



Understanding Perceptions of the Transport Planning Professional Qualification

A report to the TPP Professional Standards Committee

by

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from a survey of transport planners conducted in March 2012, which set out to discover how wider uptake of the Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification could be encouraged. The survey revealed that:

- The majority (95 per cent) of respondents were aware of the TPP qualification, but only a minority (one third) of respondents reported a definite intention to apply for the TPP qualification.
- Younger professionals (aged under 30) were more likely to express an intention to apply for the qualification than older professionals. This could suggest that over the longer term, the TPP qualification will gradually diffuse across the profession as successive generations join and move through their careers.
- However, employer support – an important means of encouraging applications - is not currently widespread. For example, ‘mentoring’ - the most frequently cited employer support measure - was only reportedly available to 36 per cent of the full sample.
- In relation to this, the survey established that professionals aged 51 and over were the most likely to say that they do not intend to apply for the qualification – evidence to suggest that senior professionals do not necessarily value the TPP qualification and are consequently not advocating it to more junior staff.
- In line with expectations, a positive intention to apply was found to be associated with also perceiving personal benefits of the TPP qualification. However, the survey findings suggest that there is currently some uncertainty surrounding the benefits - e.g. whether there is adequate professional recognition of the qualification or whether individuals feel they will be sufficiently rewarded following the acquisition of the qualification. This suggests that further evidence is required to clearly demonstrate the personal benefits of achieving the TPP qualification.
- Some respondents reported that the competency requirements appear inflexible and unduly challenging. In particular at present there appears to be no suitable route ways for specialists such as transport modellers.
- The guidance notes are also not positively perceived, potentially exacerbating the perception that the competency requirements are inflexible and challenging to meet. Less than half of respondents (44 per cent) rated the notes as ‘Helpful and informative’.

Based on these findings, the report concludes with the following four recommendations (presented in order of priority) concerning how wider uptake of the TPP qualification could be encouraged.

Recommendation one: Establish a mechanism through which senior professionals can be regularly contacted by those responsible for the TPP qualification. At this early stage in the establishment of the TPP qualification, it is crucial that senior professionals take ownership of the TPP so that they are willing and capable of acting as mentors to more junior staff. Ensure that guidance on mentoring provision is actively disseminated to senior professionals. Senior professionals should themselves be encouraged to become TPP qualified.

Recommendation two: Continue to widely publicise the TPP qualification both within and external to the profession (including amongst international networks) to improve its standing. Ensure that the *personal benefits* of the TPP qualification are clearly emphasised in marketing materials (predominantly the website), drawing on real case studies of individuals that have already successfully qualified.

Recommendation three: Explore the possibility of making the competency requirements more flexible. In particular, consideration should be given to offering route ways for specialists (modellers) and for those that are unable to gain experience in particular areas. Also ensure that the competency requirements are expressed in a way that makes them *appear* achievable to potential candidates (see recommendation four). The option of awarding TPP status in increments should also be considered so that the overall task does not appear burdensome.

Recommendation four: Review, in consultation with Transport Planners at differing career stages, the efficacy of provision of guidance and advice (including the possibility of simplifying the online guidelines). Consider establishing regional networks so that peers can meet at regular intervals to support each other through the application process.

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1 Introduction

The Transport Planning Professional qualification (TPP) was launched in May 2008 (Morris 2008) by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) and the Transport Planning Society (TPS). The aim of the qualification is “to provide professional recognition for transport planners, in the same way that Chartered Engineer recognises the highest level of engineering competence” (Transport Planning Professional 2012). In March 2012, The CIHT and TPS commissioned a survey of their members. The survey aimed to explore how the TPP qualification is currently perceived by transport planning professionals and to establish whether any measures could be introduced to encourage wider uptake of the qualification.

A preliminary analysis of the survey data was conducted and reported on by SRA (2012). This report deepens these earlier findings (through the use of further statistical tests and analysis of the qualitative data), and summarises the results of the survey in the five sections that follow:

- Section two provides a contextual overview of the requirements of the TPP qualification and the level of uptake to date.
- Section three summarises the characteristics of the survey respondents.
- Section four reports the survey results.
- Section five draws together the key findings in a discussion, with a specific focus on identifying barriers to the wider uptake of the TPP qualification.
- Section six offers recommendations that, based on the survey findings, are considered to have the potential to encourage wider uptake of the TPP qualification.

2 The transport planning professional qualification

The TPP qualification is achieved by demonstrating a level of competency in several technical areas and three management areas (Transport Planning Professional, 2011) as set out in Table 1. The first six of the technical competencies are mandatory, whilst candidates can select one or more of competencies A7-A10, depending on the specific requirements of their chosen route to TPP status (summarised in section 2.1). All three of the management competencies are mandatory.

Table 1: TPP competencies

Technical: Policies and Regulations	A1. The policy context A2. Laws and regulations
Technical: Tools and Techniques	A3. Data A4. Transport models and forecasting A5. Assessment A6. Stakeholder engagement
Technical: Design	A7. Developing strategic and master plans for transport A8. Applying the principles of transport systems design
Technical: Operations	A9. Travel Planning A10. The commercial and operational management of transport systems
Management:	B1, Professional leadership B2. Interpersonal skills B3. Commitment and professional conduct

2.1 Routes to TPP status

Candidates must be members of the CIHT or the TPS in order to apply for the TPP qualification. There are then four routes to achieving TPP status:

The standard route - this is available to those with an approved transport Masters degree or a first degree and a completed (approved) professional development scheme. These candidates are required to submit a Portfolio of Evidence before progressing onto a Professional Review interview.

The portfolio of technical knowledge route - this is available to those with a first degree, but with no Masters qualification or a completed professional development scheme. These candidates are first required to produce a Portfolio of Technical Knowledge, before moving on to prepare a Portfolio of Evidence followed by the Professional Review interview.

The technical report route - This is available to those without a first degree. These candidates are required to produce a Technical Report to demonstrate technical knowledge, before submitting the Portfolio of Evidence and progressing to a Professional Review interview.

The senior route - this is for professionals in a “senior management position within transport planning who have very extensive experience” (Transport Planning Professional, 2011: p.3). These candidates are required to submit an application to demonstrate their breadth of experience, which is then judged by three members of the TPP professional standards committee.

The TPP (2012) online guidance explains that early career transport planners “need at least five years’ experience in transport planning and to have been engaged on a variety of transport planning projects to demonstrate the breadth and depth of competence required to gain the qualification”.

2.2 Level of uptake of the TPP qualification

To date, 114 people have been awarded the TPP qualification. 63 people were awarded the qualification via the senior route (paper application only, no interview) and 51 via the professional review route.

To give context to these figures, as well as to the survey findings, it is important to recognise that the launch of the TPP qualification in 2008 coincided with the onset of an economic crisis that has yet to be resolved. The Transport Planning profession has undoubtedly been seriously affected by the crisis, with some estimating that there are now 30 to 40 per cent fewer transport planners working in the UK than there were in 2008 (Transport Planning Society, 2012). Given this turbulent backdrop, it has in recent years been challenging to keep abreast of the changing size and demographic composition of the profession. Consequently, it has not been possible through this study to interrogate and present useful contextual data surrounding the survey, such as: how many people currently work in UK Transport Planning and what their characteristics and qualifications are. This would be beneficial in order to understand whether the survey sample is truly representative of the wider profession. In the context of intention to pursue the TPP qualification it would be a reasonable assumption that the sample is not representative, since survey respondents have the distinction of having already taken the step of acquiring one or more professional memberships. Following on from the survey, it is also suggested that the CIHT and TPS should continue to regularly monitor: the number of professionals that have applied for the TPP qualification; what their characteristics are; and how many people have been successful.

3 Characteristics of the survey respondents

The survey took the form of an online questionnaire that was emailed to members of the CIHT, the TPS and the Royal Town Planning Institute in March 2012. 432 responses were received in total, representing approximately 10 per cent of those surveyed (SRA, 2012). The characteristics of the survey respondents are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of the survey respondents

		Number	Percent
Gender	Male	239	70
	Female	102	30
	Total	341	100
Age [mean years experience in transport planning]	Under 30	113 [5 yrs]	33
	30-40	149 [10 yrs]	44
	41-50	44 [17 yrs]	13
	51-64	29 [26 yrs]	9
	65+	7 [35 yrs]	1
	Total	342	100
Professional body	CIHT	207	60
	TPS	140	40
	CILT	79	23
	RTPI	31	13
	ICE	38	15
	RICS	1	0
	Other	36	10
	None	26	8
	Total	347	NA
No response	85	25	
Hold first degree	Currently studying	1	0
	Yes	311	90
	No	35	10
	Total	347	100
Hold Masters degree	Currently studying	14	4
	Yes	207	60
	No	126	36
	Total	347	100
Chartered membership	ICE	18	5
	RTPI	23	7
	CILT	59	17
	RICS	0	0
	Other	14	4
	None	247	71
	Total	347	NA
Employment status	Full time	303	87
	Part time	21	6
	Retired	5	1
	Self employed	11	3
	Unemployed	7	2
	Total	347	100

70 per cent of respondents were male, reflecting the current gender imbalance across the profession. 77 per cent of respondents were aged 40 or under. Nevertheless, those aged 40 or under reported an average of 7.2 years experience, indicating that they would be in a position to apply for the TPP qualification (i.e. given the need for at least five years experience). Over 90 per cent of respondents reported holding a first degree, with 57 per cent of respondents having graduated from either Geography or Engineering disciplines (Table 3). 60 per cent reported holding a Masters degree, mainly in transport planning and / or engineering (Table 4) again suggesting that two thirds of respondents were well placed to take advantage of the standard route to TPP status. Nearly 90 per cent of respondents reported being in full time employment.

Table 3: First Degrees

Subject	Frequency	Percent
Geography	127	37
Engineering	66	19
None	36	10
Other	23	7
Maths	20	6
Natural / environmental / computer sciences	17	5
Transport planning / Engineering	16	5
Economics / Business	15	4
Town / country planning	14	4
Social sciences / Politics / History	13	4
Total	347	100

Table 4: Masters Degrees

Subject	Frequency	Percent
None	140	40
Transport Planning	66	19
Transport Planning and Engineering	62	18
Other	29	8
Town and country planning	19	6
Engineering	16	5
Transport Engineering	15	4
Total	347	100

4 Survey results

The survey asked a range of closed (quantitative) questions concerning issues such as intention to apply, awareness of the TPP requirements, level of experience in each of the technical competencies and level of support from employers. This section of the report firstly presents the results of a *quantitative analysis* of responses to these questions. This included the extraction of descriptive statistics (frequencies and proportions) relating to each question. A deeper statistical analysis then focussed on understanding factors associated with responses to the question “Is it your *intention* to apply for the TPP qualification?” (with response options Yes, No and Unsure). Factors influencing intention to apply were identified as being crucial to understanding barriers to the wider uptake of the TPP qualification. Accordingly, where appropriate, cross tabulations have been employed to identify relationships between intention to apply and other survey variables (for instance age or level of experience). In these cases, the reported chi square tests of association indicate whether an apparent relationship between two factors is statistically significant (indicated by a p-value of less than 0.05) or not. The absence of statistical significance suggests that patterns apparent in a cross tabulation are likely to be attributable to random variation in the survey data rather than to an underlying relationship between the two variables.

The survey questionnaire concluded with an open response (qualitative) question which asked for additional comments on how uptake of the TPP qualification could be encouraged. The findings from a qualitative analysis of this data (a process of identifying common themes from the responses) are reported subsequently, in section 4.9.

4.1 Demand for the TPP qualification

It is positive to find that 95 per cent of respondents were aware of the TPP qualification, though it should be borne in mind that the questionnaire was sent to members of professional bodies. Awareness may be less prevalent amongst non-members – a potentially sizeable proportion of the profession. Just over a third of respondents reported an intention to apply for the TPP. Thus a majority of respondents (66%) were unsure whether they would ever apply for the qualification. Indeed, around one fifth (22 per cent) of respondents had no intention of applying for the TPP qualification (Table 5).

Table 5: ‘Is it your intention to apply for the TPP qualification?’

Intend to apply	Frequency	Percent n=365
No	80	22
Unsure	160	44
Yes	125	34
Total	365	100

With respect to submission time frames, the majority of respondents were either unsure about when they might apply, or expected to apply over the longer term (69 per cent), again suggesting a lack of certainty surrounding the necessity of the TPP qualification. Cross tabulating with intention to apply also demonstrated that having a definite intention to apply was associated with expecting to submit in the next 12 months ($\chi^2 = 94.423$, $df=4$, $p<0.000$).

Table 6: ‘When do you hope to be ready to submit your application?’

Submission time frame	Frequency	Percent n=267
Unsure	110	41
Longer term	73	27
Next year	51	19
Over the next six months	29	11
Immediately	4	2
Total	267	100

4.2 Factors associated with intention to apply

Cross tabulations were performed across a range of demographic and other variables in the survey to establish whether specific factors were associated with expressing an intention to apply or not to apply for the TPP qualification. The results of these tests are summarised in Table 7. It is notable that holding a first or Masters degree was *not* found to be associated with a positive intention to apply. This suggests that the four routes to TPP status adequately cater for professionals with differing academic backgrounds (though it should be noted that only 10 per cent of the sample had no first degree).

Table 7: Factors associated with intention to apply

Factor	Chi-square test	Observations
Age	$\chi^2 = 27.55$, df=6, p<0.000	Those under 30 were more likely to intend to apply. Those over 51 were more likely to have <u>no</u> intention to apply.
Gender	$\chi^2 = 10.02$, df=2, p=0.007	Males were slightly more inclined to have <u>no</u> intention to apply than females
Hold a first degree	$\chi^2 = 4.97$, df=4, p=0.291	No association between holding a first degree and intention to apply
Hold a Masters degree	$\chi^2 = 6.53$, df=4, p<0.163	No association between holding a Masters degree and intention to apply
Read the guidance notes	$\chi^2 = 32.810$, df=2, p<0.000	Having read the guidance notes is associated with an intention to apply
Applicable route	$\chi^2 = 17.67$, df=4, p=0.001	Being unsure about which route is applicable is associated with being unsure about whether to apply
Awareness of alternative routes	$\chi^2 = 12.722$, df=2, p=0.002	Not being aware of alternative routes is associated with being unsure about whether to apply. Certainty about alternative routes is associated with an intention to apply
Awareness of requirements	$\chi^2 = 27.23$, df=2, p<0.000	Not being aware of the requirements is associated with being unsure of whether to apply. Certainty about the requirements is associated with an intention to apply
Understanding competencies	$\chi^2 = 4.835$, df=4, p=0.305	No association between level of understanding of the competencies and intention to apply
CPD Record	$\chi^2 = 3.367$, df=2, p=0.186	No association between having an up to date CPD record and intention to apply
Personal Development Plan	$\chi^2 = 0.284$, df=2, p=0.868	No association between having an up to date PDP and intention to apply
Submission time frame	$\chi^2 = 94.42$, df=4 p<0.000	Having an intention to apply is associated with expecting to submit in the next 12 months. Whilst being unsure about applying is associated with being unsure about when an application might be submitted
Membership of a professional body	$\chi^2 = 7.434$, df=2 p=0.024	Not being a member of a professional body is associated with having <u>no</u> intention to apply
Chartered membership of a professional body	$\chi^2 = 34.47$, df=2 p<0.000	Those that already have chartered membership of a professional body were less likely to intend to apply

The headline findings from the cross tabulations are summarised in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Key factors associated with demand for the TPP qualification

Expressing an intention to apply was found to be associated with:

- Being female;
- Being aged under 30;
- Having read the guidance notes; and
- Being aware of the requirements of the TPP qualification.

Being unsure about whether to apply was found to be associated with:

- Being unsure about which route is applicable; and
- Not being aware of the requirements of the TPP.

Expressing no intention to apply was found to be associated with:

- Being aged 51 or over;
- Being male;
- Not being a member of a professional body*; and
- Already holding chartered membership with another professional body.
- Those with no intention to apply also tended to have been working in the profession for longer than those with an intention to apply – an average of 16 years (no intention to apply) compared to 9 years (intention to apply) (and this result is statistically significant $t=6.196, P<0.000$).

** It is not clear why, when the survey was distributed to members of professional bodies, some respondents indicated not being a member of a professional body.*

4.3 Employer support

Respondents were asked whether their employer offered any measures to support attainment of the TPP qualification. The results are summarised in Table 8. It is disappointing to find that mentoring, the most frequently cited measure, was only selected by 36 per cent of the full sample. It would appear that the majority of respondents do not currently receive active support from their employer. However, as the notes in the Table indicate, this may relate to the interpretation of the question – it seems likely that question responses reflect take up of support offered by employers as opposed to the level of support made available by employers.

Cross tabulations and chi-square tests were performed to establish whether provision of a support measure was associated with an intention to apply for the TPP qualification. In all

cases other than offering financial support, a statistically significant association was evident. Employer support was found to translate into an intention to apply for the TPP qualification, while conversely lack of employer support was found to translate into lack of an intention to apply.

Table 8: ‘Does your employer provide you with any of the following?’

Type of support	Frequency	Percent n=432	Chi-square test
Opportunities to gain the relevant experience	138	32	$\chi^2 = 6.510, df=1, p=0.011$
A mentor from within the company	97	36	$\chi^2 = 6.515, df=1, p=0.011$
Time to work with a mentor secured through CIHT/TPS	31	7	$\chi^2 = 5.191, df=1, p=0.023$
Enrolment on the TPS professional development scheme	48	11	$\chi^2 = 6.931, df=1, p=0.008$
Enrolment on another formal training programme	44	10	$\chi^2 = 2.790, df=1, p=0.095$
Financial support	78	18	$\chi^2 = 0.192, df=1, p=0.661$
None of the above	58	13	$\chi^2 = 3.525, df=1, p=0.060$
NA as I am self employed	12	3	$\chi^2 = 2.099, df=1, p=0.147$
<p>Notes:</p> <p>This table presents percentages as a proportion of the full sample (n=432), but it is important to note that it is not possible to distinguish deliberate non response from a missing response. 269 respondents actively answered this question; 163 respondents offered no response; 58 respondents actively selected ‘none of the above’.</p> <p>It is important to note that the question wording appears to be asking whether the respondent personally benefits from different types of support as opposed to whether or not the employer makes available such types of support to staff.</p>			

4.4 Professional experience

Respondents were asked to rate their level of experience in eight of the 10 TPP technical competencies. In all of the core competencies over 70 per cent of respondents (to the question, n~350) reported having at least some experience (Figure 1), demonstrating that many respondents are in a position to begin developing an application for the TPP qualification. Few respondents reported having experience in commercial and operational management.

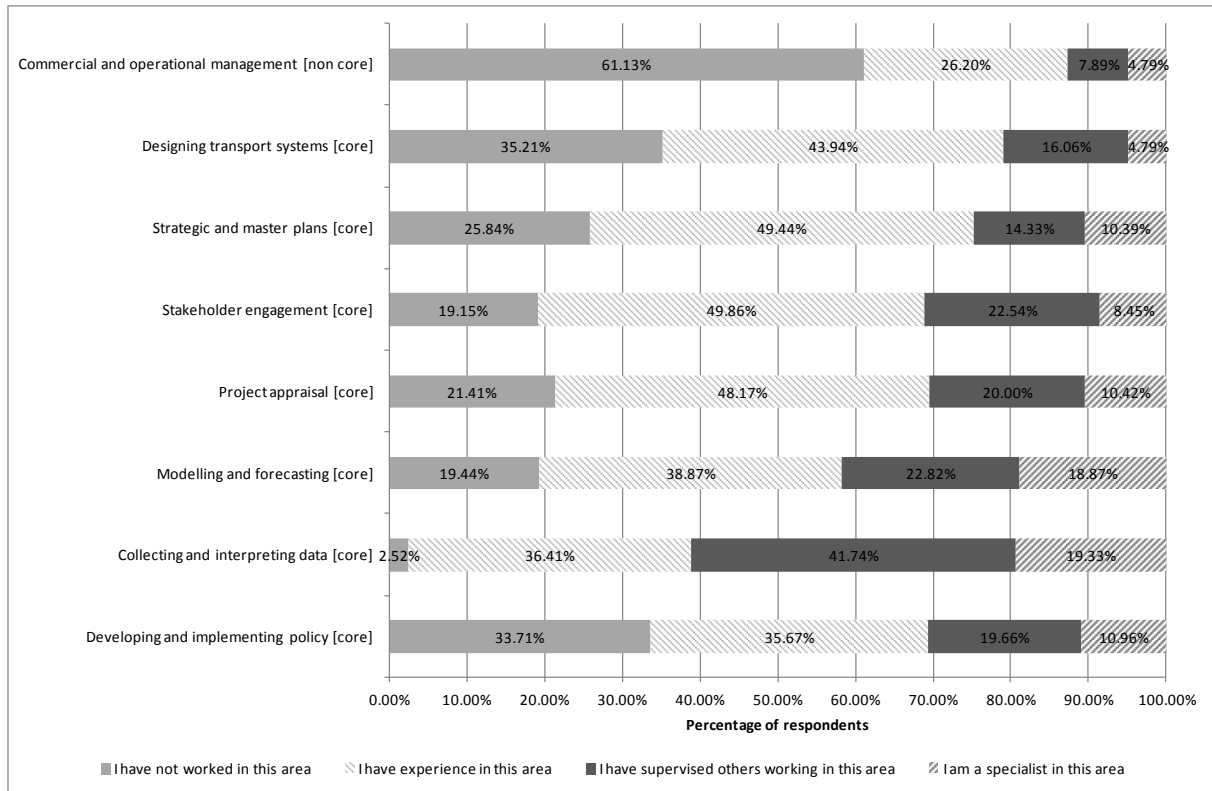


Figure 1: Professional experience

Table 9: Professional experience and intention to apply

Competency	Chi-square test	Association with intention to apply
Developing and implementing policy	$\chi^2 = 7.193$, df=6, p=0.303	No association
Collecting and interpreting data	$\chi^2 = 4.902$, df=6, p=0.556	No association
Modelling and forecasting	$\chi^2 = 14.493$, df=6, p=0.025	Being a specialist modeller is associated with no intention to apply. Having no modelling experience is associated with being unsure about applying.
Project appraisal	$\chi^2 = 17.905$, df=6, p=0.006	Being a specialist is associated with no intention to apply. Having no experience is associated with being unsure about applying.
Stakeholder engagement	$\chi^2 = 11.114$, df=6, p=0.085	No association
Developing strategic and master plans	$\chi^2 = 10.410$, df=6, p=0.108	No association
Designing transport systems	$\chi^2 = 14.577$, df=6, p=0.024	Having no experience is associated with being unsure about whether to apply
Commercial and operational management	$\chi^2 = 18.295$, df=6, p=0.006	Having experience in this area is associated with having no intention to apply

Cross tabulations and chi-square tests were performed to establish whether level of experience in each competency was associated with an intention to apply for the TPP. The results are summarised in Table 9. This analysis suggests that those specialising in transport modelling, project appraisal and operational management are not attracted to the TPP qualification in its current form, which requires all round skills. Conversely, not having experience in modelling and appraisal is associated with a lack of intention to apply. Indeed in open response questions, respondents suggested that the TPP competency requirements are too broad, in not offering a route for specialists or for those that are unlikely to gain hands on experience in modelling. These qualitative findings are discussed further in section 4.9.

4.5 Perceived benefits of the portfolio

Respondents were asked whether they felt compiling a portfolio of experience would produce wider benefits in addition to working towards achieving TPP status. Over half of respondents (n=358) agreed that the portfolio would provide an increased personal awareness of achievements and a better basis for discussing professional development. Better personal motivation was the least frequently cited benefit (Figure 2).

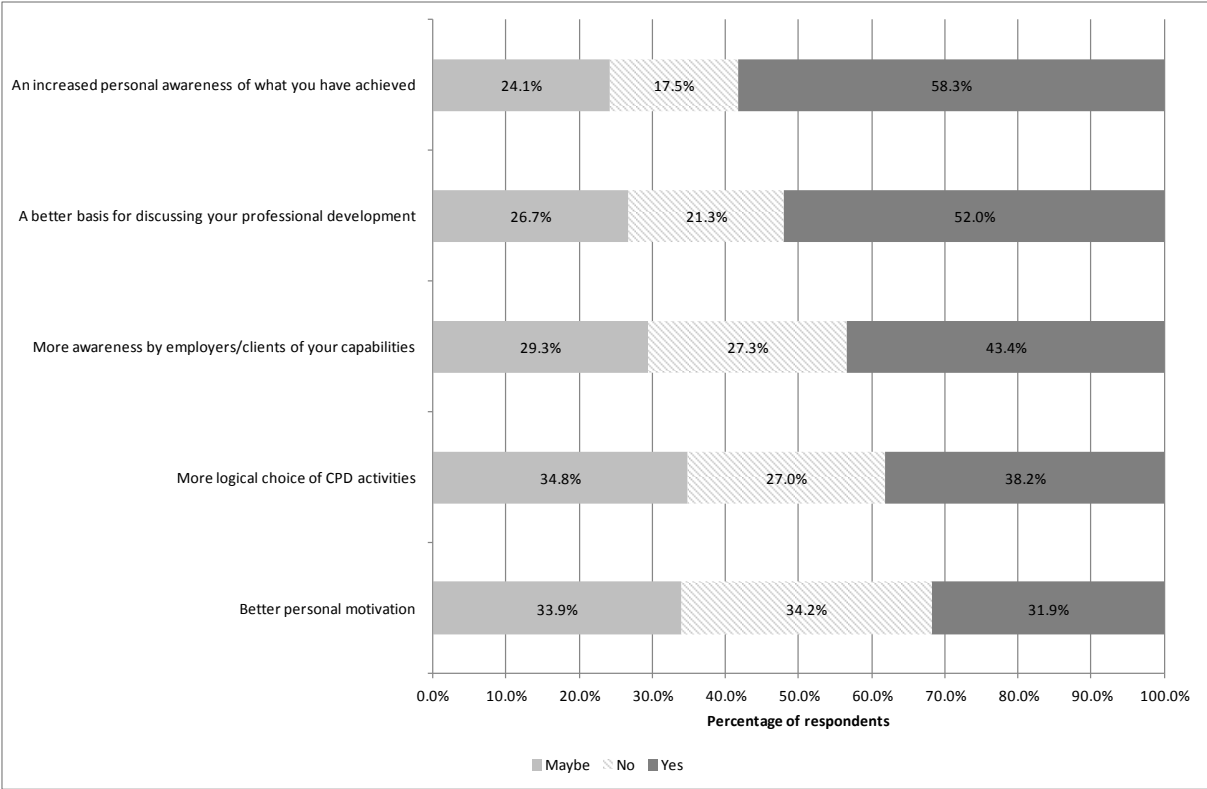


Figure 2: ‘Do you think the portfolio will provide any of the following benefits?’

Cross tabulations and chi square tests of association also demonstrated that recognition of the benefits of producing a portfolio was associated with an intention to apply for the TPP qualification (Table 10). It is not possible to establish the direction of the association however i.e. whether perceiving benefits of the portfolio leads to an intention to apply or whether an intention to apply leads to perceiving benefits of the portfolio (it is likely to be a two way association).

Table 10: Portfolio benefits and intention to apply

Benefit	Chi-square test	Association with intention to apply
Better personal motivation	$\chi^2 = 40.401, df=4, p<0.000$	Those with an intention to apply more likely to agree. Those with no intention to apply more likely to disagree
More logical choice of CPD activities	$\chi^2 = 28.491, df=4, p<0.000$	Those with an intention to apply more likely to agree. Those with no intention to apply more likely to disagree
More awareness by employers of your capabilities	$\chi^2 = 14.667, df=4, p=0.005$	Those with an intention to apply more likely to agree. Those with no intention to apply more likely to disagree
Basis for discussion professional development	$\chi^2 = 32.693, df=4, p<0.000$	Those with an intention to apply more likely to agree. Those with no intention to apply more likely to disagree
Personal awareness of achievements	$\chi^2 = 28.555, df=4, p<0.000$	Those with an intention to apply more likely to agree. Those with no intention to apply more likely to disagree

4.6 Perceived benefits of the TPP

There was conflicting evidence concerning the perceived benefits of the TPP qualification. On the one hand responses to the closed question “do you feel that gaining the TPP qualification will offer you any of the following benefits?” suggested wide recognition of certain benefits - 72 per cent of respondents agreed that the TPP would enhance professional status, while 58 per cent of respondents felt it would potentially improve opportunities when applying for a new job. (It should be borne in mind that the phrasing of a closed question such as this, in which a list of pre-defined benefits is presented to participants, could lead to a higher proportion of positive responses). Similarly in some open responses, respondents noted other benefits including a one off bonus payment, improved job security and improved confidence. However other respondents explained that they were **unsure** of the benefits, or the benefits were **not yet proven or professionally accepted**

compared to other professional qualifications such as Chartered Engineer. These qualitative findings are discussed in further detail in section 4.9. In line with expectations, cross tabulations clearly revealed an association between perceiving benefits of the TPP and a positive intention to apply i.e. those with an intention to apply were more likely to positively recognise benefits of the TPP.

Table 11: ‘Do you feel that gaining the TPP qualification will offer you any of the following benefits?’

Benefits	Frequency (n=268)	Percent	Chi-square test
Enhanced professional status	192	72	$\chi^2 = 20.40, df=1, p<0.000$
Improved opportunities when applying for a new job	155	58	$\chi^2 = 5.499, df=1, p=0.019$
Improved chance of promotion	88	33	$\chi^2 = 5.45, df=1, p=0.020$
Increase in salary	42	16	$\chi^2 = 5.39, df=1, p=0.020$
None	39	15	$\chi^2 = 7.28, df=1, p=0.007$
Other	13	5	NA

4.7 Deterrents to applying

80 respondents reported that they did not intend to apply for the TPP qualification. In answer to the closed response question “if you do not intend to apply for the TPP qualification, please specify why”, the most frequently cited (questionnaire defined) reasons for not intending to apply were (Table 12):

- I do not feel that the qualification would provide any benefits (e.g. promotion or pay increase); and
- I do not feel I need the qualification as I hold Chartered membership of another Institution.

This reinforces the finding that perception of benefits of the TPP is likely to improve uptake of the qualification. In open responses, ‘Other’ reasons given for not intending to apply included: being late on in their career, including approaching retirement; a perception that the TPP is not well recognised by employers, or an intention to achieve chartered status with another institution (mainly Chartered Engineer).

Table 12: ‘If you do not intend to apply for the TPP qualification, please specify why’:

Reason	Frequency	Percent n=79
I do not feel that the qualification would provide any benefits (e.g. promotion or pay increase)	35	44
I do not feel I need the qualification as I hold Chartered membership of another Institution	35	44
Other reasons	33	42
I do not consider the qualification to be relevant to my future career path	23	29
I do not feel able to commit enough personal time to prepare and submit an application	18	23
I do not feel that I am able to gain the necessary range of skills in my current job	15	19
I am a specialist (e.g. modeller) and do not want to gain the necessary range of skills	13	17
I found the requirements of the qualification too complicated	12	15
I cannot afford the costs involved	11	14
I would not receive support from my employer	9	11
Notes: 79 respondents answered this question		

All survey respondents were asked "are any of the following (questionnaire defined responses) deterring you from applying?". In this regard, the most frequently cited deterrents were (Table 13):

- I am not sure that the qualification would provide any benefits;
- I am not sure that I am able to commit enough personal time to prepare and submit an application; and
- I am not sure that I am able to gain the necessary range of skills in my current job.

In open responses, respondents identified a number of other deterrents including: **Currently studying towards a Masters degree** and wanting to complete that before considering whether to apply for the TPP. One respondent suggested that a good time to receive information on the TPP would be on completion of the Masters. The **entry requirements** and **inflexibility** in the competency requirements were deterrents for some. They expressed concern that they had a wealth of experience, but that it did not necessarily match the TPP requirements and this precluded application. Consistent with the analysis of competencies, lack of modelling experience was noted as an inappropriate barrier by several respondents (a theme that is returned to in section 4.9). Others felt that the effort involved in preparing a

portfolio was too great given their level of experience and qualifications. Lastly, some explained that **job insecurity** in the current economic climate meant that training opportunities were curtailed whilst others repeated a preference to pursue an **alternative professional qualification**, for instance Chartered Engineer.

Table 13: ‘Are any of the following deterring you from applying?’

Deterring you from applying	Frequency
I am not sure that the qualification would provide any benefits	81
I am not sure that I am able to commit enough personal time to prepare and submit an application	75
I am not sure that I am able to gain the necessary range of skills in my current job	70
I am not sure that the qualification is relevant to my future career path	48
The requirements of the qualification are too complicated	47
I am not sure that I need the qualification as I hold Chartered membership of another institution	33
I cannot afford the costs involved	33
Other	29
I would not receive support from my employer	27
I am a specialist (e.g. modeller) and do not want to gain the necessary range of skills	19
Notes: Percentages not computed as this question did not force an answer and it is impossible to distinguish between missing responses and deliberate non selection	

4.8 Encouraging applications

The survey questionnaire also probed whether a range of questionnaire-defined measures might facilitate the application process and the results are summarised in Table 14. The most popular measures included ‘having an opportunity for applications to be reviewed prior to submission’, ‘talking to professionals who have gained the qualification’ and ‘mentoring’ (Table 14).

Other possible measures suggested by respondents in open responses, included: **receiving advice from TPP** experts on requirements and exemptions, the time commitment involved, and how to gain the necessary experience; **simpler online documentation** to help understanding of requirements and **example completed application forms** to assist with submissions. **Employer support and rewards** was suggested by some, including tailored work programmes to enable staff to gain the necessary experience, financial incentives (including salary increases on completion), and **peer support groups**, including regional

support groups to assist peers in developing submissions. Others explained that further **evidence of the benefits** of the TPP should be provided to demonstrate how the TPP improves career prospects. In this regard, some respondents commented that the TPP requires **wider recognition across the profession**, while others suggested **simplified routeways** including for those without Masters qualifications, and for those mid career. Those reporting that nothing would encourage them to apply cited **time constraints** as a major reason. Others felt that they were lacking **experience**.

Table 14: Facilitating the application process

Measure	Encouraging applications (frequency)	Assisting with applications (frequency)	Understanding requirements (frequency)
An opportunity for your application to be reviewed by an experienced person prior to submission	76	155	60
Talking to someone who has gained the qualification	68	133	64
Ongoing support from a mentor	54	126	47
Discussing the requirements over the phone with the CIHT qualifications manager	51	105	40
Emailing TPS or CIHT for written help and advice	43	96	43
Other	24	26	13
No measures would assist me	19	23	6
An opportunity to practice your presentation skills	13	35	7
Notes: Percentages not computed as these question did not force an answer and it is impossible to distinguish between missing responses and deliberate non selection			

4.8.1 Quality of the guidance notes

253 respondents (65 per cent, n=388) had read the guidance notes. On the whole, the survey results would suggest that the guidance notes are not perceived positively. Less than half of respondents said that the guidance notes were helpful and informative and only 16 per cent of respondents felt that they were clear and concise (Table 15). In open responses, respondents suggested that the documents were too long and ‘wordy’. Others found it hard to ‘determine if I had enough experience’ and were unsure ‘how to get started’. Some noted that the examiner expectations are not clear and that these should be clarified with mentors.

Table 15: ‘How did you find the guidance notes?’

Guidance notes	Frequency n=244	Percent
Helpful and informative	108	44
Complicated and difficult to understand	93	38
Too many separate guidance documents	68	28
Clear and concise	38	16
Other	29	12
Notes: Percentages do not add to 100% as respondents could select more than one option		

4.9 Qualitative insights

120 respondents took the opportunity to complete the concluding open ended question which asked for additional comments on how to encourage people to apply for the TPP qualification. The following four key barriers to taking the TPP emerged from these qualitative responses.

Inflexibility of requirements: As noted previously, some respondents clearly felt that the requirements for achieving the TPP qualification were too broad and did not offer sufficient flexibility to cater for different, but nonetheless equally valid (in terms of level of professional competency) career paths. In this regard some local authority employees felt that the TPP qualification was better suited to those working in consultancies, as they were more likely to be exposed to the required range of project types. One female respondent commented that maternity leave could unduly hinder progress towards achieving the TPP. It was also suggested that other professional qualifications, including Chartered Engineer, were easier to achieve than the TPP qualification.

The need to have experience in modelling was noted as a barrier by some ‘generalist’ transport planners who felt that they were unlikely to gain experience in this area. On the other hand, specialist modellers felt that the TPP qualification offered no route way for them as they would never achieve the necessary experience in the other competencies. An issue identified by the more experienced transport planners was that they were now at a career stage for which gaining experience in new areas (such as modelling) was challenging, given that on the job training was no longer a cost effective use of their time. Indeed the current economic climate was recognised as having restricted training and CPD activities.

In terms of offering positive solutions to these issues, some commented that the TPP qualification could be awarded incrementally so that people are not overawed or put off by the overall requirements. Others queried whether the breadth of competencies was

necessary or whether certain exemptions could apply to those transferring from another professional qualification, including Chartered membership of the Institute for Logistics and Transport.

Professional recognition: There were repeated comments relating to the need to publicise the qualification and its worth more widely, both within and external to the profession (including across international networks). Respondents noted that they were unclear of the benefits and the extent to which employers or potential clients valued the qualification. A senior transport planner commented that he felt experience was more valuable to him than the qualification. On the other hand, a less experienced transport planner commented that a lack of qualified senior staff meant that the senior staff do not value it or necessarily advocate it amongst more junior staff. Others commented that their employer did not know about the qualification and consequently did not promote it to staff in the same way that they promote working towards Chartered Engineer. Lastly, there was recognition that there was yet to be a 'pressure' amongst peers to acquire the qualification as it is not yet widely held across the profession.

Time and cost constraints: Given the perceived lack of professional recognition of the qualification some commented that the potential benefits were not worthy of the time and effort required to put together an application. This feeling was heightened by the economic conditions as this had lessened time for CPD activities at work. Others specifically noted that the cost of applying put them off as this expense may not be met by their employer.

Guidance quality: Consistent with the quantitative findings, there were several suggestions that improved access to guidance in various forms could facilitate the application process. Some suggested that regional TPP representatives and meetings would be beneficial (similar to those provided by the ICE to support route ways to Chartered Engineering). Others felt that the online explanation of the qualification entry requirements and the application process should be simplified. Hard copy, clearly expressed information packs were also felt to be required. It was further recommended that case studies of different pathways would be beneficial and there was a suggestion that it would be useful to see "others' portfolios to gauge the nature of material and presentational format required".

5 Discussion

It is clearly challenging to establish a new professional qualification as it requires time for practitioners to first become aware of its availability, second for them to value its worth, before lastly making the decision to prepare and submit an application. As noted earlier, the

early establishment of the TPP qualification has undoubtedly been hindered by the serious economic crisis that coincided with its launch in 2008. Many employees (including senior staff) have faced redundancy or the prospect of redundancy, company budgets have been squeezed, and the ability of employees to gain new on the job experience and training has been more limited. Against this challenging backdrop, the survey has nevertheless revealed three additional structural barriers to the shorter term uptake of the qualification:

1. Recognition of the TPP amongst senior professionals

Whilst there is a high level of awareness of the TPP qualification amongst those surveyed, it is clear that there remains some uncertainty amongst the majority about whether to pursue the qualification. It is encouraging to find that early career transport planners are the most likely group to intend to apply for the TPP. This suggests that over the longer term, the TPP will gradually diffuse across the profession as successive generations join and move through their careers. On the other hand, it appears that mid and late career professionals are somewhat less motivated to acquire the qualification. This lack of appetite amongst more senior professionals has been identified as a potentially significant barrier to the wider uptake of the qualification in the shorter term. The survey results revealed that both employer support and personal recognition of the benefits of the TPP qualification are associated with a positive intention to apply. To achieve both factors first requires positive recognition of the qualification amongst *senior* professionals. It is they that hold the influence to advocate the qualification to junior staff, to act as their mentors and to set the expectation for the qualification to be held amongst applicants to new posts.

Indeed it is suggested that the effective diffusion of the qualification across the profession requires a virtuous circle as depicted in Figure 3. The virtuous circle begins with professional recognition of the TPP, which is catalysed by positive recognition and uptake of the qualification amongst senior staff. Professional recognition leads to an intention to apply. This in turn leads to a greater number of submitted applications, which consequently translate into a greater number of qualified professionals. As the number of qualified professionals increases, so does professional recognition of the TPP and the virtuous circle is perpetuated:

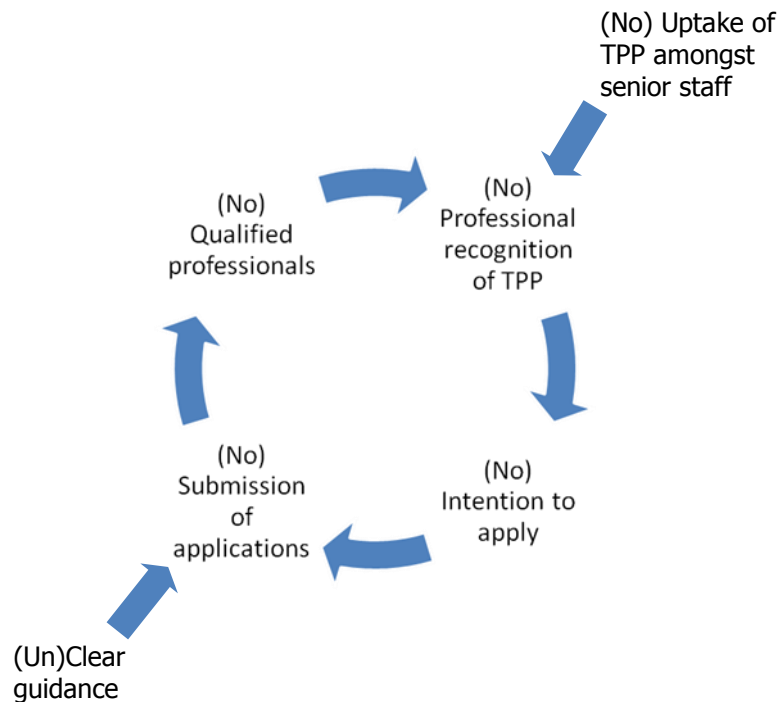


Figure 3: A virtuous (or vicious) circle

2. Perceived inflexible competency requirements

A second finding from the survey is that academic qualifications (or lack thereof) do not appear to be a barrier to intending to pursue the TPP qualification (though it is clear that the great majority of those surveyed hold at least a first degree). Thus the survey results suggest that the four route ways to TPP status appear to be offering sufficient flexibility. However the required breadth of experience across the technical competencies is *perceived* to be a barrier to application. Although those surveyed generally appeared to have experience that spanned the core technical competencies, the open responses suggested that the breadth of experience required appears to be challenging to meet and the task is overbearing for some. Indeed, it is perceived that the TPP in its current form offers no route way for specialists or for those that have limited or no opportunity to gain experience in a specific competency (typically modelling). This was identified as a particular problem for some mid and later career professionals as on the job training is no longer viable for them (again exacerbating the issue with lack of motivation amongst more senior staff).

3. Quality of the guidance

The survey results would suggest that the guidance (in its various forms) could be improved to assist potential applicants in understanding the requirements and application process. This is not suggested to be a fundamental barrier however, as if senior professionals are well

informed of and engaged with the process, then they will be able to effectively mentor junior colleagues through the process (regardless of weaknesses in the presentation of guidance). Suggestions for improving guidance included simplifying the online guidelines, providing case studies of the different routes and example application material, providing regional TPP contacts and holding regional events to support the application process.

5.1 Parallels with the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Lastly in this discussion, a potentially enlightening observation is that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB, Ajzen 1991), often cited in travel behaviour change policies, offers a useful framework for interpreting the headline findings (as depicted in Figure 4). With reference to the TPB, a positive intention to apply for the TPP qualification can be considered to emerge from three pre-conditions which must exist in parallel:

1. Behavioural attitude: An individual must acquire a positive attitude to the TPP qualification, through for instance feeling that they will personally benefit from achieving the TPP qualification.
2. Subjective norms: An individual must also believe that it is normal or expected for transport planners to pursue the TPP qualification (professional recognition).
3. Perceived behavioural control: An individual must lastly feel that they have the necessary skills and opportunities to achieve the requirements of the TPP qualification.

Thus the process of acquiring a positive intention to apply can be considered to occur in two stages. In stage one, positive behavioural attitudes and subjective norms are formed. Once these are established, in stage two, individuals seek information on the requirements and decide whether they are capable of meeting those requirements. If these two stages are passed then a positive intention to apply is formed. The provision of effective mentoring and readable guidelines then facilitates the process of applying.

From the survey results it would appear that the acquisition of positive behavioural attitudes and subjective norms towards the TPP qualification (stage one) are being hindered by three factors:

1. uncertainty surrounding the potential personal benefits of acquiring the TPP qualification;
2. a lack of positive recognition of the qualification amongst some senior professionals; and
3. difficulty in achieving a critical mass of qualified professionals as a precondition to establishing pursuit of the TPP qualification as the professional norm.

This would again suggest a need to continue to publicise the *personal* benefits of the TPP qualification and to encourage positive recognition of the qualification amongst senior professionals.

A lack of 'perceived behavioural control' (stage two) is evident through the finding that many respondents felt that the requirements were too broad or that they would find them challenging to meet. This could either be because the competency requirements are in fact too broad, or because the competency requirements are *perceived* to be too broad. Whilst it is not possible to say with certainty, it is likely that there is some combination of the two at play. And in this case, perceived behavioural control would be addressed by considering both the provision of alternative route ways to TPP status for specialists (e.g. transport modellers) and by ensuring that the TPP competencies are communicated to transport planners in a way that makes them appear achievable.

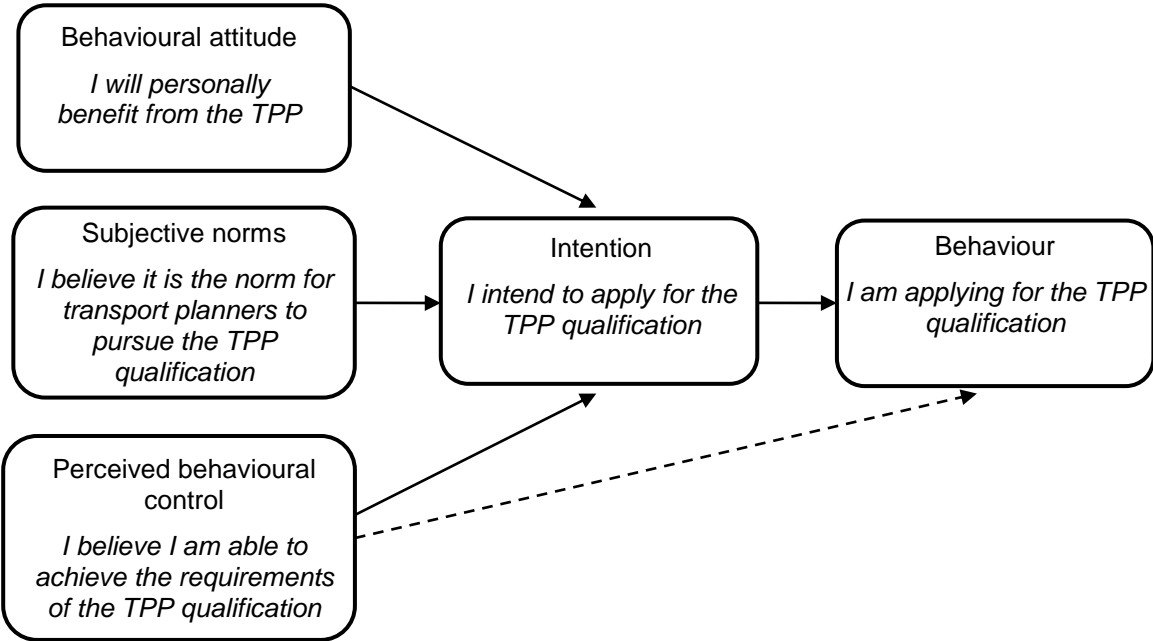


Figure 4: Intention to apply for the TPP and the Theory of Planned Behaviour

6 Recommendations

With these considerations in mind, the report now concludes with four recommendations, presented in order of priority, concerning how wider uptake of the TPP qualification could be encouraged:

Recommendation One: Engagement with senior and mid career professionals – At this stage in the establishment of the TPP qualification, it is clear that senior professionals have

an important role to play in advocating the qualification to their juniors and in mentoring them through the application process. Accordingly, senior professionals must be convinced of the need for the TPP qualification, if not for themselves, then for the profession itself.

It is natural that senior professionals are less likely than younger transport planners to derive personal benefits from the qualification, as they already have well established careers and may be approaching retirement. With this in mind, it might be that senior professionals need not acquire the TPP qualification as long as they are capable of mentoring more junior employees through the process. A crucial factor is ensuring that senior professionals *value* the TPP qualification's worth. Accordingly, in addition to advocating personal benefits of the TPP to senior professionals, a fruitful marketing message may be to suggest that they can (or ought to) contribute to the profession by assisting with the establishment of the TPP as part of their legacy.

Accordingly, if it is not already in place, a mechanism through which senior professionals can be easily contacted by those responsible for the TPP qualification should be established. Subsequently, senior professionals should be contacted regularly throughout the year to remind them of the importance of the qualification and their role in its establishment. Guidance on effective mentoring should also be actively disseminated to senior staff.

Recommendation Two: Targeted marketing – In addition to targeting senior professionals, ongoing efforts should be made to publicise the qualification and its benefits widely both within and external to the profession. This includes publicising the qualification amongst international professional networks to increase its profile and standing. One respondent commented that the profile of the qualification could be raised by providing regular updates in *Local Transport Today* (and / or other professional magazines).

It has been shown that positive recognition of the *personal* benefits of the TPP qualification is an important factor in establishing a positive intention to apply amongst individuals. Evidence based marketing material, including the website, should clearly demonstrate these personal benefits, drawing on real case studies of individuals (at differing early, mid and late career stages, and with differing career paths) who have successfully qualified. Such personal benefits might include: increased ability to compete for and retain employment during challenging economic periods (given that at this stage having the TPP qualification sets you aside from the majority of the profession), increased potential for promotions and pay rises, and increased professional confidence given recognition of the wide range of competencies demonstrated in achieving the TPP qualification.

Recommendation Three: Competency requirements – Some professionals clearly feel overawed by the competency requirements and in some cases perceive them to be

unachievable. A review should be undertaken to establish whether alternatives to the fixed competency requirements can be offered, without unduly diluting the rigour of the TPP qualification. In particular, this should include consideration of the provision of specialist routes (for modellers for instance), and alternative routes for generalist transport planners that may not be able to achieve on the job experience in specific competencies such as modelling. This is a particular problem for mid-career professionals who have less opportunity for on the job training.

In parallel with this, how the requirements are presented to candidates should also be reviewed (see Recommendation Four) to ensure that they are not being misconstrued as unduly difficult to achieve. For instance, it might be that candidates can fulfil the modelling requirement through educational attainment and demonstrating understanding of the discipline through having used modelling outputs in project work (without necessarily building and running the model themselves). It is also important that the expectations of candidates are carefully managed (through the various forms of guidance, including the website). Potential candidates should be made aware that the qualification is intentionally challenging, but is nevertheless an achievable and rewarding task that is approached by meeting smaller milestones over several years. In this respect, the option of awarding TPP status in increments should also be considered.

Recommendation Four: Guidance provision – Linking with Recommendation Three, the online guidance should be reviewed and where necessary rationalised into a single document and a simple set of web pages. This process should be undertaken in consultation with transport planners of differing levels of experience in order to reach an effective outcome. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of regional networks, representatives and events to support and encourage applicants through the process.

Lastly, an action plan for meeting these four recommendations is set out below:

Priority one: Establish a communication channel to encourage senior professionals to advocate the TPP qualification to more junior staff.

Priority two: Focus marketing materials (predominantly the website) to emphasise the specific and current personal benefits of achieving the TPP qualification.

Priority three: Review the flexibility of the competency requirements and how they are presented (in online guidelines) to ensure that they appear achievable to potential candidates.

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