



Comptroller and Auditor General
Special Report

Department of Transport

Driver Testing in the Road Safety Authority

November 2009

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This report was prepared on the basis of, and in reliance upon information, documentation and explanations obtained from the public bodies referred to in the report. The draft report was sent to the Road Safety Authority and the Department of Transport. Where appropriate, the comments received were incorporated in the final version of the report.

This report relates to the RSA only and any reference to any third party (named or otherwise) is incidental to the purposes of assessing the performance by the RSA of its administrative functions including its contract management systems. Consequently the report should not be read as constituting any comment, opinion or judgment by the Comptroller and Auditor General in respect of any third party.

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Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Driver Testing Service

I have, in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993 carried out an examination of the Driver Testing Service administered by the Road Safety Authority.

I hereby submit my report on the above examination for presentation to Dáil Éireann pursuant to Section 11 of the said Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Buckley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Buckley
Comptroller and Auditor General

17 November 2009

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Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings

Long waiting lists and extended waiting times have been a feature of the Driver Testing Service for a considerable period of time. The driver testing system was operated by the Department of Transport (the Department) between 2002 and 2006. In September 2006, following the establishment of the Road Safety Authority (RSA), responsibility for driver testing transferred to that agency, subject to an oversight role by the Department.

An external contractor was employed between 2006 and 2009 to augment the service delivered by directly employed testers.

The examination focused on

- management by the RSA of the contractual arrangements for the provision of outsourced tests and
- the performance of the Driver Testing Service and the systems put in place by the RSA to evaluate testing performance and facilitate oversight by the Department.

The examination extended only to the systems, practices and procedures employed by the RSA to manage the delivery of testing during the period under review and, consequently, did not extend to the internal procedures of the contractor.

Test Delivery

The RSA target is to deliver tests to all applicants within ten weeks of application. The timeliness of the provision of tests has radically improved. Although applications for driving tests doubled between 2005 and 2008, the RSA succeeded in dealing with the surge in applications as well as the historical backlogs. It increased the number of tests delivered through conducting a greater proportion of tests on overtime and by using an external contractor to deliver a large number of tests. By the end of 2008, the numbers on the waiting list and consequential waiting times had decreased significantly. By the end of 2008, average waiting time had fallen to 8.6 weeks and the longest a candidate had been waiting was eleven weeks at that time.

Contract Management

While outsourced test provision was a key element in delivering increased output, a supervision exercise conducted by the RSA at the beginning of 2007 to assess the quality of the outsourced tests identified potential problems with the outcome and marking of tests. In the case of over 2,000 contract tests supervised in the period between October 2007 and the end of 2008, the RSA supervisor and the contract tester disagreed on the test result in 7% of cases. Overall, the RSA invested significant additional resources by way of supervision and training of contract testers. Over the same period, but in a smaller number of supervised tests, where RSA supervisors supervised RSA testers there was no disagreement on test results.

A positive feature of the contract arrangement was the opportunity it offered to compare and, where appropriate, embrace practices and systems operated by the contractor. This has fed into the design of ICT systems which, when fully implemented at the end of 2009, should result in more efficient administrative processes and significantly improved management information.

Management Information

The development and reporting of a core set of indicators covering all aspects of performance would be an important step in facilitating the evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of the Driver Testing Service.

The RSA did not have a well-developed management information system. Measures and indicators such as the unit cost of tests delivered, the output of testers, customer satisfaction levels and results of supervised tests were not generated for the years 2007 and 2008. The introduction by the RSA of a new ICT system should facilitate the production of meaningful management information.

Driver Testing Output

The number of potential driving tests is a factor of the number of testers employed and the number of tests delivered by each tester on an annual basis. A target of 1,550 tests per tester per year had been adopted when the Driver Testing Service was operated by the Department (2002 to 2006). However, the RSA has not adopted a target for tester output and does not monitor this aspect of performance. Ongoing monitoring of output would help the RSA to better manage capacity and identify opportunities to increase efficiency. Figures compiled for the purpose of this examination showed that output per tester increased in 2006, coming close to the target of 1,550 tests per tester per year, but had fallen off in 2007 and 2008.

Consistency of Driver Testing

Analysis of pass rates in the course of the examination found that a high level of variation existed between the pass rates in those tests conducted by RSA testers compared with those in tests conducted by the contractor. The national average pass rate for drivers tested by RSA testers was 49% compared with a level of 62% for contract testers.

There was considerable variation in pass rates at test centres. Average pass rates by centre varied from 39% to 60% in relation to RSA test centres and from 51% to 77% for contractor centres. While variation between centres can arise as a result of the profile of candidates presenting for testing it is important that the RSA validates the pass rate occurring at centres. The RSA had not conducted such validation procedures.

There was also considerable variation between results determined by testers – which ranged from average pass rates of 23% to 69% in relation to tests conducted by RSA testers and from 37% to 83% for contract tests. 33 of the 50 RSA test centres had testers whose pass rate varied by more than 10% from the average pass rate at the centre. This compared with 40 of the 50 contractor's test centres. Review of individual tester results showed a pattern, where some testers consistently passed or failed significantly more candidates than other testers operating from the same centres.

Overall, this pattern of results has implications for the consistency of the tests conducted by the RSA.

The RSA could make better use of its existing management information and, by improving its analysis and performance reporting, use that information to identify differences in driver testing results. It would be particularly important to compare results across test routes and analyse the pattern of faults observed by individual testers, which could inform any follow up action required including increased supervision and training of individual testers.

The RSA policy on supervision of testers is that each RSA tester would have at least one supervised test per month and that at least 125 contract tests would be supervised in a month. The required level of supervision of RSA testers has not been achieved in recent years.

Driver tester training was low in 2007 as the RSA concentrated its efforts on tackling waiting lists and reducing waiting times. This was addressed towards the end of 2008 and early in 2009 when intensive refresher training was provided to all RSA driver testers.

Some recent measures taken by the RSA that have the potential to address the variations in pass rates include publication of standard procedures and guidelines in relation to the conduct of the test, publication of the up-to-date Rules of the Road and the introduction of an Approved Driving Instructor scheme.

Cost Recovery

The RSA does not monitor the unit cost of each test. The unit cost was estimated at €88 per test for the purpose of this examination.

The driving test fee remained unchanged at €38 per test from 1992 until April 2009 when it was increased to €75. In 2008, €42 million was incurred in conducting 470,000 tests. The revenue associated with the tests delivered was €18.2 million resulting in a requirement for significant Exchequer funding to subsidise the difference.

Ongoing monitoring of the unit cost of tests delivered would be useful in gauging overall efficiency and tracking the difference between the fee levels and cost, as well as providing a comparator with other jurisdictions and with the cost of outsourced tests.

Oversight

The Department has responsibility for oversight of the RSA. While the Road Safety Authority Act, 2006, provided for the development of a service agreement between the Department and the RSA, this has not been done.

Overall Conclusions

The examination concluded that the RSA succeeded in reducing waiting lists and waiting times for driving tests. However, divergence in pass rates generally, and the extent of variation between the pass levels awarded by individual testers and the average rates for the centres from which they operated, raised concerns in relation to the consistency of testing. The generation and use of relevant management information could help focus a continuous quality improvement drive.

Overall, in any such drive, the challenge is to maintain a service that conducts a professional independent testing of drivers in each individual case, while at the same time pursuing testing consistency.

Driver Testing Service

1 Introduction

1.1 The Driver Testing and Licensing Directorate of the Road Safety Authority (RSA) is responsible for the driver testing system. The RSA is a statutory organisation, established under the Road Safety Authority Act, 2006. The Act provides for an oversight role by the Department of Transport (the Department).

1.2 The Driver Testing Service had struggled to deliver the required service for a number of years. This was due to an ongoing backlog of tests with 140,000 people waiting for tests at the end of 2006. In October 2007 changes to the driver licensing system were introduced precluding holders of provisional licences¹ from driving unaccompanied. The impact of these changes on driving test demand was that there were 290,000 test applications in 2007 (110,000 of which were received between October and December 2007), and 360,000 applications in 2008. The level of demand for tests has reduced considerably with about 150,000 test applications expected in 2009.

1.3 The Driver Testing Service has a target that applicants will not be waiting longer than ten weeks to take the test. The RSA has taken a number of measures in order to achieve this target against a backdrop of existing waiting lists, increasing volumes of applications, industrial relations issues and its self-acknowledged need for structural reform. One of the main elements in the strategy to reduce waiting times was the engagement of an external contractor to conduct driving tests on its behalf. Prior to the service being transferred to the RSA, the Department had put in place a contract to deliver additional tests to tackle the backlog. In addition, since its inception in 2006, the RSA has continued to tackle the backlog with the use of outsourcing. The contractor delivered 27% of tests conducted in 2007 and 57% in 2008.

1.4 €24.4 million had been paid under the contract up to the end of December 2008 for the conduct of 302,381 driving tests². The contract was terminated on 10 April 2009 when the backlog of applications had been dealt with.

1.5 Up to April 2009, the test fee had remained unchanged since 1992. This resulted in a requirement for significant funding from the Exchequer to cover the costs of delivering the Driver Testing Service.

1.6 In 1999, a special report on an examination of the Driver Testing Service was published. The main audit concerns then identified were long waiting times for driving tests and wide variations in pass rates suggesting a lack of consistency in the application of the driving test.

Objective and Scope of the Examination

1.7 The aim of the examination was to review

- the adequacy of the RSA's contract development and management procedures in respect of the contracts for outsourced tests
- the overall efficiency of the Driver Testing Service and the systems put in place by the RSA to manage organisational performance and to facilitate oversight by the Department.

1 As part of a plan to develop a graduated licensing system, provisional licences have been replaced with learner permits and there will be different restrictions/conditions applying at different stages.

2 A further 15,000 tests were conducted by the contractor in 2009.

Methodology

1.8 The examination was carried out by staff of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. It included review of documentation and interviews with relevant personnel in the RSA and the Department.

1.9 The RSA had difficulty supplying some of the information required for this examination. As a result performance indicators in the following areas were calculated by the examination team by reference to primary data supplied by the RSA

- the total cost of the Driver Testing Service, the cost recovery rate and the unit cost per test
- the output of testers expressed as the number of tests delivered per tester per year
- the proportion of supervised tests (both RSA and contract) where the supervisor and the testers disagreed on some aspect of the test marking
- a breakdown of supervised contract tests where the supervisor and the testers disagreed on the final test result, i.e. whether the candidate should pass or fail.

Structure of the Report

1.10 Chapter 2 examines the RSA's arrangements for outsourced provision and evaluates the contract put in place, the subsequent monitoring of that contract by the RSA and the extent to which the RSA ensured that the required service was delivered. Chapter 3 examines the efficiency of the Driver Testing Service and looks at the adequacy of procedures to evaluate effectiveness. It also considers the oversight role of the Department.

2 Contract Management

2.1 Outsourcing offers agencies a practical way of increasing capacity temporarily in order to deal with peaks in demand. It also potentially allows for benchmarking of the directly delivered services. Under outsourcing arrangements effective delivery of the required services to quality standards requires an appropriate contract that is effectively managed. Effective contract development by agencies should identify the indicators, targets and methods that would be used to assess performance over the life of the contract. This chapter looks at the contracts that were concluded and the systems in place by the RSA to manage their provisions.

Contractual Arrangements

2.2 There were two contracts over the period 2006 to 2009. The first contract, signed in July 2006, was entered into by the Department and provided for the supply of a minimum of 40,000 tests at a cost of €77.26 per test. The second contract, signed in June 2007 by the RSA, was for a minimum of 100,000 tests at a cost of €80.26 per test³.

2.3 Under the two contracts, the contractor undertook to

- provide trained driver testers, appropriately supervised, to undertake driving tests
- design appropriate test routes to meet the required standard
- provide suitable premises
- provide statistics regarding the test standard being met, including pass and fail rates
- develop an ICT interface with the RSA's computer system
- provide services to specific customer service standards.

The contracts also provided for inspection and ongoing monitoring of the contractor's driving tests and a Contract Liaison Officer⁴ (liaison officer) was appointed to oversee the operation of the contract tests, as per the terms of the contract.

Quantity of Tests

2.4 At the RSA's request the contractor supplied in excess of the specified minimum number of tests required for each contract. Figure 2.1 sets out the numbers of tests carried out and the associated costs under both contracts.

3 There was a provision for an increase in the price per test, based on the Consumer Price Index, for tests in excess of 100,000.

4 The RSA Contract Liaison Officer was responsible for monitoring and reporting to the RSA management any issues affecting the standard of outsourced tests, liaising with the contractor on addressing those issues, approving contract test routes and signing off on the quality of tests conducted by the contractor prior to payment to the contractor.

Figure 2.1 Contractor – Test Output^a, 2006 to 2008

Year	Contract 1		Contract 2		Total	
	No. of Tests	Cost €m	No. of Tests	Cost €m	No. of Tests	Cost €m
2006 ^b	390	0.03	-	-	390	0.03
2007	45,610	3.52	16,749	1.34	62,359	4.86
2008	-	-	239,632	19.55	239,632	19.55
Total	46,000	3.55	256,381	20.89	302,381	24.44

Source: Road Safety Authority

Notes:

- a In the period 2006 to 2008, a further 40,000 individuals referred to the contractor were taken off the waiting list (having forfeited their fee) without having a test conducted because they failed to attend, cancelled their test three times or did not respond after three attempts to arrange a test. As per the contract provisions, the contractor did not invoice in relation to these individuals.
- b The contractor conducted about 7,600 tests in 2006 but the majority of these were not paid for until 2007.

Quality of Tests

2.5 Procedures to ensure a uniform test would include tester training, use of appropriate test routes and supervision of a sample of tests to ensure they were to the required standard.

2.6 During the first contract a subsidiary of a European national roads authority, which had been supplied with the RSA's standard training material, provided an initial six weeks training to contract testers. In relation to the second contract, this training, provided to newly recruited contract testers, was augmented by the RSA's in-house trainers.

2.7 Under both contracts the contractor was to design test routes. During the period of the first contract the liaison officer was involved in the appraisal of routes designed by the contractor. This officer concluded that, in the case of a number of contract test centres, the test routes did not meet the standards required by the RSA. The liaison officer provided the contractor with model routes for these centres and the contractor was to devise alternative routes based on those models. However, in some cases the contractor's test routes still did not, in the opinion of the liaison officer, comply with the RSA standards and the test routes were subsequently devised by the RSA. During the course of the second contract it was agreed between the RSA and the contractor that the RSA would examine and approve all test routes and any modifications to those routes proposed by the contractor. The RSA stated that this decision was taken in the interest of maintaining RSA and EU standards.

2.8 When tests are supervised, the supervisor accompanies the tester during tests and both complete a standard scoring sheet. At the end of the test the supervisor's and tester's assessments of the candidate's driving test are compared. There are three possible outcomes.

- The supervisor and the tester can disagree on whether the candidate has passed or failed the test.
- The supervisor and the tester agree on whether the candidate has passed or failed but disagree on how the test was marked.
- The tester and supervisor agree on all aspects of the test.

2.9 In order to assess the quality of the contractor's tests, the RSA liaison officer supervised a sample of 67 contract tests in December 2006 and January 2007 and in 12% of cases he disagreed with the tester on whether the candidate had passed or failed the test. The RSA policy in these circumstances, and in common with international standards, is that primacy is given to the decision of the tester. The RSA stated that there were no instances where the disagreement was of such significance that the supervisor overruled the tester's decision.

2.10 In addition, the liaison officer concluded that, in a number of cases where there was agreement in regard to the test result, the assessment methods used were not correct as they were not in accordance with the Driving Fault Marking Guidelines and Standard Procedures⁵ as developed by the Department and operated by the RSA. The extent of these instances was not quantified. However, the RSA believed that it was necessary to conduct a more widespread review given the results of the initial batch of contract tests supervised.

2.11 As a result, a benchmarking exercise was carried out in April and May 2007 where the RSA supervised contract testers on 259 tests in order to assess the application of test standards and fault assessment by contractor staff against that laid down in the guidelines and procedures.

- Of the 259 tests conducted under supervision, 18% of the test results awarded by the contract testers were at odds with the findings of the RSA supervisor. This meant that the contract tester in these cases would have awarded a pass when the supervisor's result was a fail and vice versa.
- In a number of other areas including, amongst others, the compulsory questions during the oral test and the technique for conducting technical checks, the supervisor concluded that the test was not conducted in accordance with the RSA guidelines and procedures.

2.12 Taking account of the results of the benchmarking exercise, the RSA decided to augment the initial training provided to the contract testers to specifically ensure that any potential challenge to the integrity of the test was minimised. To this end, a series of training courses⁶ were delivered by RSA trainers to the contract driver testing staff.

2.13 It was not envisaged in the contracts that the RSA would have a direct role in supervision of the contract. However, the results of the sample of tests supervised by the liaison officer and the subsequent benchmarking exercise resulted in the RSA having a significant role in supervision of the contract. Between October 2007 and the end of 2008 2.5 supervisors were deployed on the supervision of contract tests. During that time the RSA supervised in excess of 2,000 contract tests. The supervisor and the tester disagreed in relation to the test outcome in 7% of those tests.

2.14 Approval of invoices for payment required confirmation of the quantity and quality of tests being invoiced. The liaison officer provided assurance in relation to the quality of tests. No deductions were made on quality grounds. The RSA informed me that, in the event that there were concerns, the liaison officer would obtain commitment from the contractor that those concerns would be addressed in the future conduct of tests and would follow up on the particular issues to ensure the contractor was taking corrective action. This would include adherence to the RSA's guidelines and procedures and the use of an appropriate standard and mix of test routes. The RSA has stated that disagreed decisions and assessments are a factor in driver testing internationally and that it is satisfied, given the level of supervision and audit it has undertaken, with the contractor system.

5 Manuals devised by the Driver Testing Service setting out the methods to be used to assess a candidate's driving ability.

6 1,049 man-days were applied by the RSA on this work.

Other Contract Provisions

2.15 Under the two contracts that operated between July 2006 and April 2009 the contractor undertook to have suitable test centres, develop an ICT interface with the RSA's computer system, design appropriate test routes and implement specified customer service measures.

Test Centre Standards

2.16 In relation to the provision of test centres the contracts specified minimum requirements. A benchmarking review conducted by the RSA during April and May 2007 assessed the adequacy of the contractor's facilities, in conjunction with the review of the quality of tests conducted. Problems were identified with facilities in some of the contractor's driving test centres. The review concluded that an independent assessment of the facilities would be necessary with recommendations sought for what should be the basic minimum standard to be provided.

2.17 The RSA stated that the driving test facilities were periodically inspected in conjunction with inspections of the National Car Test (NCT) centres, where many of the driving test centres were housed. Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP (PWC) were contracted to carry out the NCT centre inspections.

2.18 A target satisfaction rate of 90% had been set in relation to NCT centres. The 2007 Annual Review presented the results of the premises inspections conducted. It showed an overall rating of 80% in the latter half of 2007. At that time the contractor was in the process of refurbishing seven of its centres and in the final quarter of 2008 the rating had increased to 89%.

Computer Systems

2.19 The contracts stipulated that the contractor would develop an appropriate interface with the RSA Driver Testing ICT system to facilitate the recording of information relating to the scheduling and outcome of contracted tests on the RSA system.

2.20 While the extent of the interface was not defined in the contracts, the tender submission limited this clause to the transfer of batches of information electronically between the RSA and the contractor, and the contractor fulfilled these requirements.

2.21 The antiquated nature of the RSA ICT system did not allow for the establishment of an effective interface with the contractor's ICT system. The RSA dealt with this problem in two ways.

- During the second contract the RSA had a dedicated link to the contractor's system allowing access to the status of applicants transferred to the contractor.
- An external IT consultant was employed to convert data from the contractor's system for subsequent upload to the RSA's system. The RSA stated that this upload required 18 consultancy days per annum and the cost was minimal.

2.22 The RSA stated that notwithstanding this, the ICT interface was adequate for the implementation of the contract because it had access to the contractor's scheduling system, was in a position to track a candidate's status and deal with the customer service issues that arose.

2.23 The inadequacy of the RSA ICT system also resulted in additional administration costs for the RSA in selecting candidates suitable⁷ for testing by the contractor. This required manual examination of the profile of candidates on the waiting list. From 2007, a team comprising five whole time staff were assigned to searching the RSA system for suitable candidates for outsourcing. The direct salary cost of this outsourcing team was €188,300 in 2008.

Customer Service

2.24 The contracts specified customer service measures in the area of complaint handling and timeliness of response to telephone, written and e-mail queries from customers. The RSA did not monitor contract performance in the area of customer service.

2.25 The RSA acknowledge that there was no formal review of complaint handling but believe that this was mitigated by the constant communication with the contractor in regard to customer queries and complaints. It stated that the RSA's primary focus in managing the contract was to ensure the integrity of the test and maximise the volume of tests and the value for the public purse.

Overall Service Delivered

2.26 The contractor delivered the number of tests required by the RSA. Early in the contract period, there were concerns in relation to the quality of the test routes used and the adequacy of training of contract testers. There was also a high, albeit declining, level of divergence between RSA supervisors and contract testers in relation to test results and overall test marking. As a result of these concerns, the RSA had significant involvement in training and supervision of contract testers, which was not envisaged in the contract. The RSA paid all contractor invoices in full, without penalty deductions.

RSA Views

2.27 The RSA stated that it was satisfied with the monitoring arrangements for the contract, which involved

- daily and weekly updates on activity with weekly forum meetings to address the work programme and issues arising and
- sampling of output using statistical selection procedures.

2.28 The RSA stated that there were weekly meetings between senior management of the RSA and the contractor dealing with issues arising on all aspects of the contract and service delivery. It is of the view that this provided for high levels of proactive monitoring and prompt resolution of difficulties.

2.29 The RSA added that the test standard was also set out in the training programme. In addition, the RSA liaison officer signed off on test quality on the basis of the results of contract tests supervised.

2.30 In relation to test routes, the RSA stated that the requirements were specified in the contract and the training programme given to each contract tester and were subject to approval by the RSA.

2.31 The RSA is of the view that the ICT interface arrangements were developed to allow files to issue electronically to the contractor and that any limitations regarding ICT were a direct result of the antiquated system inherited by the RSA from the Department in September 2006.

⁷ Applicants waiting longest and without a history of test failure were deemed most appropriate for testing by the contractor.

2.32 The RSA was of the view that additional supervision resulting in additional training, coupled with the limitations of the RSA ICT system, placed significant costs on the contractor who did not seek to recoup them from the RSA. The RSA was of the view that there were no significant issues arising with the service provided, and that the regular hands-on management of the contract by the RSA prevented the accumulation of issues and a possible dispute type situation with inevitable transaction costs.

2.33 The RSA stated that when it took over the Driver Testing Service in September 2006, a contract was already in place for the provision of outsourced tests. This contract had been put in place by the Department. In April 2007, the RSA conducted its first audit and put in place a number of actions to address issues identified. Given the nature of media coverage and political comment on the Driver Testing Service, the RSA felt it was prudent and appropriate to provide additional oversight and training, given the need to ensure the integrity and creditability of Driver Testing not just within Ireland, but also amongst other countries with which Ireland has a mutual recognition arrangement.

Learning Transfer

2.34 The RSA stated that as a result of learning in the course of outsourcing it had modified its own processes and procedures. The learning transfer related to changes in administrative processes in the areas of communication with test candidates and improvements in information systems.

2.35 Communication with test candidates has been improved through the implementation of a new call answering system and increased use of e-mail and text messaging.

2.36 The contracting experience also helped inform the RSA on the specification for the new Driver Testing ICT system which will improve the administration of test applications and enhance information production capability. The main initiatives adopted are

- on-line application for driving tests available in Phase 1 of the RSA's new ICT system which became available during 2008
- self-booking and self-management of test appointments which will be available when Phase 2 of the new ICT system is implemented, currently planned for the end of 2009
- enhanced database architecture allowing for improved routine and ad hoc reporting of information in relation to demand for tests, numbers of tests conducted, output of testers and pass rates, which will be possible when Phase 2 of the ICT system has been implemented.

2.37 Contract testers used Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) when conducting tests to record faults during the driving test, allowing for automatic production of the test result which was updated to the ICT system using mobile technology.

2.38 While the RSA appreciates the benefits of the use of PDA type technology, at present staff object to its use on safety grounds. The RSA has stated that the new ICT system can facilitate its use and expect that the health and safety issues raised by staff can be overcome. It does not envisage having sufficient funding in 2009 or 2010 to adopt its use. However, it acknowledged that the use of such technology increases efficiency and facilitates analysis of test results allowing for the examination of trends by fault type and test route.

2.39 The RSA intends developing a system whereby all details in relation to individual tests are input to a database, either by scanning the details onto the database at a cost of €100,000, or by the use of electronic notebooks (tablets) by testers costing €1m. The scanning option would require manual intervention to update test results but could be in place in three months. The tablet system requires no intervention and could be in place in twelve to 18 months. Either system will identify the tester conducting the test, the test route used, the faults identified and the test result. This will facilitate more timely in-depth analysis of all aspects of the conduct of tests.

Conclusions – Contract Management

The RSA incurred additional costs in relation to the outsourced tests. While some of these costs were envisaged, considerable extra costs arose in the training and supervision of testers. Additional administration costs also arose due to the inadequacies of the RSA ICT system.

The RSA's action in training and supervision succeeded in reducing disagreed decisions from a high of 18% in early 2007, to an average of 7% in the case of over 2,000 contract tests supervised between October 2007 and December 2008.

The absence of specified performance measures in the contract militated against effective evaluation of its performance.

Future contracts for outsourced services should be more specific in relation to how the quality of service will be assessed. This would include the development of clear performance indicators, the setting of targets and the identification of the methods used to monitor performance. In addition, more thought needs to be given to framing the contracts and, in particular, ensuring that there are appropriate contractual mechanisms to deal with any failure to meet targets set.

A positive feature of the outsourcing arrangement was the opportunity it offered to compare and, where appropriate, embrace practices and systems operated by the contractor. This has fed into the design of ICT systems, which when fully implemented at the end of 2009, should result in more efficient administrative processes and significantly improved management information.

There has been a useful transfer of good practice in the area of scheduling using modern technologies.

3 Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Driver Testing Service

3.1 In order to manage driver testing efficiently and effectively the RSA would need to

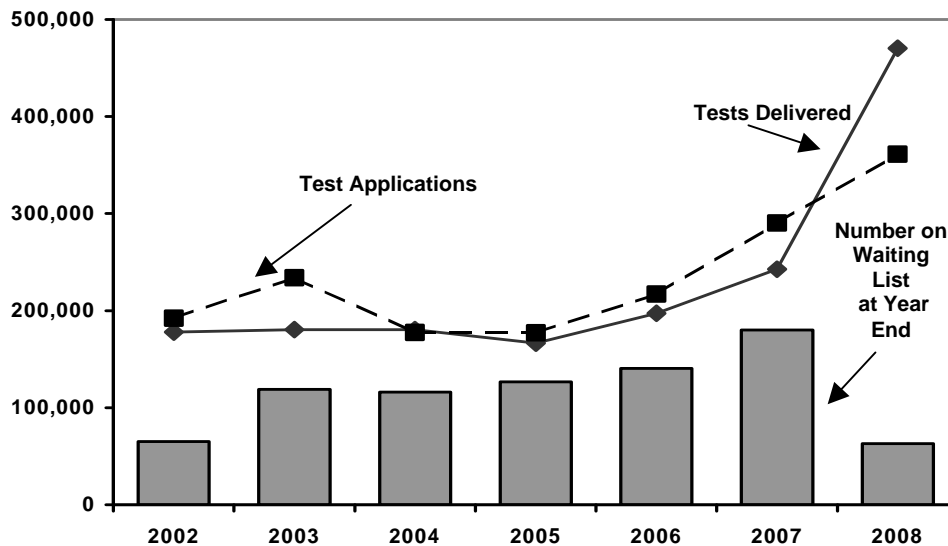
- deliver the required number of tests in a timely manner matching demand to its resources and ensuring optimal tester output
- maximise cost recovery through efficient service delivery
- ensure consistency of driver testing and
- monitor the effectiveness of driver testing, facilitating oversight by the Department.

Delivery of Required Number of Tests

3.2 The number of test applications increased significantly in each of the years 2006, 2007 and 2008. The number of applications in 2008 was the highest to date at 360,000 and was twice the level of applications in 2005.

3.3 Over 470,000 tests were delivered in 2008⁸. Between 2006 and 2008, the RSA significantly increased the number of tests carried out, thereby satisfying the demand for tests and reducing the numbers on the waiting list and the associated waiting time. Figure 3.1 displays the number of test applications and the number of tests delivered as well as the number of persons waiting for a driving test at each year-end.

Figure 3.1 Test Statistics, 2002 to 2008



Source: Road Safety Authority

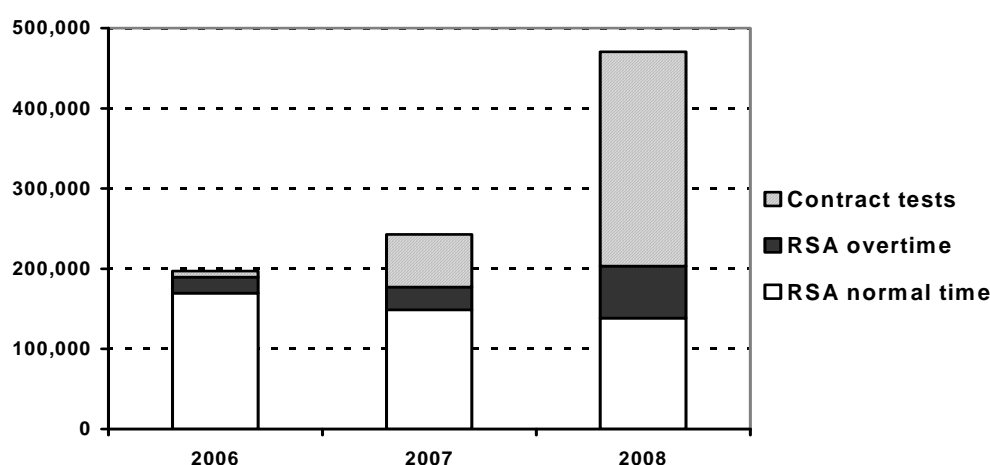
8 This includes approximately 82,000 applicants who forfeited their fee without a test being conducted as a result of failing to attend or failing to comply with required conditions.

3.4 The increase in the number of tests was achieved through two mechanisms - the use of overtime and outsourcing.

- **Use of overtime** - Between 2006 and 2008, there was increased use of overtime by the RSA to deliver tests. In 2007, approximately 16% of the tests delivered directly by the RSA were carried out on overtime but this had increased to about 32% by 2008.
- **Increased use of outsourcing** - The external provider carried out an increasing number of tests and ultimately delivered over half of all tests carried out in 2008. The RSA has since terminated the outsourced contract now that the backlog of tests has been addressed.

3.5 Figure 3.2 outlines the types of resources used to conduct the tests in the period 2006 to 2008.

Figure 3.2 Breakdown of Tests Delivered, 2006 to 2008



Source: Road Safety Authority

Forecasting Demand

3.6 The RSA does not have a longer term forecasting model. Neither did the Department at the point when the driver testing function was transferred to the RSA. A demand management tool aimed at relating weekly applications to capacity does exist. However, this does not assist in predicting longer term demand.

3.7 The RSA acknowledges that it does not have good data in relation to future demand levels. It does, however, draw on a number of data sources such as the Central Statistics Office, the National Vehicle and Driver File and the driver theory testing system. However, it does not have the capacity to convert this data into forecast applications, as historical relationships are not very well understood. The RSA is confident that the elimination of the backlog of test applicants, together with a return to more normal demand levels, will facilitate better long term forecasting of demand and will contribute to more effective service planning and delivery.

Waiting Times For Driving Tests

3.8 The RSA has committed to providing tests to all applicants within ten weeks of the date of application. It monitors two primary measures of waiting time

- the longest time an individual has been on the waiting list
- the average time those who have been tested in the previous four weeks were waiting.

3.9 As a result of the large number of tests delivered in 2008, average and longest waiting times and the numbers on waiting lists have decreased significantly, as shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3 **Waiting Times for Driving Tests, 2004 to 2008^a**

Year	Number on the Waiting List at Year End	Longest Waiting Time on Waiting List at Year End (Weeks)	Average Waiting Time of those Tested at Year End (Weeks)
2004	116,000	55	30.9
2005	127,000	43	32.8
2006	140,000	36	29.8
2007	180,000	21	18.8
2008	63,000	11	8.6

Source: Road Safety Authority

Note:

- a Measures of waiting time, both longest and average, do not include candidates who did not avail of a test appointment allocated.

3.10 Between 2004 and 2006 there were between 116,000 and 140,000 people on the waiting list for driving tests. Candidates who sat the test in the last four weeks of those years waited on average between 30 and 33 weeks, with wider variations in average waiting times among centres. The number on the waiting list at the end of 2007 rose to 180,000. During 2008, the number of tests conducted significantly exceeded test applications and as a result, the waiting list decreased to 63,000, its lowest level in a number of years. By the end of 2008, average waiting time had fallen to 8.6 weeks and the longest a candidate had been waiting was 11 weeks at that time.

Output

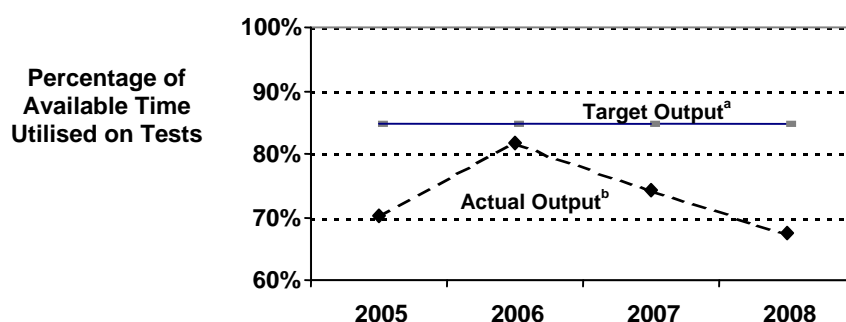
3.11 The number of tests each tester conducts is a useful indicator of the performance of the Driver Testing Service. The maximum number of tests that a tester could theoretically carry out in any year is 1,824⁹. This is based on eight tests per day. This is a theoretical maximum and is reduced by the loss of tests due to tester training, travel time or sick leave. An annual target of 1,550 tests which allows for these losses had been adopted when the Driver Testing Service was operated by the Department (2002 to 2006). However, the RSA has not set a target for tester output and does not routinely monitor the actual output levels being achieved by its testers.

9 Taking account of annual leave entitlement and public holidays, the RSA plans on the basis of each tester being available for 228 days each year. Each tester is expected to conduct eight tests per day. The number of tests per tester per day was reduced from nine per day to eight per day in March 2002, following an agreement with IMPACT.

3.12 Data collected for the purpose of this examination estimated the output levels being achieved between 2005 and 2008. The resulting data (set out in Figure 3.4) is approximate since the RSA could not accurately identify the numbers of tests conducted through the use of overtime. However, based on a target of 1,550 tests per year (85% of the maximum) the results would suggest that efficiency levels increased in 2006, coming close to the target, but have fallen off again in 2007 and 2008.

3.13 The RSA has informed me that it has enhanced its time and attendance management including the management of annual leave and sickness absence. Monitoring of these aspects of performance is part of the day-to-day work of frontline managers throughout the RSA.

Figure 3.4 RSA Target and Actual Tester Output, 2005 to 2008



Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Notes:

- a The target of 1,550 tests per tester per year is based on 85% of the theoretical maximum of 1,824 tests. The reduction of 15% is to allow for sick leave, training, administrative work and travel time of testers.
- b Actual output is calculated by reference to the standard number of tests and the total number of testers employed. Tests are converted into an equivalent number of standard tests to take account of tests on heavier vehicles, which take about twice as long to complete. Tests include tests conducted during normal working hours, abandoned tests and instances where the candidate failed to attend or failed to comply with the required conditions.

Conclusions – Test Delivery

The RSA has radically improved the timeliness of the provision of tests.

The examination found that, although the number of applications for driving tests had doubled between 2005 and 2008, the number of tests delivered in that period significantly exceeded applications. This was due to the delivery of greater numbers of tests through overtime by RSA testers and the use of an external contractor to carry out tests. In addition, waiting time for driving tests decreased significantly during 2008 and the RSA is very close to achieving its target of providing tests within ten weeks of application.

The RSA does not have a well-developed model to forecast longer term demand for driving tests. This hampers its ability to plan its services and resource requirements over the longer term.

While recognising that in recent years specific factors, including the signalling of alterations in enforcement approaches, had substantial short-term impacts on testing demand, as this works out of the system more data driven forecasting should be possible. The RSA should investigate the development of a long term forecasting model taking account of the relationships between demand for driving tests, demographic data, demand for theory tests and information held on the National Vehicle and Driver File.

A useful indicator of output is the number of tests conducted by each tester per year. A target of 1,550 tests per tester per year had been adopted when the Driver Testing Service was operated by the Department (2002 to 2006). The RSA has not adopted a target for tester output and does not monitor this aspect of performance.

The RSA should investigate the factors that underlie the trend in tester output set out in Figure 3.4 and monitor this trend on an ongoing basis.

Cost Recovery

3.14 The RSA had not developed a costing model for the apportionment of its overhead costs to its various divisions¹⁰. As a result, the cost of delivering tests was estimated for the purpose of this examination by reference to the direct costs incurred in respect of the Driver Testing Service, such as staff costs, test centre costs and outsourcing, and a portion of the RSA's overheads and pension costs. While this basis of calculation does not give precise costs, it is useful as an indicator of the approximate level of driver testing costs.

3.15 In 2008, €42 million was incurred in conducting 470,000 tests. The costs are made up of €37 million in direct salary and travel and subsistence payments to RSA staff and payments to the contractor as well as €4.7 million to take account of central overheads and pension costs. In 2007, 243,000 tests had been delivered at a cost of €26 million¹¹.

3.16 The unit cost per test delivered in 2008 is estimated at €88. Up to April 2009, the driving test fee had remained unchanged at €38 per test since 1992. The difference between the fee paid (€38) and the cost of delivering a test gave rise to a requirement for significant Exchequer funding. In 2008, the revenue associated with the tests delivered was €8.2 million¹² - a cost recovery rate of 44%.

3.17 The fee was increased from €38 to €75 in April 2009. In increasing the fee, the RSA is moving towards a situation where it may recover the full economic cost of delivering the test. While the current unit cost is estimated at €88, the RSA expects further cost savings in future years which it believes will achieve a closer alignment between fees and costs.

3.18 To date cost reductions have been secured in a number of areas. Agreement was reached by the RSA to end a system of rotation under which, historically, driver testers travelled to other centres on a regular rotation basis (every second or third week). One objective of rotation was to ensure that repeat candidates were tested by different testers but the levels of rotation arising were far in excess of what was required to achieve this objective. Since early 2008 rotation is based on business needs where backlogs exist and the issue of repeat candidates is not considered a priority unless a candidate requests an alternative tester. In addition, the system of headquartering testers is now also business led with driver testers being assigned on the basis of the level of demand at a test centre.

10 The other main services delivered by the RSA are oversight of the driver theory test and driver licensing regime, regulation of driving instruction, management of the penalty points system, road safety promotion and research, driver education and vehicle standards and enforcement.

11 The costs recorded for 2007 include some costs relating to 2006 as a result of backlogs in processing overtime and travel and subsistence claims when the RSA took over the Driver Testing Service. These backlogs were cleared in 2007. The RSA was not in a position to quantify these costs.

12 Revenue is calculated on an accruals basis. Income is recognised in relation to tests carried out at a rate of €38 per test.

3.19 The RSA has identified a number of areas for cost reduction in the future.

- It would expect to see significant reductions in overtime and travel and subsistence costs as demand for tests reverts to more normal levels.
- It also anticipates significant savings in administration costs as a result of a new ICT system, costing approximately €2 million in total to implement. The existing system is inflexible with poor reporting facilities and limited customer interactivity. While the savings from the new system were not quantified in the ICT business case, efficiencies were identified in staff administration costs due to increased automation along with a reduction in time spent on customer queries as a result of improved customer interactivity. It also expects reductions in the number of candidates not attending as a result of self-scheduling of tests.

Conclusions – Cost Recovery

The RSA was not in a position to monitor the unit cost of each test. Unit costs are useful measures and a valuable means of monitoring convergence between the fee levels and costs as well as providing a useful comparator with other jurisdictions and the cost of outsourced tests.

The RSA should develop a full costing system, that takes account of all direct and indirect costs, in order to monitor the unit cost of tests. Monitoring the unit cost of tests would provide useful information in relation to changes in efficiency over time and would also allow for benchmarking with Driver Testing Services in other jurisdictions.

The RSA should quantify the savings it achieves from any changed management of the service arising out of its investment in ICT.

Consistency of Driver Testing

3.20 Effective quality assurance procedures are critical in order to ensure that a consistent test is administered irrespective of the test centre or the individual tester involved. The RSA has ultimate responsibility for the quality of its testing whether tests are delivered by its own testers or by contract testers.

3.21 Quality assurance measures which it could take include

- initial training to ensure that all testers are trained to the same standard
- analysis of pass rates by test centre and by tester to identify possible divergence from the average with subsequent investigation of the factors that contributed to variances
- random and focused supervision of testers where testers are accompanied by a Driver Testing Supervisor who evaluates the conduct of the test
- ongoing development of testers through refresher training for all testers and additional training for individual testers as a result of test supervision.

Initial Training

3.22 Newly recruited testers complete an initial six-week training programme. In 2006 the RSA introduced a pass/fail assessment following this training and only those who pass are offered an employment contract. The number of days initial training given by the RSA to newly recruited driver testers is set out in Figure 3.5.

Figure 3.5 Training of Newly Recruited Testers, 2005 to 2008

Year	Total Number of Days Training for New Testers	Number of New Testers	Number of Days Training per New Tester
2005	0	0	0
2006	594	20	30
2007	362	12	30
2008	231	8	29

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

3.23 Testers complete a one-year probationary period during which the RSA aims to supervise at least 112 tests. On successful completion of the probationary period¹³, testers are offered employment contracts.

Testing Pass Rates

3.24 Variations in pass rates between test centres and between individual testers may point towards instances where a consistent test is not being administered.

Comparison between Test Centres

3.25 The national average pass rate for 2008 was 57%. The pass rate recorded in relation to the tests carried out by RSA testers was 49% as compared with 62% for tests conducted by contract testers.

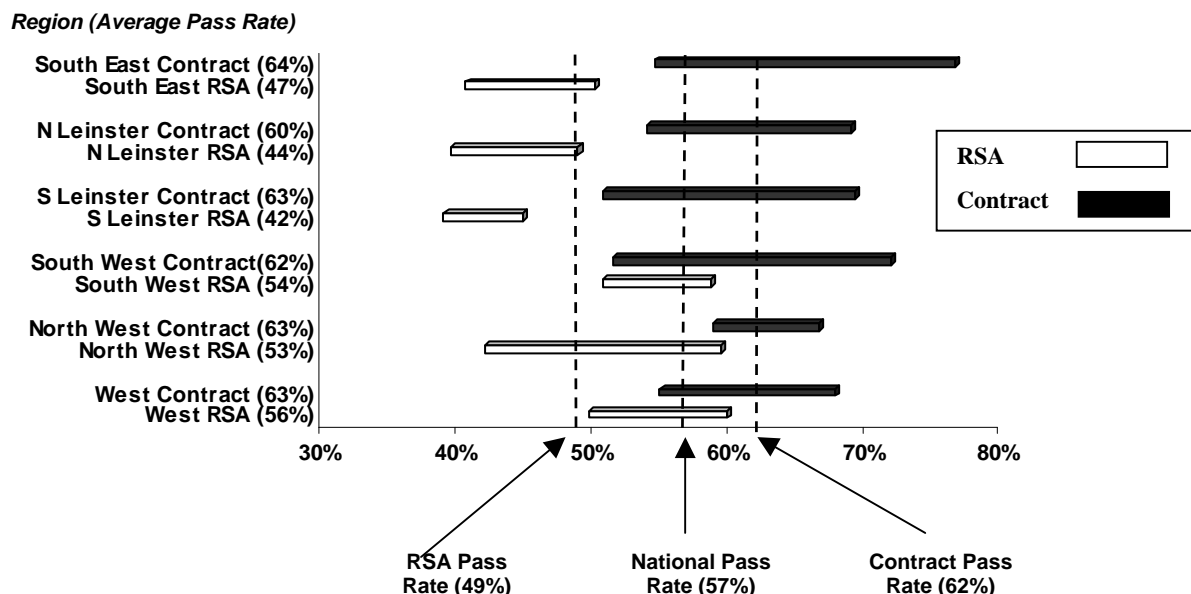
3.26 In 2008, RSA supervisors conducted approximately 1,127 tests¹⁴. The pass rate arising on those tests was 61%.

3.27 When all results are combined, the level of variation in average pass rates by region was found to vary from 55% in North Leinster and the South East to 58% in the West, North West and the South West. However, the pass rates in relation to tests conducted by contract testers were significantly higher in each of the six Driver Testing regions.

3.28 The average pass rate at centres ranged from rates of between 39% and 60% in RSA centres to rates of between 51% and 77% in the centres where contract testers administered tests. The results are displayed in Figure 3.6 and the pass rates for each region and test centre are set out in Appendix A.

13 The RSA have stated that instances of failure of the assessment of the initial training or the probationary period have not occurred to date as testers who are not reaching the required standard have terminated their employment, of their own accord, prior to the assessment.

14 These tests were conducted in circumstances where staff testers were absent due to illness or otherwise unavailable.

Figure 3.6 Range of Pass Rates^a for RSA and Contract Centres by Region, 2008

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Note:

- a The pass rates shown are for car tests only, since the contractor only conducted car tests. Car tests comprise 96% of the total tests.

3.29 The RSA stated that, based on its review of international experience, success rates differ considerably from country to country and may also vary considerably from region to region within countries. It stated that the research showed that pass rates by centre varied from 28% to 71% in the UK and between 55% and 90% in Canada. In Sweden, which has a reputation as a country with highly evolved road safety policies, pass rates between individual centres varied from 69% to 82%. It stated that, the main factors giving rise to variations in pass rates in the UK, Canada and Sweden were identified as follows

- the quality of preparation/tuition¹⁵
- socio-economic factors, such as access to a vehicle, resources to purchase tuition and access to learning materials, were also identified as giving rise to variations
- differences between urban and rural areas were also evident with rural areas tending to have a higher pass rate but lower throughput of tests
- the age and gender of the candidate - in general, younger candidates had a higher pass rate and males had a higher pass rate than females
- a lack of exposure to possible errors - an applicant tested on a road that requires frequent manoeuvres and who is confronted by heavy traffic will be exposed to a greater number of errors than an applicant fortunate enough to take the test on a route that involves long stretches of straight driving and encounters little traffic.

¹⁵ The RSA drew attention to the fact that, in Ireland, in testing driving instructors for the Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) Scheme, 28% of driving instructors failed the theory test and 22% failed the practical test.

3.30 Although a high level of variation has existed between individual centres, the RSA has not attempted to validate the pass rates occurring at individual centres. While it is accepted that, due to the factors outlined above, significant variation can occur between pass rates across centres, it would be important to validate centre pass rates in order to ensure that the variation is consistent with the appropriate standards. Such validation might be based on

- comparison of the pass rates resulting from the conduct of batches of tests conducted by an independent team with those occurring at the centre
- benchmarking results with other test centres with a similar profile
- analysis of the underlying data on test routes used and the identification of particular manoeuvres that have caused the candidate to fail the test may point towards areas where the standard may not be applied correctly¹⁶.

Comparison between Tests Conducted by RSA and Contract Testers

3.31 A high level of divergence in pass rates was noted between tests carried out by RSA testers and contract testers. In many areas, RSA and contract centres are based in the same town or location and, hence, would have a similar candidate profile. However, in almost all such areas, the pass rate at the contract centre was significantly higher than that occurring at the RSA centre. Figure 3.7 sets out the pass rates in areas where significant differences arose between the RSA test centre and the contractor test centres located in the same area.

Figure 3.7 Pass Rates for RSA and Contract Test Centres, 2008

	Pass Rate at RSA Test Centre	Pass Rate at Contractor Test Centre	Difference
Nenagh	47%	77%	30%
Carlow	41%	71%	30%
Naas	44%	69%	25%
Finglas	39%	59%	20%
Kilkenny	41%	60%	19%
Portlaoise	48%	66%	18%

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

3.32 The RSA point out that variations in pass rates between the contractor and the RSA may be a result of differences in the types of candidates tested by the contractor. It stated that those waiting the longest and those who had not failed previously were allocated to the contractor, while the RSA testers were, in some cases, dealing with candidates who had failed repeatedly and those with shorter waiting time¹⁷ and, therefore, less driving experience.

3.33 However, the RSA could not provide an estimate of the number of candidates assigned to the contractor who were sitting the test for the first time. In any event, the differential in pass rates between first time applicants and repeat applicants is not significant¹⁸.

16 For example, a test centre with a low pass rate that has an abnormally high failure rate on a particular manoeuvre might point towards a problem with the way that particular item is being tested at that centre.

17 The RSA have indicated that, on average, the candidates allocated to the contractor were waiting approximately one or two months more than those allocated to RSA testers.

18 Data produced by the RSA in relation to candidates tested in 2007 showed that, overall, 54.8% of candidates passed the test. 56.6% of applicants taking the test for the first time passed as compared with 52.9% in the case of repeat candidates. In that year, first time applicants accounted for half of all candidates tested. Comparable statistics for 2008 are not available.

Pass Rates Awarded by Individual Testers

3.34 A high level of variation also existed between individual testers. Pass rates awarded by testers¹⁹ varied from 23% to 69% in relation to tests conducted by RSA testers and from 37% to 83% for contract testers.

Variations in Awards by Individual Testers

3.35 Since testing conditions and the profile of candidates at individual centres should be reasonably similar over time, pass rates awarded by individual testers would be expected to converge around the centre norm. Consequently, it would be useful to identify material divergences from that norm as a basis for monitoring testing consistency. An initial level of variation of 10% (the level adopted for this examination) could be used for this purpose.

3.36 The pass rates at each RSA test centre were compared with the pass rates of the individual testers operating at those centres²⁰. In 17 of the 50 RSA test centres the pass rates of all testers at the centre were within 10% of the average pass rate for drivers tested at that centre. In the remaining 33 RSA test centres, the pass rate awarded by at least one tester varied by more than 10% from the test centre average.

3.37 In the centres operated by the contractor, 40 of the 50 test centres had at least one tester whose pass rate varied by more than 10% from the average pass rate at the centre from which he operated.

3.38 These divergences are displayed graphically in Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10. Additional data is set out in Appendix B²¹.

Overall Level of Award Variation

3.39 While Figure 3.9 and Figure 3.10 suggest that there can be considerable differences between pass rates awarded by individual testers and the average rates for the centres they operated from it is useful, also, to identify the extent of divergence amongst testers. Figure 3.8 sets this out.

Figure 3.8 Extent of Divergence from Centre Pass Rate by Individual Testers, 2008

Extent of Divergence ^a	RSA Testers		Contract Testers	
	Number of Testers	Percentage	Number of Testers	Percentage
More than 20%	4	3%	12	8%
Between 15% and 20%	11	8%	30	19%
Between 10% and 15%	33	23%	32	21%
Less than or equal to 10%	94	66%	81	52%
Totals	142	100%	155	100%

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Note:

a The divergence is the extent to which pass rates are above or below the centre average.

19 The pass rates awarded by individual testers excludes testers who had conducted less than 500 tests in the year.

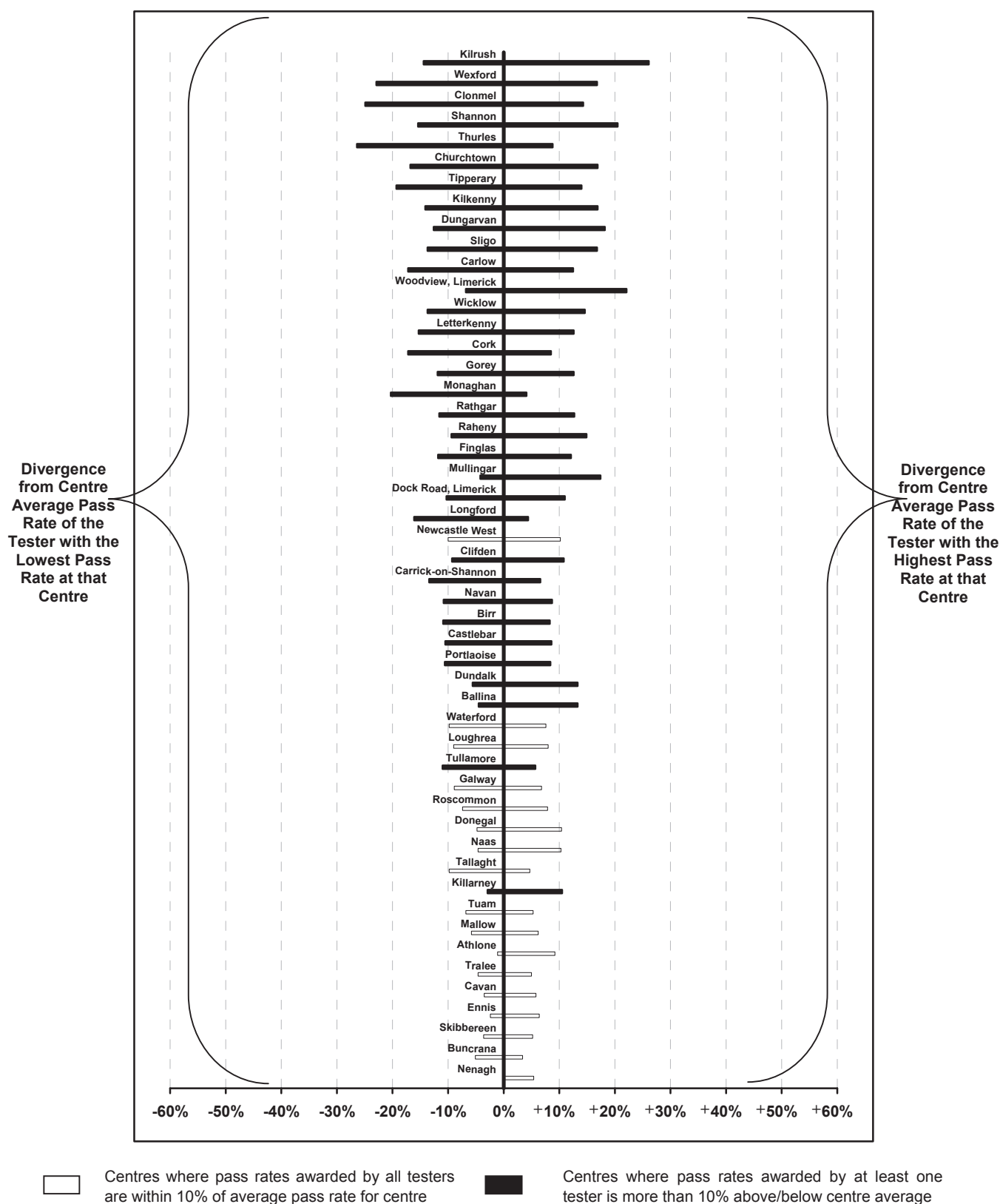
20 Testers who had conducted less than 100 tests at an individual test centre were excluded from this analysis.

21 It should be borne in mind that the average result in each centre takes account of all cases including those where the divergences occurred.

3.40 One third of all RSA testers awarded pass rates that diverged by 10% or more from the pass rates occurring at the centres from which they administered tests. The pass rate awarded by around half of all contract testers diverged by more than 10% from the average pass rate at the centres from which they operated.

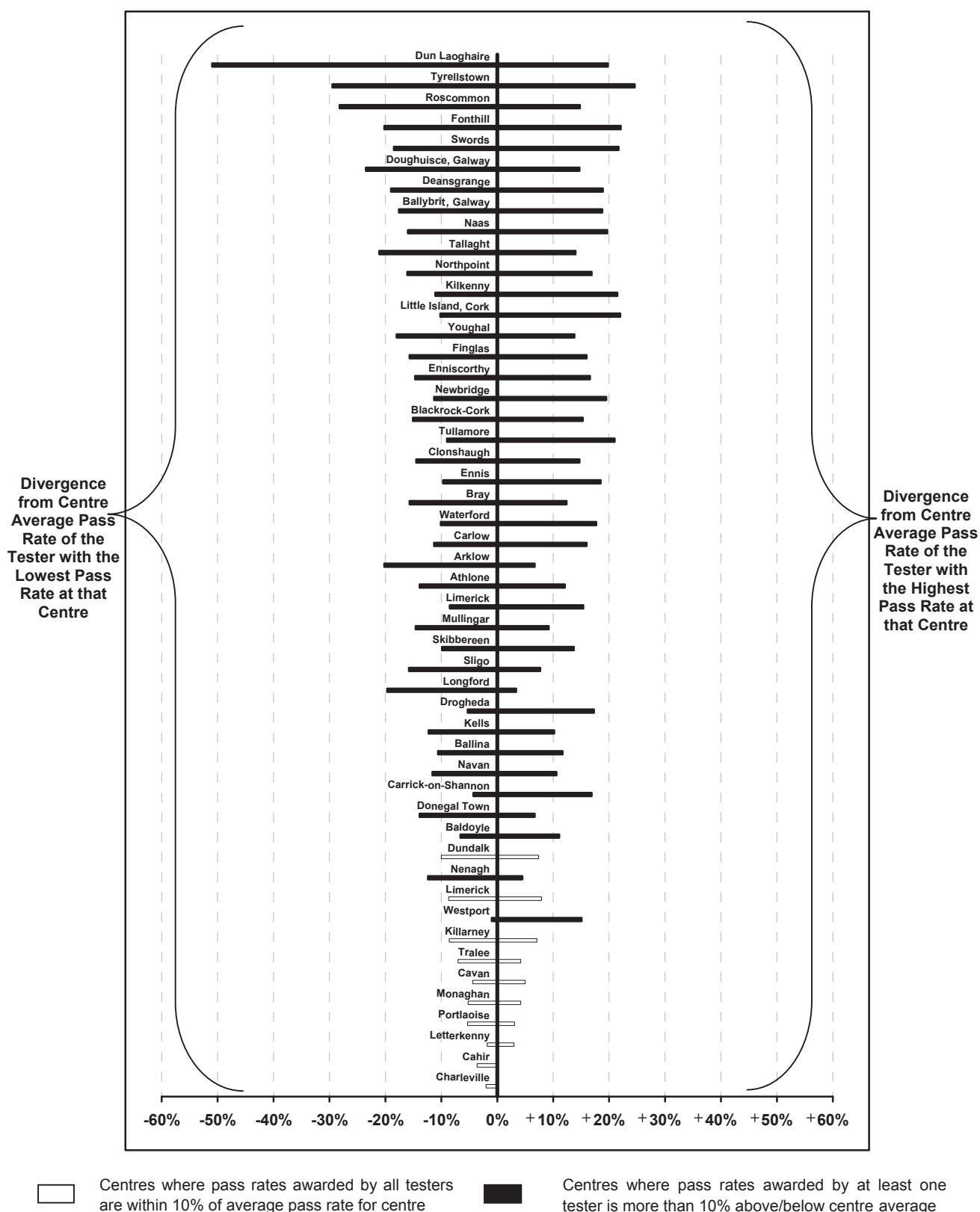
3.41 Since testers can operate from time to time from a number of centres, it is possible to examine results for individual testers irrespective of location in some cases. In general, this tended to suggest that the pattern of results was associated with the tester rather than the centre.

Figure 3.9 Divergence of Individual Tester Pass Rates from Average Test Centre Pass Rates, RSA



Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Figure 3.10 Divergence of Individual Tester Pass Rates from Average Test Centre Pass Rates, Contractor



Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Supervised Tests

3.42 The RSA policy on supervision is that

- Each RSA tester should have at least one supervised test per month. In general, newly recruited testers would have increased supervision to ensure that tests are being conducted to the required standard.
- It would supervise at least 125 contracted tests every month, which would equate to about one test per month per tester. It was the RSA's policy to conduct further supervised tests where issues had been identified.

3.43 Analysis of the RSA supervised tests conducted over the four-year period 2005 to 2008 showed that, in general, RSA testers did not have the required level of supervision. None of the testers had 40 or more supervised tests (which would equate to about one per month) over the four-year period and about 40% of the testers had less than 20 supervised tests over the period.

3.44 In the period October 2007 to May 2008, a total of 1,175 contracted tests were supervised by the RSA, equating to an average of 147 supervised tests per month. Examination of this data showed that the rate of supervision was not evenly spread across individual testers with some testers having considerably more tests supervised than others. The RSA stated that this reflects its policy to conduct further supervised tests where issues had been identified with the performance of a tester as a result of supervision. The RSA did not have access to the results of any supervision conducted by the contractor.

3.45 Supervision of tests is carried out by RSA staff. Leaving aside correct assessments where the tester and supervisor agree in all respects, there are two possible negative outcomes.

- Disagreed decision - the tester and the supervisor disagreed on whether the applicant had passed or failed the test.
- Disagreed assessment - the tester and the supervisor agreed on the test result but there were differences between the scoring of the supervisor and the tester.

Results of Supervised Tests

3.46 The RSA did not collate the results of supervised tests to identify the extent of disagreement between testers and supervisors either by tester or overall. As part of this examination the results of supervised tests were analysed. They are set out in Figure 3.11. The review noted a marked difference in the results emerging from tests supervised in relation to the contractor's and the RSA's testers. In relation to the RSA tests supervised, the supervisor concluded that all of the decisions made by the RSA testers were correct. By contrast, the tester and the supervisor disagreed on the test result in 7% of the contract tests supervised. In addition, where the tester and the supervisor agreed on the test result, the supervisor had concerns about how that decision was reached in 7% of cases in relation to RSA testers and 43% of cases in relation to the contract testers.

Figure 3.11 Results of Tests Supervised, 2008

	Contract ^a	RSA ^b	Total
Total Supervised Tests	2,175	424	2,599
Disagreed Decisions	7%	0%	6%
Agreed Decisions	93%	100%	94%
Disagreed Assessment	43%	7%	37%
Agreed Assessment	50%	93%	57%

Source: Road Safety Authority

Notes:

a Supervised tests in the period October 2007 to December 2008.

b Supervised tests in the period January 2008 to December 2008.

3.47 Overall, the supervisor concurred fully with the tester in half of contract tests supervised as compared with 93% for the RSA tests.

3.48 For the purpose of this examination, decisions made by contract testers where the supervisor disagreed with the test result were examined to establish if there was a propensity to either pass or fail candidates. The results are set out in Figure 3.12. In almost three quarters of cases, where the supervisor and the testers disagreed on the test result, the decision was to pass the candidate.

Figure 3.12 Outcome of Disagreed Contract Decisions, October 2007 to May 2008

	Number	Proportion
Total Tests Supervised	1,175	
Decisions Result Disagreed	90	
Pass	66	73%
Fail	24	27%

Source: Road Safety Authority

Ongoing Tester Training

3.49 Training is a key element in ensuring the testers conduct driving tests to the required standard. Training requirements can be identified by supervisors as a result of supervised tests. The RSA supervisors provide on-the-road mentoring in these cases. This mentoring is in the form of feedback to the tester after completion of supervised tests and, occasionally, can include a re-run of the route used to demonstrate to the tester where there were issues arising. The RSA informed me that where no improvement is identified after a time the tester is taken off testing duties for further coaching until improvement is evident.

3.50 Other training needs are identified where testers' pass rates are very different from the norm.

3.51 In the past, the RSA held informal conferences where testers aired their views on areas of concern regarding testing and possible solutions were debated. This was regarded as an informal training forum. These conferences have not taken place in recent years.

3.52 Figure 3.13 sets out the number of training days delivered to RSA testers since 2005.

Figure 3.13 Ongoing Training of RSA Testers, 2005 to 2008

Year	Number of Training Days	Number of Testers WTE ^a	Training Days per Tester per Year
2005	743	115	6.5
2006	175	95	1.8
2007	110	108	1.0
2008	836	117	7.0

Source: Road Safety Authority

Note:

- a The number of testers is reduced for staff on long-term sick leave and by the number of new recruits in the year who have received initial training, and would, therefore most likely not receive refresher training in the same year.

3.53 The level of refresher training in 2006, 2007 and early in 2008 was lower than in earlier years due to the focus on increasing the numbers of tests delivered. Towards the end of 2008 and in 2009 the RSA has been in a position to devote more time to training and refresher training was delivered for all RSA testers. This consisted of a two-week training programme, including a mandatory pass/fail assessment at the end of the training.

Views of the RSA – Consistency of Driver Testing

3.54 In relation to the disparity in pass rates, the RSA expressed its confidence that Ireland's performance in the delivery of practical driver testing compares favourably with counterparts across Europe and internationally.

3.55 It also holds the view that in the most scientific testing regimes with few variables there is always an accepted level of variation in outcomes. It gives the example of the Irish Driver Theory Test, which is completely automated, where pass rates between test centres varied from 58% to 68%.

3.56 The RSA stated that driver testing regimes worldwide experience disagreed decisions and assessments. It stated that some differences arise as the supervisor sits in the rear of the vehicle and does not have the same view as the tester of the driver being tested or of the road. This can lead to differences in perception and in marking. The RSA also stated that it is satisfied, given the level of supervision and audit it has undertaken, with the contractor system.

3.57 In regard to improvements since it assumed responsibility for the service, it pointed out that it has progressed the Driver Testing ICT System, trained all of its driver testers and supervisors and dealt with the historic work practices which limited its ability to undertake supervision. In the field of management practice, the RSA stated that it would like to augment the RSA supervisory structure and utilise the new ICT system to facilitate more focused supervision of RSA testers. It expects this to be progressed when the electronic storage of test results is in operation giving the RSA immediate and focused information on trends among testers and centres.

3.58 The RSA is of the opinion that the regulation of driving instruction through the Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) scheme since 2009 has the potential to limit the impact of variations in the quality of tuition. Figure 3.14 outlines that scheme.

Figure 3.14 Approved Driving Instructor (ADI) Scheme

One of the functions assigned to the RSA was to regulate the driving instruction industry with the objectives of standardising instruction, giving the driving instructor a leading role in developing better drivers and making a greater contribution to road safety. To this end, any person giving driving instruction for reward must be on the RSA register of Approved Driving Instructors. The RSA have prepared a qualification process for persons who want to become Approved Driving Instructors.

- Stage one is a theory test examining knowledge of the Rules of the Road as well as general road safety and driving instruction matters. The structure of the test is similar in format to the theory test for learner drivers.
- Stage two is a test of driving competence, a longer and more comprehensive driving test than that which applies to learner drivers.
- Stage three is a test of ability to instruct the learner driver.

The RSA, in conjunction with the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), has developed and benchmarked an ADI standard for the entire process and ADI instructors are awarded a FETAC Level 6 qualification.

3.59 The RSA stated that it recognises that the principal tools available to monitor the quality of the driving test are statistical analysis to identify significant variation, followed by corrective action such as one-to-one supervision or refresher training, as appropriate. The RSA stated that its ability to use statistical analysis to identify significant variation will be improved following the introduction of the new ICT system. It also noted that its reduced reliance on outsourcing would allow for increased supervision and monitoring of RSA testers. It stated that more effort has been devoted to training during 2008 and 2009 which included refresher training for all testers. It plans to evaluate the effectiveness of this training by supervising ten tests per tester before the end of 2009. The RSA have also requested that the Department approve restructured management arrangements which would provide for greater supervision of RSA testers.

3.60 The RSA stated that it has taken a number of steps to reduce the level of variation in pass rates arising. Considerable effort has been devoted to producing a variety of documentation to assist drivers in preparing for the test including updating and republishing the Rules of the Road. It has also commenced updating the ICT and administrative systems which will improve the quality and timeliness of information available, which will, in turn, be useful in focusing monitoring and training. The introduction of the ADI scheme should also lead to greater uniformity in the tuition provided to learner drivers.

Conclusions – Consistency of Driver Testing

A high level of variation exists between the pass rates at individual centres. The RSA has not sought to validate the centre pass rates.

The high level of divergence between pass rates awarded by testers by comparison with the average pass rates occurring at the centres from which they operate suggests that there is a risk that a uniform or consistent test is not always administered. This type of variation occurred in tests administered by RSA testers and contract testers.

Even allowing for the different profiles of candidate assigned to the contractor a significant difference existed between the pass rates of RSA testers and contract testers. This is evidenced in the pass rates being experienced and borne out by analysis of disagreed decisions.

There is scope for improvement in the quality assurance procedures employed by the RSA. Pass rate norms for individual centres should be established.

Taking account of these norms the RSA should review variations in pass rates. Available information in relation to test routes used and faults observed should be used in order to identify the common characteristics of testing yielding results outside a pre-established range.

Driver tester training was low in 2006 and 2007 as the RSA concentrated its efforts on tackling waiting lists and reducing waiting times. This was addressed towards the end of 2008 and early in 2009 when intensive refresher training was provided to all RSA driver testers.

The RSA should ensure that its driver testers receive the appropriate amount of training in order to maximise the likelihood of achieving consistency of driving test assessments. It also needs to increase the level of supervision and use available information to improve the focus of its efforts in that area.

Monitoring Effectiveness

3.61 The RSA, like all public sector bodies, has an obligation to be effective in the discharge of its functions. As part of its responsibility to deliver value for money, it is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of its own operations. In that regard, it would be expected that a management information system, incorporating a set of performance measures, would have been developed and that periodic monitoring would be done to provide feedback on results. This would be necessary to enable the RSA to manage its operations and to assess the overall effectiveness of driver testing. It would also facilitate oversight by the Department.

Management Information

3.62 While the RSA collected information in relation to applications, waiting lists, waiting times and pass rates, measures and indicators on the cost of tests, tester output levels and the results of supervised tests were not generated. As a result, much of the information required to assist in performance evaluation was not readily available and had to be generated for the purpose of this examination.

3.63 The RSA put the deficiencies down to inadequate ICT systems, which did not allow for the production of routine management information. It stated that it inherited an outdated ICT system that was unreliable and provided very little by way of management reporting and monitoring capability. On taking over the Driver Testing Service, it quickly identified the need for an appropriate ICT system to manage the service, completed a EU tender for such a system and Phase 1 of the new system has been implemented. It provides a driver testing administration system with web-based driving test application processing. It is intended that the next phase of this development will facilitate

- self-booking and management of a driving test allowing the candidate to apply on-line, pay for the test and choose the time, date and location of the test
- the production of reliable management information in relation to numbers of test applications, tests carried out and numbers on waiting lists
- the facility to examine trends in test centres and tester behaviours, particularly in relation to pass rates, routes used and fault marking.

3.64 However, it will not be integrated with the financial system and will not, therefore, allow for the association of cost information with operational performance results.

Financial Management

3.65 The RSA's Financial Statements for 2008 show an excess of expenditure over income of €4.6 million. At 31 December 2008, the deficit was financed by a reduction of €2 million in cash balances with the remainder funded through increases in creditors. The Driver Testing Service accounted for 60% of RSA expenditure in 2008.

3.66 The RSA did not become aware of the deficit until February 2009 for a number of reasons.

- Management accounts prepared up to and including November 2008 were prepared on a cash basis recognising only amounts that had been paid. As a result, these accounts did not record significant amounts of expenditure that would properly be accounted for in the period to November 2008. The November management accounts submitted to the Board showed a deficit of €1.8 million.
- The RSA's budgets did not take account of the number of driving tests expected to be delivered and the associated unit cost. As a result, the increase in overall expenditure arising from the delivery of additional tests was not quantified.

3.67 It is estimated that, in 2008, the Driver Testing Service incurred an excess of expenditure over income of about €6 million. This was somewhat offset by savings experienced by the Road Safety, Research and Driver Education and the Standards and Enforcement directorates of the RSA.

3.68 The deficit in the Driver Testing Directorate of the RSA was identified as primarily arising out of greater than anticipated numbers of outsourced tests as well as additional tests conducted by the RSA - a significant proportion of which were conducted on overtime.

Conclusions – Monitoring Effectiveness

The RSA did not have a well-developed management information system. Summary information, for the years 2007 and 2008, in the following areas was not readily available during the examination

- output of RSA testers per year
- unit cost per test, broken down by unit cost of RSA tests and those provided by the contractor
- analysis of the outcome of supervised tests
- customer service information such as the number of complaints received from candidates or information in relation to the level of customer satisfaction.

The introduction by the RSA of a new ICT system should allow for greater data capture, and following its processing, enhanced management information.

The RSA should identify a core set of indicators to reflect all aspects of its performance. It should then develop a routine reporting system with information on those indicators in order to allow it to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Driver Testing Service.

The cash based management accounts system inherited from the Department and operated by the RSA during 2007 and 2008 did not adequately support forward financial planning during those years. The method of budgeting for Driver Testing did not set out expected activity and cost levels and was not helpful in monitoring expenditure.

The RSA should enhance its management accounting function to integrate demand, budget formulation and monitoring, thereby facilitating the provision of monthly accounts to management and the Board prepared on an accruals basis. This would provide improved financial information and facilitate more informed decision-making. It should also move to enhance its management accounts, which, since 2009, are on an accruals basis, for direct programme costs by allocating all overheads to its programmes.

Oversight by the Department

3.69 In 2008, the Road Safety Authority received a total of €40 million Exchequer funding from the Department. The RSA allocated approximately €17.6 million of this funding to the Driver Testing Service.

3.70 The Department has responsibility for oversight of the RSA. The most common mechanism used by government departments to exercise this oversight role is through the development of a Service Level Agreement (SLA). In general, a SLA defines the roles and responsibilities of both the department and of the agency being supervised. It also describes the nature of the services to be provided, the expected performance levels for the service and the process for monitoring and reporting.

3.71 The Road Safety Authority Act, 2006 provided for the development of a service agreement that, in accordance with the functions assigned to the RSA, would govern '*certain tasks to be carried out, advice given, functions performed or standards adhered to in the performance of its function in the public interest*'. The Act stipulated that the advance of funds would be conditional on compliance with the terms of the agreement.

3.72 A service agreement governing the relationship between the Department and the RSA has not yet been developed. The RSA has stated that it would be amenable to operate within such a system. The Department observed that it would generally seek to set objectives and targets for an agency such as the RSA without seeking to prescribe the detail of how delivery of that service should be managed. In the absence of a service agreement the Department noted that there is an array of reporting arrangements including standard provisions such as annual reports and accounts, corporate governance reporting, reporting on the Road Safety Strategy and a variety of briefings on issues such as driving test applications and waiting times.

Conclusions – Department Oversight

The Department has responsibility for oversight of the RSA. The oversight role is normally exercised through the development of a SLA setting out the roles and responsibilities of the agency, the services to be provided, the expected performance levels and the process for monitoring and reporting. While the Road Safety Authority Act, 2006 provided for the development of a service agreement between the Department and the RSA, this has not been done.

A SLA should be put in place between the Department and the RSA setting out the expected performance levels for the Driver Testing Service and the process for monitoring and reporting. This should set out the objectives and targets of the RSA as well as standards and levels of service, establish cost levels and define the monitoring and reporting mechanisms that apply.

General Views of the RSA

3.73 The RSA noted that when the Driver Testing Service was transferred to it in September 2006, it inherited a number of problems. These included a significant backlog of applications, unacceptable waiting times and significant under-capacity in relation to the demands on the service. Back office administration systems were paper based and the phone system was not capable of servicing customer requirements. There had been a legacy of poor customer service and a confrontational industrial relations environment.

3.74 The RSA stated that since its inception, it has radically improved the timeliness of the provision of tests. In addition, the implementation of a new call centre has increased customer service levels and the introduction of a new ICT system, will, when fully implemented, allow for on-line test bookings which will reduce the administrative effort devoted to test applications and results and improve the quality and timeliness of information.

3.75 It is of the opinion that it has made very significant demonstrable progress in reforming the way in which drivers are trained, tested and licensed in Ireland since its establishment in 2006. It drew attention to a number of initiatives undertaken to reform the way driving test candidates are trained, tested and licensed. These included

- the publication of written standard procedures for conducting tests and driving fault marking guidelines as well as a range of other materials to assist drivers in preparing for their test and
- updating and re-publishing the Rules of the Road.

3.76 The RSA is currently reviewing the format and content of the driving test and the regulation of the driving instruction industry has been addressed with the introduction, from May 2009, of the new ADI Scheme. It is of the opinion that the introduction of that scheme will improve the preparedness of candidates for their test.

3.77 It has sought to address the variations in pass rates by the introduction of the ADI scheme, revising the Rules of the Road, publishing material to assist applicants in preparation for the test and publishing standards and guidelines to assist testers in conducting tests to a consistent standard.

3.78 The RSA stated that in its first years of operation it has dealt with the complex inherited legacy issues and is well on its way to advancing the professionalism of the service and ensuring that the Irish Driver Testing Service compares favourably with the best across the EU. While taking account of this progress, the RSA is cognisant of the significant further work necessary to ensure that its Driver Testing Service provides the best possible value to the taxpayer and the highest possible level of customer service.

Appendices

Appendix A Driving Test Pass Rates by Provider, Region and Centre, 2008

Region	RSA Centre	RSA Pass Rate	Contractor Centre	Contractor Pass Rate
South East ^a	Kilkenny	41%	Waterford	55%
	Carlow	41%	Kilkenny	60%
	Tipperary	45%	Portlaoise	66%
	Wexford	45%	Carlow	71%
	Nenagh	47%	Arklow	71%
	Gorey	47%	Enniscorthy	72%
	Portlaoise	48%	Nenagh	77%
	Thurles	48%		
	Clonmel	49%		
	Dungarvan	50%		
	Waterford	50%		
Region Pass Rate		47%		64%
North Leinster	Finglas	39%	Drogheda	54%
	Mullingar	44%	Mullingar	55%
	Raheny	46%	Finglas	59%
	Navan	48%	Swords	59%
	Dundalk	49%	Northpoint	59%
			Navan	60%
			Clonshaugh	61%
			Dundalk	63%
			Baldoye	68%
			Kells	69%
Region Pass Rate		44%		60%
South Leinster	Tallaght	39%	Tullamore	51%
	Rathgar	42%	Deansgrange	58%
	Wicklow	43%	Fonthill	59%
	Naas	44%	Newbridge	60%
	Tullamore	44%	Tyrellstown	64%
	Churchtown	45%	Dun Laoghaire	67%
			Tallaght	67%
			Naas	69%
			Bray	69%
Region Pass Rate		42%		63%

Region	RSA Centre	RSA Pass Rate	Contractor Centre	Contractor Pass Rate
South West	Woodview, Limerick	51%	Tralee	51%
	Dock Road, Limerick	52%	Skibbereen	54%
	Kilrush	52%	Killarney	60%
	Mallow	53%	Little Island, Cork	60%
	Cork	53%	Roxboro, Limerick	63%
	Killarney	53%	Ballysimon, Limerick	64%
	Skibbereen	56%	Charleville	64%
	Shannon	56%	Blackrock, Cork	67%
	Tralee	58%	Youghal	72%
	Newcastle West	59%		
Region Pass Rate		54%		62%
North West	Cavan	42%	Cavan	59%
	Donegal	52%	Carrick-on-Shannon	60%
	Sligo	52%	Longford	61%
	Letterkenny	52%	Donegal Town	65%
	Carrick-on-Shannon	53%	Monaghan	66%
	Longford	55%	Letterkenny	66%
	Ballina	58%	Sligo	67%
	Monaghan	59%		
	Buncrana	59%		
Region Pass Rate		53%		63%
West	Athlone	50%	Athlone	55%
	Loughrea	52%	Ennis	61%
	Roscommon	53%	Westport	62%
	Birr	56%	Roscommon	64%
	Tuam	56%	Ballybrit, Galway	64%
	Galway	56%	Ballina	67%
	Ennis	57%	Doughuisce, Galway	68%
	Castlebar	58%		
	Clifden	60%		
Region Pass Rate		56%		63%
All Regions Average		49%		62%

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Note:

- a The Cahir centre operated by the contractor is excluded from this analysis as it was not a fully functional centre during 2008. The pass rate for Cahir was 80.27% in 2008.

Appendix B Divergence of Individual Tester Pass Rates and Average Test Centre Pass Rates

RSA Test Centres and Testers, 2008

RSA Centre	Overall Test Centre Results		Results for Individual Testers who had Conducted in Excess of 100 Tests at Individual Test Centres ^a			
	Total Tested	Centre Pass Rate	Lowest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Below Centre Pass Rate ^b	Highest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Above Centre Pass Rate ^b
Kilrush	1,512	52%	38%	14%	78%	26%
Wexford	6,714	45%	22%	23%	62%	17%
Clonmel	5,374	49%	24%	25%	63%	14%
Shannon	2,364	56%	41%	15%	76%	20%
Thurles	3,587	48%	22%	26%	57%	9%
Churchtown	4,312	45%	28%	17%	62%	17%
Tipperary	2,553	45%	26%	19%	59%	14%
Kilkenny	1,861	41%	27%	14%	58%	17%
Dungarvan	3,113	50%	37%	13%	68%	18%
Sligo	1,331	52%	38%	14%	69%	17%
Carlow	1,849	41%	24%	17%	53%	12%
Woodview, Limerick	1,499	51%	44%	7%	73%	22%
Wicklow	4,482	43%	29%	14%	58%	15%
Letterkenny	2,578	52%	37%	15%	65%	13%
Cork	7,188	53%	36%	17%	62%	9%
Gorey	3,126	47%	35%	12%	60%	13%
Monaghan	1,298	59%	39%	20%	63%	4%
Rathgar	5,613	42%	30%	12%	55%	13%
Raheny	6,504	46%	37%	9%	61%	15%
Finglas	9,468	39%	27%	12%	51%	12%
Mullingar	2,126	44%	40%	4%	61%	17%
Dock Road, Limerick	2,335	52%	42%	10%	63%	11%
Longford	1,367	55%	39%	16%	59%	4%
Newcastle West	4,797	59%	49%	10%	69%	10%
Clifden	1,249	60%	51%	9%	71%	11%
Carrick-on-Shannon	1,439	53%	40%	13%	60%	7%
Navan	2,813	48%	37%	11%	57%	9%
Birr	4,702	56%	45%	11%	64%	8%
Castlebar	4,514	58%	47%	11%	67%	9%
Portlaoise	1,517	48%	37%	11%	56%	8%
Dundalk	2,688	49%	43%	6%	62%	13%
Ballina	1,246	58%	54%	4%	71%	13%

	Overall Test Centre Results		Results for Individual Testers who had Conducted in Excess of 100 Tests at Individual Test Centres ^a			
RSA Centre	Total Tested	Centre Pass Rate	Lowest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Below Centre Pass Rate ^b	Highest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Above Centre Pass Rate ^b
Waterford	3,030	50%	40%	10%	58%	8%
Loughrea	3,740	52%	43%	9%	60%	8%
Tullamore	1,676	44%	33%	11%	50%	6%
Galway	2,826	56%	47%	9%	63%	7%
Roscommon	1,512	53%	46%	7%	61%	8%
Donegal	1,372	52%	47%	5%	62%	10%
Naas	3,737	44%	39%	5%	54%	10%
Tallaght	5,240	39%	29%	10%	44%	5%
Killarney	1,972	53%	50%	3%	64%	11%
Tuam	3,912	56%	49%	7%	61%	5%
Mallow	6,574	53%	47%	6%	59%	6%
Athlone	1,190	50%	49%	1%	59%	9%
Tralee	2,002	58%	53%	5%	63%	5%
Cavan	2,355	42%	39%	3%	48%	6%
Ennis	1,382	57%	55%	2%	63%	6%
Skibbereen	1,729	56%	52%	4%	61%	5%
Buncrana	1,871	59%	54%	5%	62%	3%
Nenagh ^c	552	47%	48%	-	52%	5%

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Notes:

- a Only testers who conducted more than 100 tests at an individual centre are included in this analysis. This accounted for 146,184 tests representing 95% of total tests conducted..
- b The divergence is based on the pass rate for individual testers compared with the average pass rate at that centre for all tests conducted.
- c While the analysis eliminates testers who may have unrepresentative pass rates, it can lead to anomalies. In the case of Nenagh the lowest tester pass rate in 2008 was 0% and this tester conducted one test in Nenagh in 2008.

Contractor Test Centres and Testers, 2008

Contractor Centre	Overall Test Centre Results		Results for Individual Testers who had Conducted in Excess of 100 Tests at Individual Test Centres ^a			
	Total Tested	Centre Pass Rate	Lowest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Below Centre Pass Rate ^b	Highest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Above Centre Pass Rate ^b
Dun Laoghaire	9,297	67%	16%	51%	87%	20%
Tyrellstown	6,198	64%	34%	30%	89%	25%
Roscommon	2,039	64%	36%	28%	79%	15%
Fonthill	13,213	59%	39%	20%	81%	22%
Swords	5,894	59%	40%	19%	81%	22%
Doughuisce, Galway	2,224	68%	44%	24%	83%	15%
Deansgrange	6,223	58%	39%	19%	77%	19%
Ballybrit, Galway	4,473	64%	46%	18%	83%	19%
Naas	6,972	69%	53%	16%	89%	20%
Tallaght	13,871	67%	46%	21%	81%	14%
Northpoint	11,045	59%	43%	16%	76%	17%
Kilkenny	5,257	60%	49%	11%	82%	22%
Little Island, Cork	8,640	60%	50%	10%	82%	22%
Youghal	1,328	72%	54%	18%	86%	14%
Finglas	7,527	59%	43%	16%	75%	16%
Enniscorthy	3,031	72%	57%	15%	89%	17%
Newbridge	5,489	60%	49%	11%	79%	19%
Blackrock, Cork	9,593	67%	52%	15%	82%	15%
Tullamore	3,453	51%	42%	9%	72%	21%
Clonshaugh	3,514	61%	46%	15%	76%	15%
Ennis	2,623	61%	51%	10%	79%	18%
Bray	2,149	69%	53%	16%	81%	12%
Waterford	7,710	55%	45%	10%	73%	18%
Carlow	5,472	71%	60%	11%	87%	16%
Arklow	1,680	71%	51%	20%	78%	7%
Athlone	2,495	55%	41%	14%	67%	12%
Ballysimon, Limerick	2,897	64%	55%	9%	79%	15%
Mullingar	3,362	55%	40%	15%	64%	9%
Skibbereen	2,570	54%	44%	10%	68%	14%
Sligo	2,558	67%	51%	16%	75%	8%
Longford	1,808	61%	41%	20%	64%	3%
Drogheda	5,346	54%	49%	5%	71%	17%

	Overall Test Centre Results		Results for Individual Testers who had Conducted in Excess of 100 Tests at Individual Test Centres ^a			
Contractor Centre	Total Tested	Centre Pass Rate	Lowest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Below Centre Pass Rate ^b	Highest Pass Rate at that Centre	Greatest Divergence Above Centre Pass Rate ^b
Kells	1,175	69%	57%	12%	79%	10%
Ballina	1,882	67%	56%	11%	79%	12%
Navan	5,592	60%	48%	12%	71%	11%
Carrick-on-Shannon	1,765	60%	56%	4%	77%	17%
Donegal Town	1,825	65%	51%	14%	72%	7%
Baldoyle	5,740	68%	61%	7%	79%	11%
Dundalk	5,364	63%	53%	10%	70%	7%
Nenagh	1,891	77%	65%	12%	82%	5%
Roxboro, Limerick	5,145	63%	54%	9%	71%	8%
Westport	833	62%	61%	1%	77%	15%
Killarney	3,099	60%	51%	9%	67%	7%
Tralee	3,691	51%	44%	7%	55%	4%
Cavan	3,477	59%	55%	4%	64%	5%
Monaghan	2,048	66%	61%	5%	70%	4%
Portlaoise	3,231	66%	61%	5%	69%	3%
Letterkenny	2,584	66%	64%	2%	69%	3%
Cahir ^c	147	80%	76%	4%	76%	-
Charleville ^c	720	64%	62%	2%	62%	-

Source: Analysis by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General

Notes:

- a Only testers who conducted more than 100 tests at an individual centre are included in this analysis. This accounted for 203,754 tests representing 98% of total tests conducted.
- b The divergence is based on the pass rate for individual testers compared with the average pass rate at that centre for all tests conducted.
- c While the analysis eliminates testers who may have unrepresentative pass rates, it can lead to anomalies. In the case of Cahir the highest tester pass rate in 2008 was 89% and this tester conducted 44 tests in Cahir in 2008. In Charleville the highest tester pass rates in 2008 were 100% and related to three testers who conducted one test each in Charleville in 2008.