
NSAR
ANNUAL REPORT

2020





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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dyan Crowther



I am delighted to be introducing this report for the first time. I joined NSAR in the spring, just as the full impact of COVID-19 was becoming apparent. It has not been an easy year for the rail industry but to its great credit, trains have run (and are cleaner than ever), and the track has been enhanced and maintained. We have even initiated some new projects, both large and small (for example HS2 and Levenmouth). Rail found an agility many would not have previously given it credit for.

NSAR has been supporting the industry every step of the way. From developing new Covid safe training and assessment guidelines, to revising apprenticeship standards, to helping secure a new future for NCATI, to supporting productivity through Living Lab. All are part of the relentless drive

to make sure rail, and wider transport, people are safe, skilled and productive. That is what NSAR is here for and that is what we will continue to do.

The word ‘relentless’ is appropriate because we can’t stand still. New technology, an ageing workforce, migration changes and especially unprecedented investment all mean that the demand for skilled people will go up not down. Our skills intelligence team have set this out in unparalleled detail. For the first time they have also set out the economic and social value of our jobs, and the potential for going even further to find and train more diverse recruits, from all kinds of backgrounds. This is a story rail has underplayed for too long.

As part of this industry wide effort, I am delighted that we have come

together to launch a new outreach platform called routes into rail. This demonstrates to young people, and those that help them such as teachers, the wide variety of jobs, the salaries and the locations that we all have to offer. I hope you will get involved with this initiative.

It remains for me to thank you, our members, funders and supporters for making it all possible: with your encouragement, NSAR is growing and having a greater impact year on year. I’d also like to thank the NSAR board for all their hard work, and of course my predecessor Mike Brown as he moves from transport to something that hopefully isn’t moving anywhere – the Houses of Parliament.

NSAR INTRODUCTION

2020 has been a challenging year for NSAR as it has for all our members, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic we were able to continue to operate though the manner in which we did so changed.

In conversations with members they have told us that topic areas where they are looking for NSAR to help and support are in practical help with apprenticeships, training and assessment; support with the acquisition of digital skills; productivity sensitivity modelling; workforce planning; initiatives that support their social inclusion objectives and tools that help with skills and competency capture. We have listened to what members have asked and throughout the year have worked to adapt existing services and develop new services to meet these needs.

We have been able to maintain our planned RTAS quality assurance schedule throughout the year with careful co-ordination and organisation between ourselves and training providers to ensure everyone was kept safe and at the same time our QA team were able to carry out their work.

Whilst the EQA team had to redesign their delivery method, they were able to ensure that apprentices could access end point assessment and complete their apprenticeship. NSAR is now the 3rd largest external provider of apprenticeship EQA, responsible for more than 60,000 apprentices starting on apprenticeships.

Throughout the year we have been reviewing our skills offer and have made some important enhancements; the rebranding of the National Network of Colleges to the Rail Training Partnership and making it much more focussed on employer needs. At the same time we refreshed Employer service which offers employers the flexibility to tailor their membership package.

We have been working closely with employers and with IFATE on the development and delivery of two key apprenticeship standards – Train Driver and Passenger Transport Onboard and Station Team Member (PTSOTM), resolving issues and are now seeing a steady flow of apprentices now coming through and completing end-point assessment. Work has also started, in response to the IFATE technical review of engineering and manufacturing standards, to refresh the rail engineering standards.

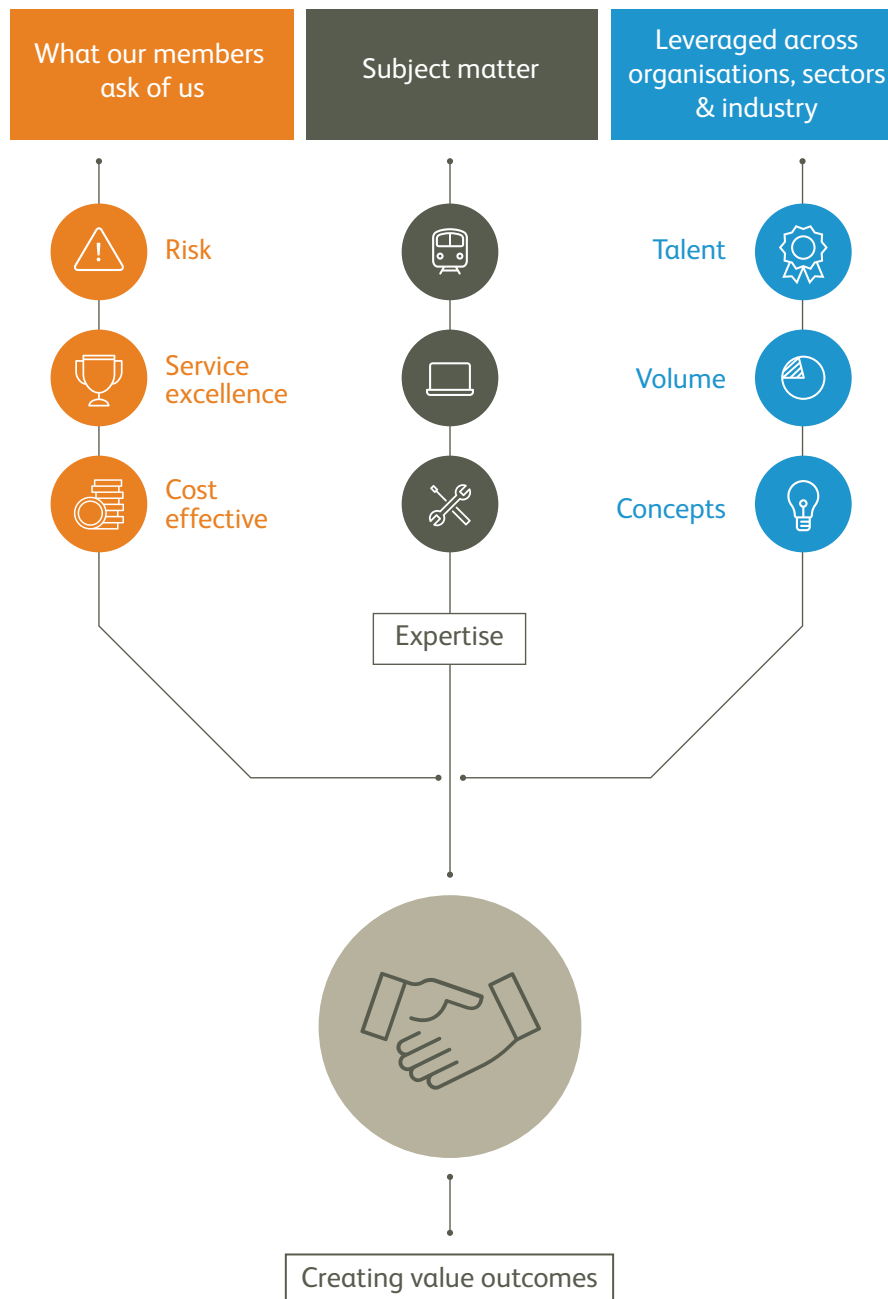
The scope of the skills intelligence team has been expanding with and now encompasses economic and productivity analysis making our contribution to the development of skills increasingly more valuable. The data that we hold enable us to support industry and individual organisations, providing insights into the fitness for purpose of workforce skills to achieve desired outcomes, the impact of digital tools, new technology and working methods together with an understanding of the social context.

As we hopefully see light at the end of the tunnel with the pandemic, the route to recovery will require us to think about the workforce of the future and the skills that will be needed. COVID-19 has accelerated the adoption of digital technology throughout organisations at all levels and this will continue as the recovery gets underway. We will continue to support employers with workforce planning to identify the skills their businesses depend on, then helping to develop and scale the resources and programmes to close any skills gaps. SkillsID is helping employers capture and track the skills and competencies of their workforce and support career and succession planning.

Economic recovery will also require practical initiatives to support social inclusion and we are taking a lead role on behalf of the sector in promoting the Government's Kickstart Scheme and in developing services to support the levelling up agenda.







NSAR

PURPOSE, VISION & VALUES

OUR PURPOSE

Our purpose remains to assist our members and the sector to deliver of modern and efficient world class railway through the provision of practical solutions to the sectors' skills needs.

The National Skills Academy for Rail is an employer-led, not-for-profit, member organisation established to enable the sector to deliver a modern and efficient, world class railway through the development of a highly skilled and productive workforce.

NSAR is trusted by the rail industry to provide workable solutions for the provision of skills needed for the increasing demands of a modern railway. We are all about developing people to excel every day, challenging the status quo and inspiring a change in the way skills and competences are delivered.

OUR VISION

Delivering a world class rail system through a highly skilled workforce.

OUR VALUES

- > Integrity
- > Passion
- > Trusted Partner
- > Foresight
- > Delivery
- > Expert



NSAR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

2020 has been an incredibly busy year for business development both in seeking out, bidding and supporting the delivery of projects. In addition we have continued to promote NSAR's range of services to members and encourage new members to join.

Apprenticeship Support Services to SMEs

NSAR was engaged by the DFE to develop and deliver a centralised support service to smaller employers and intermediary organisations across England to raise the awareness of the latest updates to apprenticeships, increase understanding of the benefits of high quality apprenticeships and to encourage smaller employers to use the national apprenticeship service. NSAR developed a dedicated micro website to promote the service and also developed a set of materials, resources and guides to support a series of physical and digital events and activities. NSAR engaged with 25 LEPs and 659 intermediary organisations in the course of delivering the project and reached over 230,000 people over a period of 3 months.

Transport Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy (TIES) Living Lab Project

A collaboration of 25 partner organisations representing government, infrastructure clients, business and academic institutions, and led by NSAR have come together to

establishes 'Living Lab' demonstrator within real world projects to show how improvements in the UK construction sector can be delivered at scale. It will be a catalyst for cultural change within UK Transport Infrastructure delivery.

As the lead partner in the project, NSAR will provide the PMO and led and successfully concluded contract negotiations between the partners and with Innovate UK who are the client.

NCATI

Recognising the value of a national college approach, NSAR put together and initially led a consortium of industry employers, academic institutions and training providers to successfully bid to takeover the management and running of NCATI, formally the National College for High Speed Rail. NSAR passed the lead bidder position to the University of Birmingham and a process of due diligence is underway.

SkillsID

Our CMS system has continued to receive praise and interest from across the rail sector and in other sectors. TfL Engineering have become the latest organisation to sign up and we have a growing number of employers who we are in ongoing discussions about the online tool.



Routes into Rail

On behalf of the rail sector to design, build and operate a website dedicated to promoting the rail sector as a great place to work. The site has been designed to appeal to young people as well as people seeking to switch careers and will support the EDI objectives of the sector. The website provides lots of valuable information on job types, qualifications, salaries and has the capability to link to schools to encourage the future pipeline of talent. The project which has been funded by Network Rail, Porterbrook, HS2, VolkerWessels, BEIS, Amey and RIA.

Kickstart

With the support of Industry and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), NSAR has provided visibility, guidance and access to funding for this key Government initiative. Acting as the Intermediary for Rail and Infrastructure, we have delivered two tailored webinars alongside DWP and industry, and in November submitted our second bid for placements. Led by industry demand, we will facilitate an Industry Steering Group to share best practice, learning and explore further collaboration. While also focusing on the development and delivery of 'Youth Readiness' Masterclass for supporting Managers and Mentors.

Infrastructure Training Scheme (ITS)

The Infrastructure Training Scheme (ITS) has taken proactive steps to address long-standing industry challenges within Rail. Providing organisations with a predetermined menu of options, ITS is working with industry to ensure that the 'Levelling up' and inclusion agendas are demonstrably delivered upon. The role of NSAR, supported by government, has been to enable members to deliver on agreed agendas, leveraging the 'Plan for Jobs' provision, despite the limitations put on them by COVID-19.

We have agreed with the NSAR Board to prioritise the Kickstart as a key strand of the emerging ITS. This is because it presents an ideal opportunity to support industry and government ambitions to increase social value in a business friendly way. It builds on work we have been doing in STAT since 2017.

We expect to be able to share more with industry on this key agenda in 2021.



NSAR SKILLS & TRAINING

Rail Provider Network (RPN)

In 2019 the National Network of Colleges underwent a rebrand to accommodate the wide scope of education and training establishments that provide skills delivery for the rail and transport sectors. The inclusion of both Higher Education and independent training providers allowed for further promotion of degree level apprenticeship standards and non-rail offerings affecting today's sector including digital and systems capabilities. The creation of a sector focused service dedicated towards improving the quality of the skills supply-side for employers also creates the opportunity to look at the ability to 'white label' the provision and to explore rolling it out to wider and adjacent sectors.

This rebranding was supported by a refocused quality requirement allowing providers to be identified as 'Rail Ready' or 'Working towards Rail Ready'. The quality criteria underpinning the designations were created through rail employer consultation looking to understand what, over and above the OFSTED inspection framework, employers are looking for from the skills training supply side.

Aligned to the new RPN offer is a membership package that includes insight on demand side skills gaps provided using our Skills Intelligence Model (SIM), regular skills updates,

access to member events and support in accessing potential employer customers. Membership also allows access to a series of products and services at a discounted member rate.

Strengthened the membership offer for employers

We have launched a substantially enhanced 'offer' to our employer members, this year. Based on a fixed menu approach, employers can now identify, from a range of products and services in the skills, and skills intelligence arena, how they would wish to recover their day allowances.

There are over 50 days of different support packages available covering a range of choices including support for getting on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers; bid and procurement support; quality improvement on apprenticeship delivery, and strategic workforce planning. Members will be able to plan how they wish to access the membership offer and build the service into a year on year programme of support.

Apprenticeship standards

Work continues on the development and delivery of two key apprenticeship standards – Train Driver and Passenger Transport Onboard and Station Team Member (PTSOTM). Both standards have been ostensibly rewritten but have been caught in Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IFATE) policy changes. These policy deliberations impact what can and should be taken into account within apprenticeship assessment plans and until this is resolved at the policy level (likely to be Spring 2021) developments here have stalled. However, considerable work has been done by NSAR External Quality Assurance of apprenticeships in rail to address structural issues with the existing assessment plan for Train Driver. These issues have now been resolved and we are seeing a steady flow of apprentices now coming through and completing end-point assessment. The Network Operations standard will now undergo a review to determine why there has been limited interest in the standard

since publication. The expectation is that this standard will be reintroduced as a Level 3 apprenticeship standard, rather than the current Level 2.

Work has also started, in response to the IFATE technical review of engineering and manufacturing standards, to refresh the rail engineering standards. NSAR is working with rail and infrastructure employers and IFATE to use this review as an opportunity to combine rail engineering, high speed rail, and tram and tramway standards into a single framework of apprenticeship standards from levels 2 to 4.

Uptake of rail apprenticeships at levels 4 to 7 is building and gaining momentum, albeit from modest beginnings.

The rail engineering standards were subject to an open consultation period running to the end of January 2020. We have now started to work with rail employers to look at how rail engineering apprenticeship standards need to respond to the results of this consultation.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Apprenticeship Framework Development for Rail

We successfully bid and were awarded a contract to work with employers from across Northern Ireland to develop a level 3 rail industry apprenticeship frameworks in 2019. This meant working with Translink, On-track-Technicians and colleges across Northern Ireland to develop a framework that both met the emerging and new needs of the rail industry in Northern Ireland, while also providing options for resilient and sustainable provision.

In 2020, as a result of the work at level 3, we were awarded a follow-up contract to repeat the process for Level 2. We expect to deliver this work by year end.



NSAR SKILLS INTELLIGENCE

Skills Intelligence Team

2020 has been a challenging year, but our services have continued to support our members and the industry through these unprecedented times. Our Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) focus continues to present sharp and incisive insights and, together with the addition of the economic narrative, provides both the detail and the evidence in supporting business case development. With the aspiration to determine economic viability



comes the need to understand how the deployment of digital tools, new technology and an understanding of the social context will further enhance the benefits of any planned infrastructure development.

We have started working with a number of organisations to support the development of a forecasting model capable of working across a number of sectors, providing a full picture of the demand landscape across industry. The output aims to produce useful information to enhance the future shape of skills training.

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)

Planning for skills training remains a high priority for many organisations and our work continues to support this process. The deployment of our Skills Intelligence Model (SIM) supports the desire to improve productivity through identifying the skills needs and developing associated

training and recruitment plans. We have developed some automated processes for improving our data cleansing procedure and worked to provide meaningful insights to support critical decision-making. In turn, this positive influence enables the industry to meet its skills and workforce demand targets. We have continued to support the work of STAT, and have been involved in the development of the shared apprenticeship scheme.

Economic Analysis

Building on our SWP work and using key metrics from the SIM and information from the ONS, we are helping clients place an economic value on skills and to evaluate the social value of providing skills training and jobs for those who are currently economically inactive. The work undertaken to date in the area has supported the business case for a variety of projects including the value added for re-opening currently disused railway lines.



Every £1 spent training on rail skills in the UK results in a £3 return on that investment.

Back on Track Report - NSAR, City & Guilds, 2020

Productivity and Technology

This is a new area of work for us arising from the government's survey in 2018 which highlighted people and resourcing as 2 of the 6 key areas influencing productivity. We are working with Network Rail to explore opportunities for improving productivity as they restructure and devolve their regions. We are studying the how the deployment of new technology can impact on productivity, although finding appropriate levels of evidence is a challenge and thus the ability to demonstrate improved levels of efficiency and productivity potentially problematic.

We have been working on how we can support the measurements of productivity improvements through better asset performance levels, lower costs, more streamlined processes, and targeted deployment of new technology.

Transport Infrastructure Efficiency Strategy (TIES) Living Lab

Our Skills Intelligence team is supporting the project will provide insights into how the skills landscape will continue to evolve in the light of implementing new technologies within the sector. Our work will add an understanding of economic value to both the development of skills, and access to the labour market alongside outlining the social value of the impacts of these major infrastructure projects.

37,067

is the anticipated total number
of retirees in rail by 2030

Routes into Rail

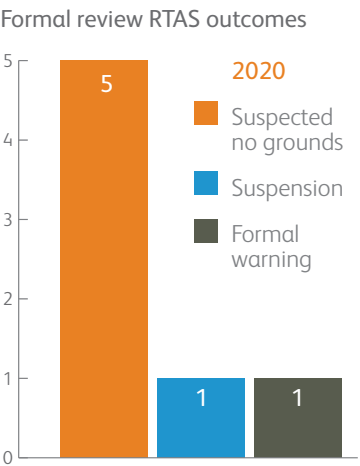
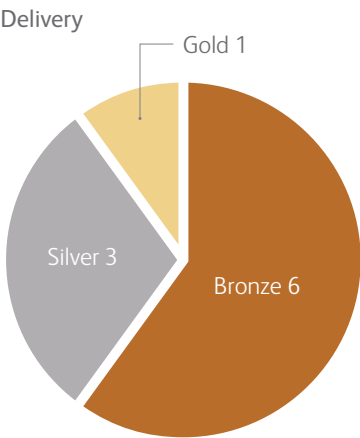
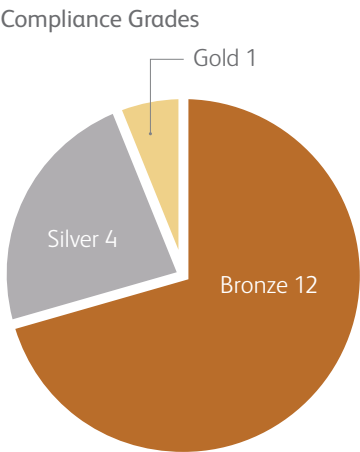
We have supported the development of the Routes into Rail project thorough gathering, collating and streamlining website content on job roles and qualifications using data held in the SIM. The team has been using its software coding skills to create a live feed ensuring information is current and up to date.

New analytical developments

We have made good progress on the development of the model to extract and utilise ONS data quickly, enhancing our service offer of providing a 360° view of the labour market reporting on both skills demand and supply.

We have advanced in the area of industry scenario planning. We are currently producing a model that will allow a number of different scenarios to be applied to the SWP outputs and further fine tune the skills demand forecasting.

NSAR QUALITY ASSURANCE – RTAS



The Quality Assurance Team has consistently adapted their Assurance Visit completion approach during varying and quickly changing COVID-19 restrictions. We have been able to maintain our programme of visits as close to the designed regime as possible. Provider activity returned to business as usual in July this year and records show that even with second lockdown in England, delivery continued without disruption. Whilst the Assurance Visits continue, elements where required, are being separated to ensure that on-site visits happen when safe to do so. The approach taken is working effectively and the programme is on schedule to be completed within the regime time frames.

Investigations have reduced in volume in 2020 but have increased in complexity with the nature of incidents continuing to move away from process and misunderstanding of the RTAS Rules to deliberate and bad practice events. Furthermore, it can be seen that whilst the number of investigations have fallen the number of investigations that have required temporary suspensions to mitigate risks to rail sit at 78% rising from 66% in 2019. This shift has also resulted in increased engagement with legal advice. Police Investigation makes good progress and has reached a key milestone by submitting evidence to the Crown Prosecution service to consider a charging decision which will open the pathway to trial.

Current investigation volumes for 2020 show a total of 15 cases to date which is a reduction of 25 on the previous year.

The Team had prepared face-to-face workshops to be delivered during 2020 but due to the national lockdowns these were adjusted to be delivered virtually. The number of provider, trainer and assessors indicated that this style event should be considered for future delivery with 188 individuals attending. Each event was delivered twice but at different times of the day to encourage and increase the opportunity for individuals to attend.

The subjects delivered were:

1. Observation Culture
2. Fundamental Ideas of Effective Observation
3. Observation Feedback, Actions & Fostering Talent
4. Rail Accident Investigation Branch - Uncovered

In addition to these webinars, the team supported Network Rail with two key communications of COSS Recertification changes and RTAS Rules V2.0 publication which were also delivered virtually.

NSAR

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

Our EQA service ensures that the end-point assessments are compliant with the employer-created assessment plans for the apprenticeship standards, and are consistently applied and comparable across the different end-point assessment organisations offering assessment for these standards. We run the employer-led external quality assurance model and work with 4 different employer boards, leading our work on four of the five EQA areas.

This year has been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic and this has had a considerable impact on end-point assessment and apprenticeship starts simultaneously. Since March 2020, the EQA team has been focused on design and implementation of end-point assessment flexibilities across all areas of our EQA footprint, looking to ensure apprentices continue to be able to access end-point assessment. This flexibility approach has been achieved without damaging the integrity of the end-point assessment and without devaluing the apprentice's assessment achievement. By the end of April, we had successfully introduced flexibilities in 100% of the apprenticeship standards that could be changed by focusing on revisiting process, administrative and/or sequencing requirements. By June 2020, all apprenticeships that needed more substantial shifts to end-point assessment in order to remain accessible had the necessary adjustments in place. These adjustments were much more focused on 'substitution' of assessment methods or more substantial assessment plan adjustments, again focusing on minimising any risk to the integrity of the apprentice's achievement.

Last year, we reported that we had been appointed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) as the EQAO for Rail, Freight and for the Digital Industries. This meant NSAR provided external quality assurance across 15 digital standards (from January 2019), 5 rail standards (from March 2019) and 4 freight standards (from May 2019). This year Screen and Media Production (20 additional standards) and Adult Care (4 additional standards) were added to our EQA responsibility. This has firmly established NSAR as the third largest provider of apprenticeship external quality





assurance, next to the IFATE and OfQUAL, and the largest employer led EQA provider. NSAR is now responsible for upwards of 60,000 apprentices starting on these apprenticeships.

Working with the Care Apprenticeship Board (employer group) on Adult Care apprenticeships during this particular year has put NSAR at the forefront of the training response to COVID-19 in a crucial, high-profile sector. Our work to keep EPA flowing and ensuring Adult Care apprentices remain able to achieve their apprenticeships and move into the workplace as fully competent adult carers is vitally important work.



Early in the year, IFATE launched a consultation on a simplified EQA system for apprenticeships. This consultation ran over the course of Spring and early Summer 2020. The simplified model of EQA was thought necessary because of the number of different approaches to EQA (4 possible approaches including OFQUAL, IFATE, Employer-led and professional institution-based EQA providers) and the number of EQA organisations that this had spawned. Although, all EQA is intended to be underpinned by the IFATE EQA framework this has bedded down to varying degrees across the EQA providers and has led to the need for a simplified approach. At present, 75% of EQA is delivered under the public sector (i.e. by IFATE's contractor, by OFQUAL).

The central proposition within the consultation was that OFQUAL (the Government's qualification regulator and EQA for about 25% of the existing marketplace) take over all EQA responsibilities other than those involving integrated degrees. These would be conducted by the Office for Students. The results of the consultation endorsed the IFATE proposition, and the transition timeline shared in the consultation document. This means that from September 2021 NSAR will start transferring EQA responsibilities for all its areas to OFQUAL. This process is likely to last through to April 2022. This will mean a transitioning focus and internal resource from EQA to Skills.

NSAR INTERNATIONAL

NSAR has maintained its agreed approach to international business development with its focus on South East Asia and China.

We have strengthened our relationships with the key stakeholders in Government – Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for International Trade. In turn they are ensuring that we are kept aware of opportunities.

Throughout this year we have established a working relationship with the Asian Development Bank who are a leading regional source of funds to governments in Asia for infrastructure projects and this include skills.

We have been asked to write a thought leadership article on workforce planning for a book to be published in the 1st quarter in 2021- Powering Learning Societies in an Age of Disruption.







NSAR 2020 ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Continued our core services through the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Supporting over 12,000 apprentices to continue their training and assessments through the COVID-19 pandemic
3. Securing and standing up the Living Lab project, with DfT support
4. Establishing Routes into Rail website and services
5. Helping the industry secure NCATI, under the leadership of Birmingham University
6. Improving safety by rapid tackling of poor training and assessment practice
7. Developing a social inclusion Infrastructure Training Service, with STAT encouragement
8. Up-to-date data and contributions to numerous industry praised reports

