

New Dubai driving test gives feedback on mistakes

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Students can learn from their mistakes under the revamped driving test. Stephen Lock / The National

DUBAI // Next time, you will know exactly why you failed your driving test.

The Roads and Transit Authority (RTA) in Dubai has put in place a grading system for its road tests that outlines where drivers have gone wrong, with the hope that the immediate feedback will lead to safer roads and saved lives.

The new test identifies where prospective drivers erred and is turned over to them after the test.

Under the old system, failed drivers rarely were told what rules they violated.

“The examiner was not clear on the mistakes I made,” said Sami Hussein, a 22-year-old Emirati from Dubai. “Therefore, I was unable to make future improvements.”

The new test will last 15 minutes, follow a standard route and include a list of 45 “minor offences”.

A driver who accrues 13 points or more for minor offences, such as failing to signal a lane change or look in a mirror, fails the test.

Five “serious offences”, such as striking something in the road, end the test immediately.

Road safety experts said yesterday a better test could help improve driving standards and reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on the country’s roads.

Simon Labbett, regional director of the Transport Research Laboratory, a traffic safety consultancy, said drivers “who pass the test correctly will drive better”.

He added: “The driving test is the fundamental component. If you get your test right, you get everything else right. A challenging test is what effectively tries out the training and the learning. It is absolutely critical to have a good, challenging test that is worthy of what is expected in the environment.”

Previously, driving tests in Dubai have been left to the discretion of the examiner, who would decide the route and duration of the test and whether he felt the candidate’s overall performance warranted a pass or a fail. Invariably, the candidate would receive no information on why they had failed.

The revised test is currently undergoing a trial phase at two driving schools and will become mandatory at all test centres within the next three weeks, according to the RTA’s licensing agency.

“Before, there was no set time for taking the test and it was up to the examiner to decide how long the test should go for,” said Mahmoud al Marzouqi, director of drivers training at the licensing agency. “If they made enough mistakes, they would decide to stop the test. “Now the driver will have a form, which will explain where they went wrong.”

He said staging the test over the same route would aid drivers, too.

“Before, they did not know where the test would be and it was different every time.”

Peter Richardson, the general manager in charge of technical and operations at Emirates Driving Institute, said the new test could help improve road safety, but only as part of an overall strategy.

He said the new test “follows a well-proven, established and accepted method. It allows for a greater degree of continuity between the training provided if the methodology is followed in full”.

Mr Richardson said the use of a set route would allow the examiner to look out for particular reactions from the driver.

“You will look for a mirror check here and a lane change there. Regardless of what happens outside of that area, you actually mark what you are looking for,” he said.

Biljana Stojanovski, 32, from Serbia, passed the new-style test last month.

“Even though I passed my test, I knew where I was going wrong and was told to be more careful when I’m driving,” she said.

“I wasn’t looking over my shoulder enough and I wasn’t overtaking too much.”

