

Skills Backbone & Freshdesk Communication

There are an increasing number of Skills Backbone requests from providers not being completed correctly. Please make sure individuals using Skills Backbone and Freshdesk fully understand what assurance actions can be completed in both Skills Backbone and Freshdesk. Skills Backbone lists the evidence that is required for each request, submissions without all correctly completed and uploaded evidence cannot be processed.

For guidance please find the Skills Backbone guide on the NSAR website:

<https://www.nsar.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NEW-Skills-Backbone-Administrator-User-Manual-V1.0-For-Web-April-2019.pdf>

Freshdesk is a Helpdesk support tool and tickets raised have an SLA of 5 days, however, if your request is urgent, ensure the ticket is flagged as urgent. Please do not raise additional tickets as this can cause a delay. Additionally, if your Freshdesk tickets asks for a response from you in relation to your query please reply to us from within the Freshdesk system as replying by the copy you receive to your email raises an additional Freshdesk ticket and separates your response from the initial query.

Compliance Visits Update

As we continue to try to keep everyone safe, visits have been able to carry on remotely keeping disruption to assurance plans to a minimum. Please make sure all current documents are uploaded to the Skills Backbone.

Good practice we have seen this year so far:

1. RTAS Competency Management Systems

These are designed to capture all RTAS rules and the processes behind these, such as Online Exams, CPD, Assessment for Operational Trainers/Assessors, Six assessments requirement.

2. Event Packs - Higher Standard Observed

Copies of Training Cycles and Certificates of Achievement are now being retained in the packs, signed & acknowledged by the learner.

3. Continuous Improvement

Providers have continued to complete action plans to a high standard and continuously improve internal processes and systems.

We look forward to seeing you all face to face very soon!

Delivery Assurance Visits Update

So far this year the quality of training and learning has generally been good with some examples of outstanding delivery. Learners are benefitting from this and resulting in high numbers of learners successfully passing their courses.

We have seen learners well-cared for from all providers with risk assessments put in place for Covid-19. Learners have spoken positively about the level of support they receive and feedback is collected regularly through course feedback forms. Some of these forms rely predominately on quantitative data and are positive. However, some establishments are developing the authenticity of learner feedback by speaking directly to the learners during observations and meetings outside the classroom.

Despite Covid-19 a good number of observations, walkthroughs and internal audits have taken place. This has helped to show that the standard of training, learning and assessment is consistent across the year and standardisation meetings highlight good practice and areas for improvement.

Observations were conducted as part of the delivery assurance visits allowing the trainers time to prepare for them. Overall observations and the quality audits identified the following strengths across the providers that have been seen:

- Learners are motivated, engaged, and keen to progress
- Learners' behaviour and working relationships with trainers are exemplary
- The standard of learners work in some providers is very good.
- Behaviour management techniques are good, and the majority of learners make good and outstanding progress with their personal and social development based on their individual starting points.
- Trainers are experienced with their delivery methods; they know what methods result in good learner achievement.

In observations we have seen:

- Sessions were predominately trainer led and did not cater for the needs of individual learners and as a result there was a lack of independent learning targets / individualised planning
- Learning environments need to be continually updated to reflect learners work and how the department has raised standards. Dated documents need to be checked for authenticity.
- In the majority of observations, trainers have used their vocational experience in the development of learners' English and maths skills, but there have been a few missed opportunities especially in maths.

The amount of work set outside of training sessions has developed over the year. Questioning of learners is very good although in some cases learners need to be stretched and challenged. Across all providers that have been visited this year resources are well presented and there is good learner engagement developing employability skills.

Suspended Sites & Off-Site Delivery

Please be reminded that if an Assured Provider is temporary suspended or fully suspended, the Providers premises and practical sites are also affected. Assured Providers must not deliver at these venues or practical sites. Where an Assured Provider intends to use another Providers premises, a check of the online [Training Directory](#) will confirm that they are still listed. If the Provider does not appear on the Training Directory the premises cannot be used.

Providers that deliver events at a premises which are not managed by themselves, are reminded that the venue must meet the Premises specification and Covid-19 safety arrangements. It is the Assured Providers responsibility to check and confirm this under their own Quality Assurance system.

The full addresses of delivery should be recorded on the Events Calendar and all practical sites of TIC, OTP and OLEC must appear on their own list of Practical sites in Skills Backbone. If the site does not appear on their list you must request registration to it via Skills Backbone before delivery takes place.

Industry Common Induction [ICI]

Network Rail has confirmed that work has now been started to remove all obsolete ICI related capability from the database. Completion of this exercise is anticipated to be around mid-April 2021. ICI capability has also been removed from Skills Backbone.

Track Handback Coming to Sentinel

Network Rail are intending to include Track Handback to RTAS assured courses. Cross industry working groups are under way but currently there are no timescales for 'go-live'. An update will be communicated when available.

Continuous Professional Development

Many thanks to those that joined the CPD Webinars, we hope that you have found them helpful going forward. With only two months left of the CPD period, please ensure hours are submitted for review to remain compliant.

Remember if there is any uncertainty if entries fit the CPD criteria, make sure that the entry clearly explains how this benefits learners or the industry and use the Guidance Notes on NSAR's website for support.

A Webinar will be planned at the start of the next CPD period which will outline all changes to the criteria and categories. Dates will be communicated when confirmed.

NSAR Provider Forum/ Webinar Workshops

Thank you to those that joined our Provider Forum.

Webinar workshops will continue remotely for the time being. For those that may have missed any workshops you can find these available on our social media platforms and on request via Freshdesk. In 2021, we plan to hold the following webinars:

- Using Skills Backbone & Freshdesk
- The Holistic Learner
- Biased and unbiased delivery
- Internal Verification

Benchmarked by BSI to ISO 19011: Guideline for Auditing Management Systems

NSAR has been recognised by BSI as meeting the international standard ISO 19011, scoring top marks in all categories with a compliance rating of 100%. This is a major achievement for NSAR which has a pivotal role in assuring the quality of training and assessment provision of over one hundred providers that operate under the Rail Training Assurance Scheme [RTAS]. NSAR assures and measures the level of quality delivered by training and assessment providers against Network Rail standards, RTAS Rules and the Rail Industry's continuous improvement and strategic development requirements.

The two day audit by BSI of NSAR included a review of all of NSAR's Quality Assurance processes and the observation of a Provider's assurance visit. NSAR had to evidence that it had robust processes in place for the preparation and delivery of assurance visits, as well as processes to evaluate the competence and selection of its own Quality Assurance Team.

The BSI auditors noted excellent communications with Providers during the planning, execution, and follow-up phases of the assurance visit, that assessment techniques were positive, consistent and that the professionalism and attitude of the NSAR Quality Assurance team was of a high standard.

Neil Robertson, CEO of NSAR said: *"Attaining ISO19011 is a huge step forward for NSAR and demonstrates clearly to the market NSAR's competence and expertise in the field of quality assurance auditing".*

Dyan Crowther, CEO of HS1 and Chair of NSAR said: *"It is vital that for the safe operation of the railway that standards of training and assessment provision are of the highest quality, in achieving ISO 19011 NSAR is showing the industry's commitment to making this happen".*

Getting in touch

Contact us by using Freshdesk, <https://nsar.freshdesk.com>. Please make sure that you select the QA category at all times so that it reaches us.