

COVID-19 updates

This year has been a testing year for all of us. We would like to thank you for all your hard work in continuing to provide a safe service to the industry whilst changing the way events are conducted.

Providers should ensure that the Skills Backbone calendars are updated to communicate any closures that may arise by adding 'unavailable' dates and confirming as a priority when the business is open again. All COVID-19 Risk assessments are required to be uploaded to SBB.

Please continue to ensure the safety of all staff members and delegates by following government guidelines. The latest guidance and advice can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

RTAS Rules v2.0 publication

Providers should be aware of the updated RTAS Rules v2.0. Version 2.0 provides greater detail and clarity and has been informed by lessons learned and investigation findings.

Providers must ensure that all staff:

- are provided with the RTAS Rules v2.0
- are briefed and confirm the understanding of the RTAS Rules v2.0 is documented for audit purposes within the providers own management system briefing arrangements.
- assess impact to and make any necessary updates to provider policies and procedures to ensure compliance to the RTAS Rules v2.0 which will be tested under Assurance Visits scheduled from 24th November 2020.

Any reviews of rules and amendments to internal management systems from this updated version will not be accepted as a Continuous Professional Development [CPD] entry.

Assurance Visits

Assurance visits are continuing to take place through a combination of remote and on-site [where is it safe to do so] visits. We would like to thank the providers that have had visits completed so far and continue to build quality within your departments at these difficult times.

Provider Grading Certificates

Electronic certificates will be provided for this current year and all providers will receive new certificates after their 2020-21 visits to align with the 3 grade system of – Compliance, Quality and Premises.

Observations upload function in Skills Backbone reminder

Providers are reminded that observations can be uploaded onto their Skills Backbone platform. NSAR have asked that you continue doing this in preparation for Assurance Visits. The combinations of remote and onsite attendance will continue taking place and as the Covid-19 pandemic guidance and restrictions change across the UK. This enables NSAR to have access to all completed observations for the year.

Any providers experiencing difficulties in meeting RTAS requirements for observations and delivery of assessments for their trainers and assessors should contact Freshdesk. The relevant QAM will then make contact with the provider.

NSAR Webinar Workshops

Thank you to those that joined our Webinar workshops this year. 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:

- The Holistic Learner
- SAR & QIP support
- Biased and unbiased delivery
- Continuous Professional Development
- Internal Verification
- RTAS lessons learned

We hope these webinars continue to provide guidance and ideas for your quality assurance cycle.

Continuous Professional Development

The last Continuous Professional Development period saw a successful CPD year with all submissions on time for the first time in NSAR history!!

With an increase in quality and an increased use of mid-term reviews, we look forward to seeing the same this period. Please remember the last date of CPD for the 2019-20 period is the 30th June. You can submit for a mid-term review when your trainer/assessor reaches 15 hours uploaded onwards.

A New Framework will be launched for the 2021-22 CPD year, which will see hour caps changing and the additional categories such as Completion of an eLearning courses and Special Educational Needs progression within the training department. An NSAR webinar will be held in February 2021 to give Trainer/Assessors and Training providers ideas and guidance on achieving beneficial CPD.

SAR position statements

As the new year approaches, Position statements should be completed. Please upload your current SAR/position statements to Skills Backbone to assist us to view them in advance of the assurance visits.

The SAR is the document where you reflect on the achievements you have made in 2020 as a training provider as well as identifying areas for improvement for 2021. They highlight the plan for achieving the improvements you are going to achieve in the coming year. Please make sure that any statements made are supported by clear evidence. This does not just have to be written, please feel free to include graphs, pictures etc.

SAR's are usually well written and delivered by team effort. Using the training team gives a well-rounded achievable and usually open document with buy in from all. Different members of the team will be able to give different evidence and suggestions, thus making it a comprehensive and accurate reflection of your training provision.

New - DC Lines Isolations Online Exams

Online Exams for DC Lines Isolations are now live for **Non-Operational Trainer and Assessor Only**. Please ensure that these are completed, where the capability is held only, to renew these competences. Please be reminded RTAS 4.3.8.3 - Failure to successfully pass the Core On-Line Exams prior to the expiry of the relevant Competences shall result in the suspension of all the Assured Capabilities. In order to reinstate those Assured Capabilities, initial training shall be required for each of the Competences lost.

CDG Updates

NSAR attend Track engineering and Over Headline CDG's. If any providers have any issues or questions, please contact us via Freshdesk.

New Framework Launch 2022

The Quality Assurance Framework will be changing from January 1st, 2022. There will be a requirement to make some small changes to your quality documents to reflect the new criteria. However, please note this does not affect your self-assessment for 2020 as it remains under the old framework.

The key judgements for the new framework will be on Leadership and Management, Quality of Education and Personal Development and Behaviour and will be awarded Gold, Silver, Bronze and Inadequate as before.

You will notice that Outcomes have been taken out of the framework but will be measured in the other areas.

During assurance visits Quality Assurance Managers will still use a range of data that is available. They will analyse the performance of the provider using the most recent validated data. Although data alone will now not lead directly to an individual judgement, it will provide important evidence for judging the impact of the quality of education.

The focus for the assurance visits will be on quality of delivery of training, how well it is being taught and assessed and the impact it has on learners. There will also be more focus on whether providers create an environment in which learners are able to learn offering advice and support. It will also take into consideration of the expectation of managers and trainers for their learners and how this is reflected in their behaviours and attitudes.

Workshops will be organised next year to understand the new framework and make amendments to quality documents.

Assessor Observations

To improve quality within Assessing, observations by NSAR will be taking place and will be at short notice. Please continue to populate Assessments taking place on the Skills backbone calendar.

Suspensions taken place under compliance

2019 and 2020 has seen Assured Providers facing suspension for failing Assurance Visits under the new regime. There have been 7 suspensions actioned as a result of being found inadequate during their Assurance Visit through 2019-20. Please ensure all RTAS rules are followed for compliance.

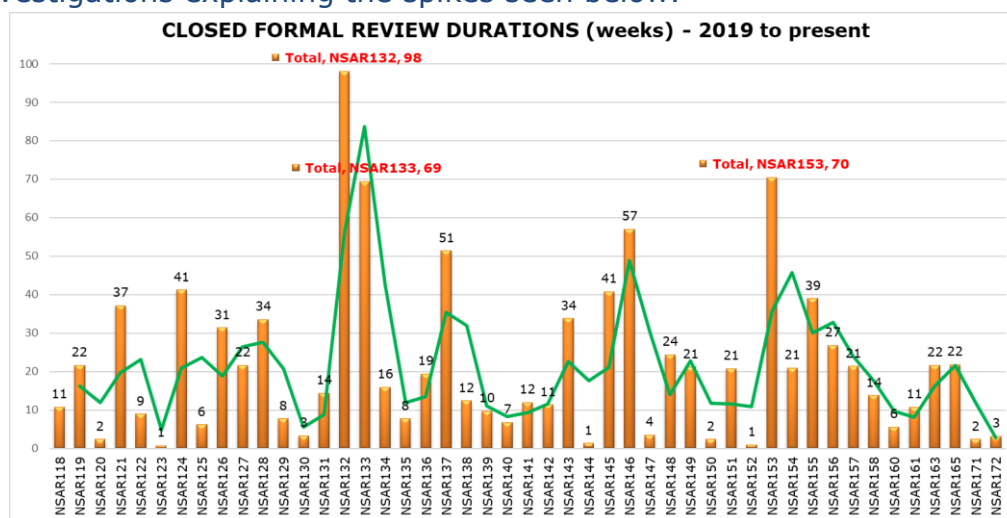
Formal Review referrals from Assurance activities, including Assurance Visits, are detailed below.

Year	Number of referrals	Outcome			
		No grounds	Improvement Action Plan	Suspension	Warning
2017	13	2	10	1	0
2018	17	0	17	0	0
2019	5	2	1	2	0
2020 so date	4	1	---	---	1
Two referrals from 2020 are still ongoing Formal Reviews with outcomes to be determined.					

This reduction over time demonstrates that quality standards have increased, and Formal Reviews are being initiated from reports to Network Rail, NSAR and Confidential reporting systems (whistle blowers).

Formal Reviews Update

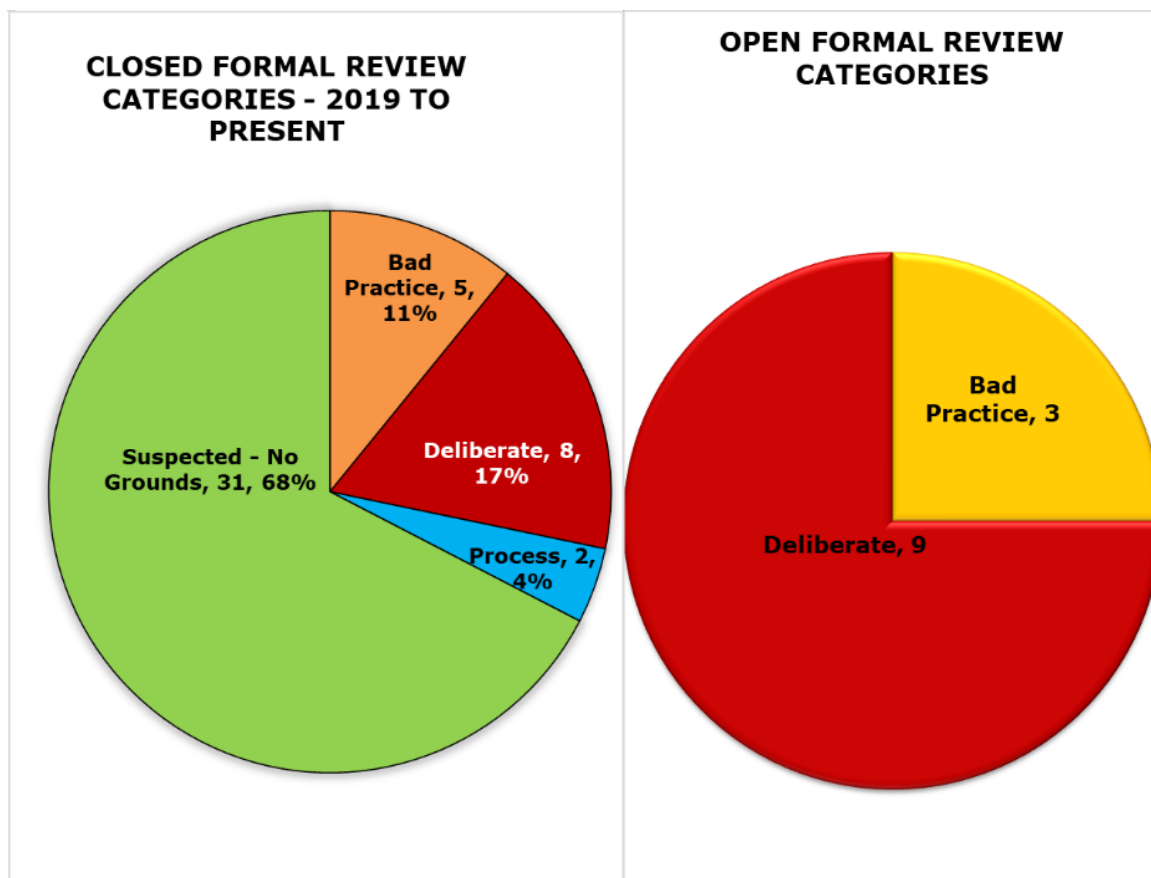
Formal Review durations have continued to reduce with the most complex of investigations explaining the spikes seen below.



NSAR - Briefing Note #18

It can be noted that the categorisations of investigations are moving towards allegations of not proven and deliberate or bad practice breaches which require significant investigation activity to reach conclusion.

Due to this change, NSAR decided to invest in the use of advanced investigative techniques. The use of covert tactics will continue where necessary



NSAR has concluded our work on one of the most serious Formal Reviews and are waiting for the outcome of a legal assessment. A dedicated communication providing more detail on all suspensions since the start of 2019 will be published as soon as we are able.

The Quality Assurance Team

The past year has seen three additions to the Quality Assurance Team:

Craig Vernal – Quality Assurance Manager – Compliance

With over 20 years of Railway Overhead line experience, Craig has assisted and delivered OLE AC Isolations as well undertaking renewal and construction work on many large projects. After moving into AP/NP Training & Assessing and eventually Track Safety, Craig became a Training manager, managing the RTAS requirements and day to day running of a large Training & Assessment provider. In his spare time Craig enjoys fishing, going to his allotment and National Banger Racing.

Dawn Atkins – Quality Assurance Manager – Compliance

Dawn has worked within Learning and Development and after successfully achieving a Business Management Diploma, began her Rail career as a Sentinel Co-ordinator. Whilst undertaking the role as a Training administrator she gained assurance for Training and later moved into the role Training manager. In Dawn's time she likes to Travel, practise Yoga, and attempt to enjoy watching Arsenal FC.

Sarah Saddler - Quality Assurance Manager – Delivery

Sarah has spent all her career within the education and training sector having started her career as a teacher before becoming a Lecturer of Education and Business in Further and Higher Education. It was during this time that Sarah took a special interest in the quality assurance aspect of education and gained the relevant qualifications alongside lecturing. Following lecturing, Sarah took a job as a Quality Assurance Manager for a national training provider. It was during this time; she became the Ofsted nominee and became responsible for the overall quality of provision across all sectors of the business. Following this role, Sarah has worked as Quality Assurance Consultant for a number of Training Providers. In Sarah's spare time, she enjoys travelling and playing hockey

Getting in touch

Once again please get in touch with any questions you may have by using Freshdesk, <https://nsar.freshdesk.com/support/solutions> Using the QA category at all times.

This will see your requests get answered as quickly as possible.

There is an SLA of 5 days, however, if your request/enquiry is urgent please ensure this is flagged as urgent and do not raise additional tickets as this creates additional workload and delays.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

The NSAR team wish you a safe and Merry Christmas and we are looking forward to seeing you all in 2021.

