

Seasons Greetings

Another successful year comes to an end, and we would like to thank everyone for their hard work and continuation to push forward to make our industry even better. We know that the Christmas period is a busy one operationally on the railway so please make sure all training and assessment notifications are completed before you log off for the Christmas break.

Whatever you are doing over the Christmas holidays everyone within the QA team at NSAR wish you a happy and peaceful time.



Changes to acceptable Forms of ID

The Citizen Card can now be accepted as proof of identity for training events as it has replaced the Validate system. Training providers are required to validate the Citizen Card online using the following link www.verify.citizencard.com or via the mobile app. Evidence of this check being completed must be retained with the copy of the ID.

The full list of acceptable forms of ID for training and assessment events are:

- Sentinel Card
- Passports
- Identity cards from an EU or European Economic Area (EEA) country
- UK photocard driving licences (either full or provisional)
- EU or EEA driving licences
- NI Electoral identity cards
- a US passport card
- a proof of age card recognised under PASS with a unique reference number (This includes the Citizen ID card)
- an armed forces identity card
- a UK biometric residence permit (BRP)

For those providers who conduct training in prisons the candidates Prison ID is acceptable if they have no other form of identification.

Acting as a Mentor after Skills Fade

Trainers and Assessors who have regained capabilities following Skills Fade cannot act as a mentor until six months have passed. This duration of time can be decreased if the provider is able to prove that the Trainer/Assessor has used the capability regularly since regaining it. This however will be dealt with individually and the provider must request permission before the mentoring process takes place. Please submit any requests via Freshdesk.

Pre-Requisites for OLEC Courses

Various providers have been asking for guidance on what pre-requisites apply for OLEC 1 and OLEC 2 initial training as there are none recorded within the training materials. The items listed below is expected for these courses.

OLEC 1 – Valid medical and D&A

OLEC 2 – Valid medical and D&A & valid PTS

These decisions have been made based upon The Network Rail standard *NR/L2/CTM/014 - Competence & Training Overhead Line Engineering*, Sentinel Scheme Rules, and Network Rail standard *NR/L2/OHS/00124 - Competence Specific Medical Fitness Requirements* and Occupational Health Provider Requirements for Medical Assessments.

PTS AC

QA Managers are noticing an increase in questions relating to PTS AC. Mostly these queries are what an Assured Provider should do if an individual does not hold this competence or if they fail just this section of the assessment.

What if a learner fails just the PTS AC element?

If a learner fails, just the PTS AC element of the initial or recertification training then they fail the course given the majority of infrastructure has OLE present. The learner should also repeat the PTS e-Learning to refresh themselves on the information contained within that.

Can you run just a PTS AC event?

Although there is no explicit written direction within the lesson plan to state that you cannot run a PTS AC-only course, the delegate should attend the full initial training again. It is also advisable that the learner repeats the PTS e-Learning to refresh themselves on the information contained within that before attending the classroom event.

What if a learner does not hold PTS AC?

In the unusual circumstance that an individual holds the PTS competence only they must complete the full PTS Initial course. Upon passing this, the PTS and PTS AC award should be notified on Sentinel or via a Data Correction. If the learner fails either of the initial PTS and PTS AC assessments, then their PTS competence must be taken down.

New Trainer/Assessor Requirements

When processing new trainer/assessor registrations and applications QA Managers are increasingly receiving challenge why a Track Safety Trainer should hold the COSS competence for 12 months before being permitted to register as an RTAS Assured Trainer/Assessor.

When an individual applies to become an approved Trainer and Assessor on Skills Backbone checks are made of three things:

- The Sentinel Number registered in Skills Backbone matches the individual applying.
- The individual's Primary Sponsor is an Assured Provider and is aware of the registration.
- The individual applying has held the appropriate competencies for 12 months.
 - Track Safety trainer – PTS and COSS
 - OTP only trainer – PTS and OTP Core
 - OLEC only trainer – PTS and OLEC 1 & OLEC 2

These checks are completed to make sure the requirements set out in the Network Rail Training material and the RTAS Rules are met.

For Track Safety Trainers looking to only train PTS, COSS competence is still required to be held for 12 months. This is due to RTAS Rules Clauses 4.3.6 & 5.4.1.

4.3. Assured Position (Assured Trainer/Assured Assessor)

Individuals in Assured Positions covered by the RTAS Scheme shall:

- 4.3.6.** In order to deliver track safety training and/or assessment hold and maintain the PTS and COSS Competences.

5.4. Competence of Assured Positions

- 5.4.1.** Assured Positions (i.e. Assured Trainers and/or Assured Assessors) shall be deemed as competent and experienced in the Assured Capabilities in which they deliver training and/or assessments. Competence certification shall be obtained and maintained in accordance with [4.3.6](#), [4.3.7](#) and [4.3.8](#).

The RTAS rules define experience as:

Experience(d)	Knowledge and/or skills in a particular competence which has been gained operationally over a reasonable period of time and in varied environments as defined in Network Rail Competence Standard(s).
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It is determined that the 'reasonable' period of time is 12 months, particularly to achieve experience in varied environments. The trainer must act as a COSS on the live infrastructure during the PTS Practical assessment, where they are responsible for individuals who are not yet competent. That requires a high level of experience and is a big responsibility. The trainer is also expected to be experienced to deal with all sorts of scenarios during training. If they are newly competent or have limited experience it is unfair to the trainer to be put in a situation whereby, they cannot meet learners' expectations.

As is often the case there may be exceptions to the rule. If a proposed trainer/assessor does not meet these requirements but is an experienced individual in an exceptional circumstance such as having lost competence due to a recent illness or has equivalent COSS competence experience on rail infrastructure that is not managed by Network Rail such as London Underground, Rail for London Infrastructure, please advise us at the time so that we can review applications on an individual, case by case basis so that no one is disadvantaged due to circumstance.

PTS Logbook Entries Clarification

A provider has asked us recently to clarify who should be signing the learner's PTS Logbook entries and whether there were any concessions given to individuals who do not work under a COSS such as a train operator staff attending breakdowns. Network Rail has confirmed the following:

- NR/L2/CTM/021 states that workplace experience shall be recorded, and each successful learner is provided with a PTS workplace experience logbook.
- The signature must be a **COSS** that the individual has worked under on a specific date, location, and under a specific form of protection.
- Section 2 of the logbook states counter signature can be the line manager or mentor i.e., an additional signature. We will expect to see evidence of this.
- Where paper logbooks are presented, Assured Providers should check that the logbook signatory for each date is a COSS.
- If the individual has PTS recorded in their electronic logbook in Sentinel, then the person that recorded it is a COSS because the use of competence cannot be recorded before being swiped in by a card checker and therefore this negates the need for countersignature by line manager or mentor.
- If the PTS holder cannot get sufficient workplace experience signed by, or added to the Sentinel Electronic Logbook by, the COSS then they are not eligible for recertification training and have to repeat the initial training.
- There are no concessions to the above

To help avoid issues on the day of delivery, Providers should make sure sponsors are aware of these requirements and the implications if an individual's logbook does not meet the standard. It may be beneficial, where possible, to collect this information before the event takes place.

Verification completed during Compliance Assurance Visits will now be monitoring these logbook entries.

First-Time Trainer Observations

Please note that an OLEC 1 event cannot be used for a first-time trainer observation. If you have a trainer who is looking to become an OLEC-only trainer, please contact NSAR directly for guidance.

Online Exams

Online exams will not be processed from Wednesday 21st December 2022 until Wednesday 4th January 2023 due to the Christmas holidays. Any exams completed during this time frame will not be processed. Please make sure that you double-check your Competence Management Systems to make sure that there is no risk of competence being lost.

Invoices and contracts for 2023

Please make sure that all invoices and signed 2023 contracts are returned to accreditationadmin@nsar.co.uk before the close of business on Tuesday 3rd January 2023. If NSAR has not received either the signed contract and/or invoice payment by Tuesday 3rd January 2023 access to Sentinel will be removed until both are complete.

Safe Work Packs from Rail Hub

There have been a few queries resulting from the use of Rail Hub to create Safe Work Packs as they have a few differences from the more familiar 'On Trac' packs.

Network Rail has advised that:

Rail Hub is designed so that the planning process cannot move onto the next stage unless the previous section has been completed this includes approval and sign-off. It is a fully electronic process. Each stage has a built-in audit trail. Assessors need to record that it is a Rail Hub pack.

SWPs from Rail Hub can be generated without signatures, as the signature itself is not mandatory. A non 'agency' Rail Hub SWP cannot be completed and printed until all verification has been done, there is an electronic audit trail inside the system. The packs should include the extract of the WON and maps as any other pack as these are required by 019 however it is possible to generate and print a pack that does not contain those attachments.

We are advised that there is work underway to reduce the number of variances that are seen within Rail Hub packs vs 'OnTrac' Safe Work Packs which is ongoing.

Finally, the audit trail can be viewed by the planner, and therefore, in all cases, Assessors should ask for the candidate or their Sponsor to make sure that they can show the audit trail that applies to the pack, therefore you will be able to see that where packs are printed without signatures it has been through the correct 019 verification and approval process.

Where there could be any doubt about the validity of the pack Providers should retain a copy of the audit trail within the assessment pack for any future verification queries.

Investigation Sanctions

We know that this is a contentious area of our work. We understand if you are subject to an investigation, and you receive a sanction then you will be feeling aggrieved. Assured Providers are often encouraged to believe that the facts of the investigation are fabricated.

NSAR and Network Rail investigators are subject to audit in the work they do and endeavour to always recommend proportionate action when suspending Individuals or Providers that is relevant to the misdemeanour.

NSAR completes investigations on behalf of Network Rail including administration and communications to parties subject to, or who can inform, an investigation. It is an entirely evidence-based process during which all decisions to open and apply risk mitigation actions during a case are made by a panel, two-thirds of which is formed of Network Rail Training and Safety Managers. RTAS Outcomes agreed by the panel are authorised by a Senior Manager in Network Rail not previously involved in the case.

2021 established that the most frequent breaches of RTAS were deliberate, and we have seen this continue in 2022.

There have been five complex investigations closed in 2022, four of which received severe sanctions. Whilst there were administrative oversights within these investigations, these oversights were not the root cause of the severity of the sanctions applied. The duration of any suspension is unique to the detail of the case, the cooperation of parties involved, the impact on competence holders, and any precedent case on record.

Please share this information with your teams so that they can be reassured that where there are allegations, investigators use advanced forms of evidence to confirm whether breaches have occurred or not. Where there are breaches of a minor nature the formal review panel will always prefer to support learning and development through action plans and formal warnings. However, you will note below that where parties are repeatedly involved in breaches and action plans or formal warnings have not been successful to prevent recurrences, sanctions will increase in their severity.

Evidenced Actions	Evidenced Breaches Include	Sanction	Temp Suspension during investigation	Evidence techniques used
Investigation 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training delegates without authority from Primary Sponsor ➤ Delivering PTS Track Visits in contravention of mandated training plans and falsifying Safe Work Packs to prevent discovery by IQA and EQA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ exceeding the maximum permitted delegate numbers. ○ shortening mandated 90 minutes duration on PTS initial track walks. ➤ Shortening of DCCR Training duration without risk assessment & not completing practical location safety briefings. ➤ Assessors gathering inadequate evidence of Workplace Assessments including allowing an environment to be manufactured for the purposes of assessment ➤ Editing the appearance of Network Rail Training Toolkit records for the second time where a formal warning had been issued by panel in 2021. ➤ Desponsoring an Assured Position whilst under investigation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breaches of RTAS & Network Rail Standards Falsification of documents/records Infringements of Health & Safety Negligence False notification of competence to Sentinel Failure of monitor trainer/assessors Desponsoring whilst under investigation 	<p>Assured Provider</p> <p>Suspended 3 years</p> <p>Assured Position</p> <p>x2 each suspended for 7 years</p> <p>x1 assessor – action plan completion with new Provider</p>	<p>Assured Provider</p> <p>Suspended from delivery of PTS only.</p> <p>Assured Positions</p> <p>Suspended from all delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covert Observation External Verification Metadata of photographic evidence Archived email accounts

Appeals that were submitted were rejected by Network Rail

Evidenced Actions	Evidenced Breaches Include	Sanction	Temp Suspension during investigation	Evidence techniques used
Investigation 2 ➤ Undertaking inadequate workplace assessment delivery in both evidence to support outcome of competence and completion of mandated workplace assessment records for the second time where temporary suspension and an action plan had been issued by panel in 2021	Breaches of RTAS & Network Rail Standards Negligence	Assured Provider Action Plan Assured Position x1 trainer suspended for 2 years, COSS competence taken down with retraining required and re-mentoring.	Assured Provider None Assured Position Suspended from all delivery	External Verification
Appeals that were submitted were rejected by Network Rail				
Investigation 3 ➤ Falsification of x2 Safe Work Packs within in order to have COSS competence for x2 individuals notified and be paid outstanding fees for assessment delivery.	Breaches of RTAS & Network Rail Standards Falsification of documents/records Infringements of Health & Safety Negligence False notification of competence to Sentinel	Assured Provider No sanction Assured Position x1 Assessor suspended for 5 years	Assured Provider None Assured Position Suspended from all delivery	Metadata of photographic evidence
No appeal made				

Evidenced Actions		Evidenced Breaches Include	Sanction	Temp Suspension during investigation	Evidence techniques used
Investigation 4	➤ Failing to prevent through IQA, the supporting learners through PTS Initial Verification assessments by advising mandatory questions by x1 trainer	Breaches of Sentinel Scheme Rules, RTAS & Network Rail Standards	Assured Provider Detailed action plan Assured Positions x2 trainer/assessors suspended for 10 years x2 trainer/assessors no sanction	Assured Provider Suspended pending reassurance visit following inadequate grading. Assured Positions x4 trainer/assessors suspended from all delivery	Metadata of photographic evidence Company Vehicle tracker data Sentinel login data Handwriting analysis
	➤ Failing to identify through IQA that the PTS Initial Track Visit had been shortened from 90 minutes to 60 minutes.	Falsification of documents/records			
	➤ Manufacturing and Falsifying Workplace Assessments [including COSS & ES Workplace Assessment for a peer trainer/assessor], deliberately scanning poor quality photographic evidence in attempts to prevent verifiers and managers from identifying the breaches	Infringements of Health & Safety Negligence False notification of competence to Sentinel Failure of monitor trainer/assessors			
	➤ Making statements and responses under local investigation interview that were known to be false.	Failure to cooperate with an investigation			
	No appeal made				
Investigation 5	➤ Allegation of manufacturing of assessments for same sponsored staff through one assessor of an Assured Provider.	None	Assured Provider No sanction Assured Positions No sanction	Assured Provider None Assured Position None	External Verification Metadata of photographic evidence

We hope that you can see that where there is evidence to confirm a breach it can be obtained and the potential for miscarriages of justice are limited.

New Logo

In September 2022 we launched our new NSAR logo and branding. We have noticed that there are many providers still using our old logo. In some cases, we still find the NSARE logo on the footers of websites and email signatures for our Assured Providers.

If you use the NSAR logo on any of your documentation or websites this needs to be updated to our new logo.

NSAR Provider Forum

Thank you to those that joined our Provider Forum on Tuesday 22nd November 2022. It was great that so many of you could join us for this event and actively took part. We would also like to thank all our guest speakers.

We will be planning 2023's Forums shortly. If you have any particular topics, you would like us to cover or Guest Speakers, you would like us to arrange for the sessions then please let us know and we will make every effort to include them.

Communication & Getting in Touch

Contact us by using Freshdesk, <https://nsar.freshdesk.com>.

Freshdesk is a Helpdesk support tool and tickets raised have an SLA of 5 days, however, if your request is urgent, you can set its priority as urgent. Please make sure that your communication is always professional, and your enquiry is best suited to NSAR and not another channel.

We work tirelessly to make sure that we meet your needs and by adhering to the above it will allow us to process your query efficiently. Please see below some simple Freshdesk housekeeping which will assist with keeping the system running efficiently.

- Make sure you add 'Quality Assurance' as the department your query relates to so that it reaches us without delay.
- Don't close your Freshdesk ticket, by closing your ticket elements of your query may be missed and we may continue trying to resolve something that you no longer need us to.
- Don't respond to a closed ticket, if your query has been closed but you still have questions regarding it, please raise a new ticket and reference the previous ticket number so we can respond to you efficiently.
- Don't raise duplicate tickets, this is either from the same account or multiple people from within the same provider asking the same question, this can cause confusion and add time to resolving the query.

Welcome to the team

Nigel Tilling has joined us as a QA Manager since Monday 12th December 2022, Cindy Major joins us on Tuesday 10th January 2023 as a QAM Support Manager and Dean Hingley completes and internal move from EQA to the QA Team as a QA Manager from Tuesday 3rd January 2023. All are looking forward to meeting you in January 2023.

Nigel has an excellent background in quality assurance and workforce competence management. He started his career as an engineer and moved into training, development, and competence. Nigel comes to NSAR from roles at City and Guilds as an External Quality Assurer and Competence Manager for Network Rail High Speed 1. A lifelong learner, he has a BA (Hons) in Professional Development, Post-Compulsory Education and Training and a Master of Education.

Cindy has been involved in varying forms of quality assurance for over twenty-five years. Her most recent role was with Network Rail as a Training Quality Assurance Specialist for all Network Rail centres and key compliance advisor to central functions. Cindy worked for Network Rail for 18 years, in quality assurance and training and development coordination. Prior to this, she worked in food manufacturing in quality control and as a production team leader.

Dean moves across from NSAR's EQA Team, where he led the External Quality Assurance (EQA) of end-point assessment for rail engineering and logistics apprenticeships, and the development of the train driver and passenger transport standards. Dean is an experienced quality assurance specialist, with specialist skills in compliance and quality assurance of learning and development provision and delivery, including the approval and audit of learning programs and trainers. Dean brings with him vast experience in L&D provision and quality assurance across a wide range of sectors from large corporations to SMEs, and subject areas including Telecoms and IT, Team Leading, Management, and Utilities. In 2021, he was invited to become a Veolia Governance Board member and provides the board with advice and support on quality in training provision.

*Best Wishes
for a peaceful
& restful
holiday.*

The QA Team

