

**These procedures apply to:**

1. Every University department that utilises vehicles and trailers.
2. The Travel and Fleet department, whom authorises drivers and determines driver eligibility for using trailers.
3. Any University member whom is required to operate a vehicle and trailer on University business, including the use of their **personal** vehicles to tow a trailer. (Grey Fleet)

**Introduction:**

This document is designed as a guideline for departments and institutes with the purpose of ensuring that the University performs its duty of care to University members when their University related business requires the towing/use of trailers.

Proper use of trailers is demanding on drivers and requires a number of factors to operate in a ‘safe’ manner, including driver competence, previous experience and a reliable knowledge of the risks, requirements and restrictions in place on what can/cannot be towed as wells as the processes involved.

**A ‘Brief’ explanation of vehicle weighting:**

Unladen:

The ‘unladen’ weight of a vehicle includes the body of the vehicle and any essential parts that would be used with the vehicle/trailer when used when the vehicle/trailer is operated on the road. This does not include passenger carried, goods being transported or the fuel of the vehicle, be it liquid fuel (Petrol/Diesel), gas or batteries (Electric).

Maximum Authorised Mass:

The maximum authorised mass (MAM) or gross vehicle weight (GVW) is the weight of a vehicle or trailer including the maximum load permissible for safe use when used on a road. The MAM will be listed in the vehicles owners’ handbook, but is also normally displayed on either the registration plate or on a sticker fitted to the vehicle. In some instances, it may also display a gross train weight (GTW) or gross combination weight (GCW), this is the total weight of the vehicle including trailer and load.

Down-plating:

Should a vehicle be unlikely to be used at its maximum possible weight, it may be possible to have the vehicle ‘down-plated’, meaning the MAM displayed on the plate or sticker will be lower.

**Authorised drivers for towing:**

The responsibility of ensuring the competence of each driver whom operate trailers or tow vehicles on University related business is held by the Travel and Fleet department. The Travel and Fleet department maintains a database of all drivers allowed to tow or use trailers, they will only approve drivers that meet the driving license endorsements required.

This also applies to any University members that utilise their own **personal** vehicles for University business, especially when using **personal** vehicles to tow trailers. In cases such as this, it is the responsibility of either the department administrator or the driver to inform the Travel and Fleet department of the intended use of a **personal** vehicle, so that the driver can be approved and the details of the vehicle recorded.

**Towing based on the driving license requirements:**

Identification of what driving license requirements are needed to tow is rather complicated, mainly due to the large number of factors that eligibility can depend on. These include; driver age, the date the driver’s license was originally issued, vehicle specifications, trailer size and load weight.

In some situations, drivers may require specific training to be completed prior to being permitted to tow.

Due to the complex nature of determining the eligibility to tow, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has created an online tool which calculates what is required based on a driver’s current license. This tool is accessible through the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/towing-rules>

**Required vehicle specifications for towing:**

It is essential that any vehicle used to tow or pull a trailer is fit for purpose, as such the following checks must take place to determine whether a vehicle meets the requirements.

The first check that must take place is that the engine is sufficient in terms of power and size in order to tow both the trailer and load. The brakes must then be checked to make sure that they are powerful enough to halt the vehicle and trailer in a safe manner. The last check is to make sure that the gross weight of the trailer including load is within the towing capacity of the vehicle.

It is important to bear in mind that attaching a loaded trailer to a vehicle will affect said vehicles performance. E.g. when starting, the vehicle will struggle to start moving, this is especially true for inclined terrain. This also includes an increased ‘safe’ breaking distance on inclined terrain and extra care being required when manoeuvring corners and bends.

The most important check previously listed is to checking the towing limit recommended in the manufacturer’s handbook, an example would be, that a vehicle has a 2,500 kg limit for a ‘braked’ trailer and a 750kg limit for a ‘un-braked’ trailer.

**Loading:**

When loading a vehicle or trailer, please follow the guidelines provided by Health and Safety to prevent injury or damage to the load. For more information on manual handling, please see the link to the relevant HSE webpage below:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/proc-prac/manual-handling/>

This page contains a generous assortment of guidelines, tools and training material to assist staff with properly loading a vehicle or trailer.

**Maintaining safety when using a trailer:**

In order to ensure that an appropriate level of safety is maintained, the following checks must take be undertaken:

Is the gross weight being towed within the trailers official payload and the total manufacturer’s recommended maximum limit (Dependent on ‘braked’ or ‘un-braked’)?

 Is the load properly secured to the trailer?

 When loaded, has the load been properly distributed so that there is not too much or too little nose weight?

 Are all lights functioning properly?

Is there any damage present on the 7/13-core plug and cable?

 Is the number plate correct (Registration number and style) and fitted properly?

 Is the breakaway cable present and fitted properly? Is there any visible damage?

 Are tyres undamaged and pressurised correctly with an adequate amount of tread? (Minimum of 1.6mm)

 Are wheel nuts and bolts properly fitted to the correct torque?

 If present, are mudguards securely fitted and in a usable condition?

 Has the trailer been properly connected to the vehicle? (Tow ball/Pin)

 Is the coupling height correct? (Nose not excessively up or down)

**Checks require prior to use of trailer:**

It is the responsibility of the driver to ensure that the following checks have been performed prior to undertaking a journey with a trailer.

 Is the trailer at an even level when it has been properly coupled to the towing vehicle?

 Is the nose weight between 50 to 100kg? (Unless trailer is very light, i.e. no load)

 Is the tyre pressure correct with at least the minimal depth of tread? (1.6mm)

 Is the jockey wheel, corner steadies/prop stands are fully wound up and properly secured?

 Finally, are the load and straps secured properly to avoid coming loose mid journey?

**Maintaining trailer integrity/functionality:**

It is the responsibility of the relevant vehicle custodian within departments to ensure that inspections and servicing are carried out on trailers as detailed below:

 The relevant checks above have been performed prior to each use.

Formal inspection should be carried out by one of the University’s local suppliers of servicing, repair and maintenance services, as per the following:

 After the first 600 miles (1,000km) – Essential for: new trailers, brake linings or Bowden cables.

 Every 3,000 miles (5,000km) – Quarterly for heavily used trailers, including boat trailers.

 Every 6,000 miles (10,000km) – Biannual for trailer based on ‘average’ use.

All record for the inspections and servicing of trailers must be kept by departmental administrators and forwarded to the Travel and Fleet department at trlstaff@aber.ac.uk.

**Maintenance of usage records:**

It is the responsibility of departmental administrators to maintain a vehicle logbook for each trailer in their department. These logbooks are available upon request from the Travel and Fleet department and must be submitted to the Travel and Fleet department upon completion.

**Relevant DVLA webpages:**

Load securing: vehicle operator guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance/load-securing-vehicle-operator-guidance>

Quick guide to towing non-articulated trailers - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516716/quick-guide-to-towing-non-articulated-trailers.pdf>

Towing with a car - <https://www.gov.uk/towing-with-car>