

[Regulating buses](#) [1]

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Our Senior Fellow in Transport, Professor John Hibbs OBE, alerts me to a new extension of regulation in the bus industry. The Certificate of Professional Competence is already a requirement for any business engaged in public road passenger transport, but from September it will be made a requirement for drivers too.

At a cost of £240, new drivers will be required to take a four-hour theory test, even though that will cover the NVQ that many companies already demand of their drivers, and naturally (since this regulation emanates from Brussels) it will cover not just safety but subjects such as 'customer care', 'transport in the economic context' and 'role in the company'. Existing drivers will have to undergo 'periodic training', involving 35 hours attendance to meet the same criteria.

Well, I love the idea that my bus driver should be trained to drive safely, but this seems to be over-egging it. It won't improve on what responsible operators already do. What it will do is load the industry with extra costs, which the large groups will be able to bear but smaller operators will not be. So new competition will be thwarted, and today's legions of perfectly well qualified part-time drivers will find themselves out of work because their hours don't justify all the cost and training. The impact will be most severe for the small firms, usually personal or family businesses, that today provide private hire and contract services of various kinds, who (thanks to current fuel prices and of course taxes, work on tight margins already.

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