban sectors (outlined in red on the map) are:

Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest

Barking & Dagenham, Havering,  
Newham and Redbridge

Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham

Bromley

Croydon

Merton and Sutton

Hounslow, Kingston upon Thames  
and Richmond upon Thames

Ealing and Hillingdon

Barnet, Brent and Harrow



## 2. Stage 1 - Introductory Pack

2.1 Following satisfactory character and medical checks, you will be sent a Knowledge of London introductory pack.

2.2 The pack will include:

- a copy of 'The Guide to learning the Knowledge of London' (commonly known as the 'Blue Book'); and
- a booklet providing detailed advice on how to learn the Knowledge.

- 2.3 Further useful information to help you through the learning and testing process can be found by watching the Knowledge films on the Taxi and Private Hire pages of the Transport for London (TfL) website.
- 2.4 Annex B of the All London Blue Book lists 320 routes (known as 'runs') within the six mile radius of Charing Cross; the number of routes for each Suburban sector varies according to the size of the sector. These routes will provide the basis of what you will need to learn.

### **3. Stage 1a - Self Assessment (All London applicants only)**

- 3.1 The self-assessment, based on the first 80 runs in the Blue Book, is designed to let you know whether you are doing things the right way. Better to find out at this stage than after you have spent many months doing it wrong! It allows you to check that you are learning the Knowledge to the proper standard.
- 3.2 The assessment takes the same form as the written examination described in Stage 2. After you have taken the assessment you will be shown the answers and you will mark your own paper. A TfL Knowledge of London Examiner will be present and will talk you through the answers and deal with any queries you may have. You don't have to tell anyone how you got on. You should be left with a fuller understanding of what is required when learning the Knowledge of London and the nature of the Stage 2 Written Examination. Taking the self-assessment is optional and no record of the result is made.
- 3.3 The self-assessment should normally undertaken within 6 months of being sent your introductory pack.

### **4. Stage 2 - Written Examination (All London applicants only)**

- 4.1 The written examination consists of two sections.

#### **4.2 Section 1**

This section will test your knowledge of the routes in the Blue Book. You will be presented with three possible routes for a Blue Book run and be required to identify the one that gives the shortest possible legal route.

There are five questions of this nature. Each correct answer is worth 10 marks, so a total of 50 marks are available for the section.

#### **4.3 Section 2**

This section will test your knowledge of points that you should have encountered when learning the Blue Book runs.

You will be presented with a list of 25 points and for each one you will be given four possible locations. You have to identify the correct one.

Each correctly identified point is worth two marks so a total of 50 marks are available for this section.

- 4.4 The total mark for the two sections is 100. The pass mark is 60.
- 4.5 If you are successful you progress to Stage 3. If you fail to achieve the pass mark you can apply to re-sit the written examination at a later date. However, the score you achieve and the number of times you have sat the exam will determine how long you will be required to wait before being able to re-sit the written examination (see Appendix B).
- 4.6 The Stage 2 written examination has to be undertaken within 24 months of being sent your introductory pack.
- 4.7 A fee is payable for each written examination you take. You can find the current fee on the Taxi and Private Hire pages of the TfL website.

## **5. Stages 3 to 5 - Appearances (General information)**

- 5.1 There are three stages of one-to-one oral examinations, known as appearances. In each of Stages 3, 4 and 5 you are likely to have to take several examinations.
- 5.2 As you progress from one stage to another the intervals between examinations will become shorter. Initially, examinations will be approximately eight weeks apart, reducing to approximately three weeks at the advanced stage.
- 5.3 A one-off fee is payable when you start appearances. The current fee can be found on the Taxi and Private Hire pages of the TfL website.
- 5.4 All appearances are conducted by Knowledge of London Examiners. In the interests of fairness, you will be examined by different examiners in rotation. Therefore, during the appearance stages you will be seen by a variety of examiners.
- 5.5 Your first appearance will last approximately 30 minutes. Subsequent appearances will last up to 20 minutes.
- 5.6 Each examination will involve the examiner asking you to state the location of two specified points of interest. These can be streets, squares, etc. or named buildings, in other words anywhere that a taxi passenger might be and ask to be taken. If you can give the correct locations of the two points you will be asked to describe the shortest possible route between the two.
- 5.7 During the course of one examination you will be asked four questions of this nature.
- 5.8 At any point in Stages 3, 4 and 5 the examiner may ask questions that focus on areas where you appear to have had difficulty in previous appearances.
- 5.9 The examination system is designed to allow you the opportunity to prove that you have the necessary knowledge to give a good service as a taxi driver. However, whilst there is no intention to cause unnecessary pressure or catch you out, as you progress through the appearances stages, not only will you have to demonstrate a higher level of Knowledge but the precision and fluency of your answers will be expected to improve.

## 6. Appearances Marking System

- 6.1 The same marking system is used for Stages 3, 4 and 5.
- 6.2 There will be a maximum of 10 marks available for each question giving a potential maximum of 40 for the examination.
- 6.3 You will be asked to identify the start and finish points of a run. If you fail to identify the location of a point you will be asked an alternative but you will be deducted one mark for each point you fail to identify.
- 6.4 Once you have successfully located the start and finish points you will be asked to describe the route between the two. Your answer will be scored out of the number of marks remaining from the original 10. You will lose marks if, for example:
- you give incorrect street names;
  - the route is not the most direct available;
  - you incorrectly describe how to leave or set down at a point;
  - the route involves making banned turns or U-turns, contravening 'no entry' signs or travelling the wrong way down one-way streets;
  - you show such hesitancy in delivering the answer that may indicate that you cannot recall the route quickly enough to be able to drive confidently and safely in London traffic.
- 6.5 Therefore, if you correctly identify the first start and finish points you are asked and call the run perfectly you will be awarded 10 marks for that question. Conversely, if you fail to identify 10 points the run cannot be attempted and no marks can be awarded.
- 6.6 If when calling a run you make an illegal manoeuvre e.g. calling a banned turn, contravening a one-way street, etc. then you will receive no marks for that question.
- 6.7 The total number of marks scored over the four questions is translated into an overall grade for the appearance. Five grades can be awarded. The grades are then translated into points, which, when accumulated in each stage of appearances, will allow you to progress to the next stage.

|       |          |           |                |
|-------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| 40    | Grade AA | 12 points | Exceptional    |
| 36-39 | Grade A  | 6 points  | Very good      |
| 32-35 | Grade B  | 4 points  | Good           |
| 24-31 | Grade C  | 3 points  | Satisfactory   |
| <24   | Grade D  | 0 points  | Unsatisfactory |

- 6.8 The total number of points needed to progress to the next stage is 12. If you accumulate four D grades on any stage you have to re-start the stage, regardless of the number of points already gained in that stage. If on the second attempt at the stage you again accumulate four D grades you will go back to the beginning of the previous stage (see diagram at Appendix A).
- 6.9 The examiners are allowed to award one U (for untested) grade per stage, this can take account of an appearance that is not completed because of extenuating circumstances (illness, etc.), treating each case on merit. A U grade does not affect your progress through the stage.

## **7. Stage 3 Appearances - Basic Points and Runs**

- 7.1 The questions in your first appearance at Stage 3 will be based on routes listed in Annex B of the Blue Book, although the start and finish points of some questions will be varied to include places of interest either on the route or within the  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius of either end. In subsequent appearances the questions may not necessarily be based on routes listed in the Blue Book.
- 7.2 You will be asked prominent points at these appearances such as major hotels, railway stations, magistrates' and Crown courts, etc.
- 7.3 If you realise that you have made a mistake when calling a run, you will be allowed to go back and correct any errors without being penalised for doping so.
- 7.4 When you have gained 12 points you will progress to Stage 4.
- 7.5 Stage 3 appearances are approximately 56 days apart

## **8. Stage 4 Appearances - Intermediate Points and Runs**

- 8.1 The start and finish points specified will again be places of interest on or within the  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius of either end of Blue Book routes, but both points of any one question will not be from the same Blue Book route. These questions are designed to allow you to show that you can link and combine Blue Book routes, enabling you to prove you can cope with more complex routes.
- 8.2 At this stage you will not be permitted to correct errors when calling a run.
- 8.3 When you have gained 12 points you will progress to Stage 5.
- 8.4 Stage 4 appearances are approximately 28 days apart

## **9. Stage 5 Appearances - Advanced Points and Runs**

- 9.1 This is the final one-to-one examination stage covering the central six-mile radius area or your chosen sector. The questions will no longer be linked to the routes at Annex B of the Blue Book and the examiner will ask questions that allow you to demonstrate that you have the necessary knowledge to take a passenger to any location in your licence area.

- 9.2 At this stage you will have to prove that your Knowledge is up to date and topical e.g. awareness of new tourist attractions, current theatre productions, changes in hotel names, high profile temporary events such as the Chelsea Flower Show, Christmas ice rinks, etc.
- 9.3 At this stage, Suburban applicants may be asked questions about major locations in the adjoining sectors. This will be limited to large points such as transport hubs, five-star hotels, sports venues, hospitals, etc.
- 9.4 On gaining the required 12 points you will progress to Stage 6.
- 9.5 Stage 5 appearances are approximately 21 days apart.

## **10. Stage 6 Appearance - Suburban/Inner London Examination**

- 10.1 This stage is a single one-to-one examination held approximately six weeks after your final Stage 5 appearance.
- 10.2 All London applicants will be required show that they have a good working knowledge of suburban London. This is achieved by learning the 25 suburban routes listed in Annex C of the Blue Book prior to the Stage 6 examination. Of these routes, 21 radiate from the edge of the six-mile radius to the outskirts of Greater London and four from London Heathrow Airport. In the examination you will be asked six questions based on these routes.
- 10.3 Suburban applicants will be required to show that they have a good working knowledge of central London and the questions are based on a list, issued at the end of Stage 5. The examination will test that you have a detailed knowledge of routes from your sector into central London and know the location of significant points of interest (e.g. hospitals, tourist attractions, theatres, etc.). You must also know the way from your sector to London Heathrow and London City Airports.
- 10.4 If you are unsuccessful you can attend for re-examination after an interval of approximately two weeks.

## **11. Stage 7 – Licence application and Pre-licensing Talk**

- 11.1 When you have passed the Stage 6 examination (and as long as you have met all the other requirements for licensing i.e. character, medical checks, taxi driving test) you can make the final application for the issue of your licence. You will need to show us your driving licence and pay the fee for the issue of a taxi driver's licence. You can find the current fee on the TfL website.
- 11.2 You will then join a group of other successful candidates to receive advice about your responsibilities as a taxi driver from a Knowledge of London Examiner.
- 11.3 Your badge and licence will be sent to you separately.



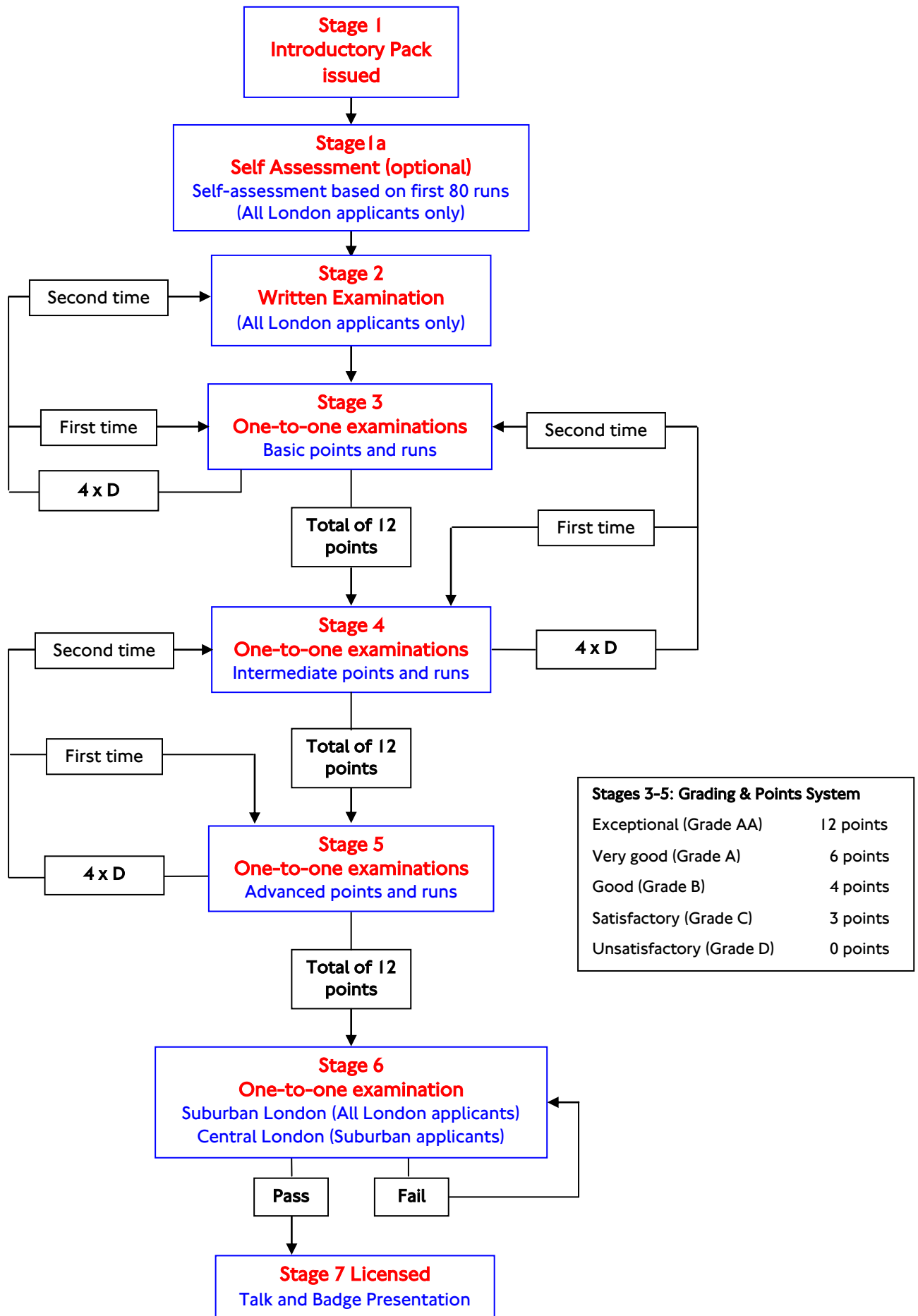
## **12. Accessibility**

The Knowledge of London examination system is able to accommodate any individual or special needs you may have through a variety of means e.g. a flexible appointments system, extended appearances if you have communication difficulties, accessible facilities for disabled candidates, etc. If you have any special needs that need to be taken into consideration during the examination process you should advise a member of Taxi and Private Hire staff.

## **13. Complaints and Appeals**

If at any time during the examination process you have a complaint or a query regarding your examinations you should contact the Knowledge of London Manager. All complaints and appeals are treated in confidence and will not have any adverse effect on your progress through the examination system.

## Appendix A – Knowledge of London Examination System Flowchart



## Appendix B – Written Examination Flowchart

