NetworkRail

Skills Assessment Scheme User Guide

1

2

3

4

5

6

everyone
home safe
every day
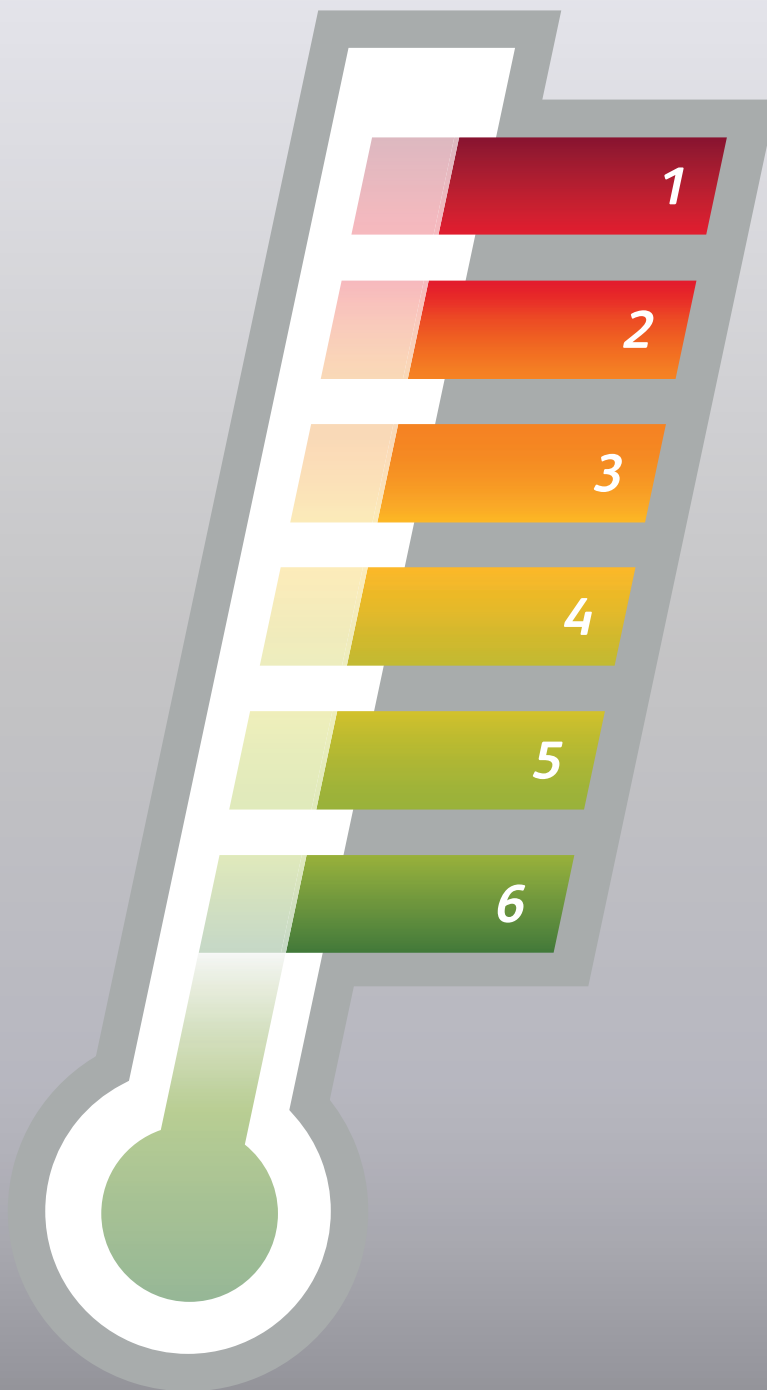
A proportionate solution...

The Skills Assessment Scheme is an evolution of AiTL. It is the way in which we gain, maintain and renew our competence.
It takes a proportionate approach based on risk.

Why?

"Our competence management system is too onerous..."

"We spend too much time assuring the low risk basic tasks instead of focussing on the high risk ones..."

"The current process is too bureaucratic, far too much paperwork to fill in…"

This is what you have told us - So we are changing the way in which we assess and assure the competence of our people.

How?

A risk based approach to managing the competence of our people aligns to the core principles of the Business Critical Rules (BCR) programme. Based on industry wide research and analysis, we have developed a better understanding of identifying the risks associated with activities. We will apply more effort assuring the highest risk activities and apply a light touch approach for the lowest risk activities.
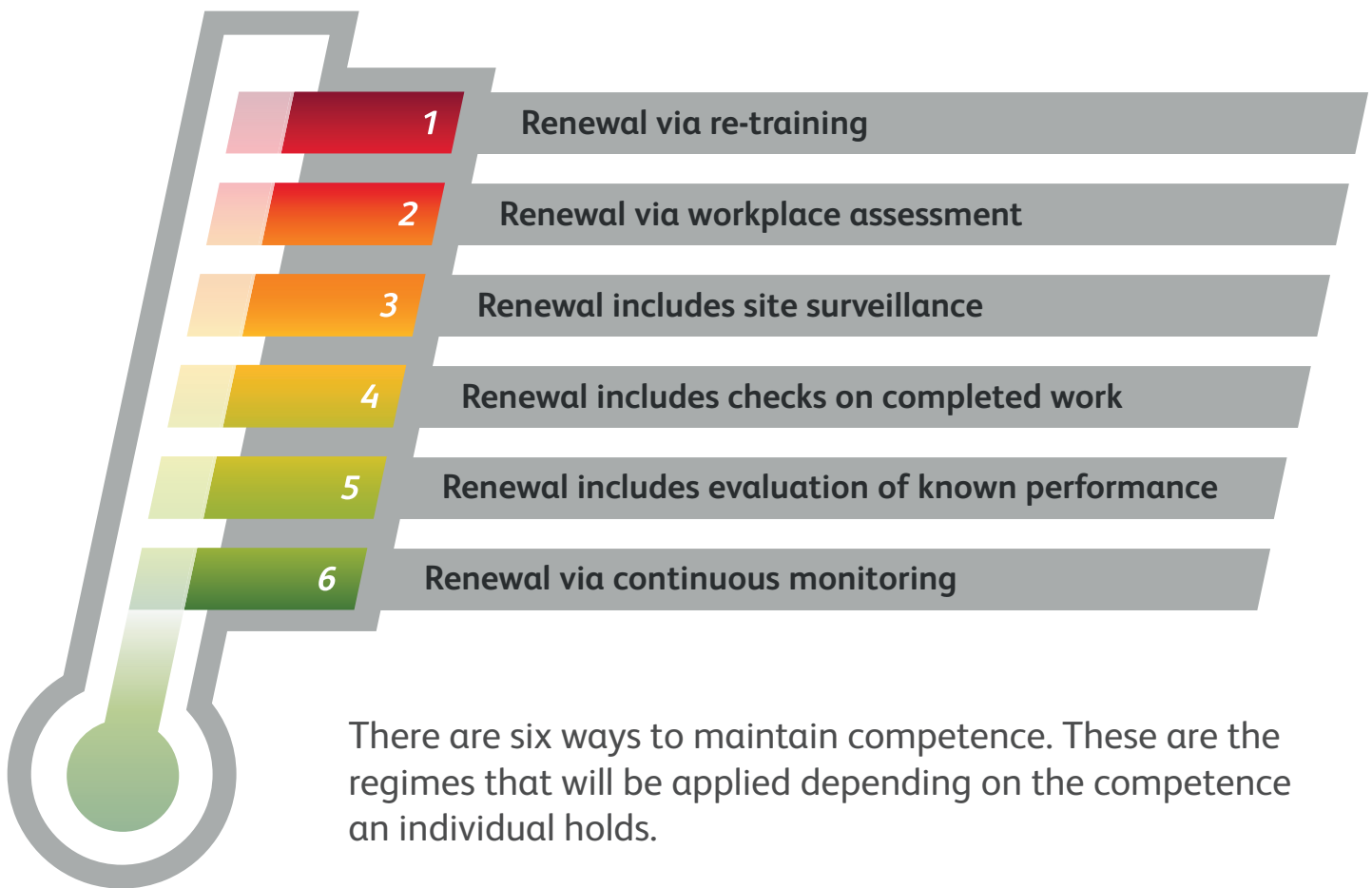
When?

Skills Assessment will be introduced during 2015, rolling out across the Routes and central functions. Training and support will be provided up to and after this date so that you are supported and prepared to implement the changes from day one.

What?

The scheme aims to be less reliant on paper reliant and, where appropriate more emphasis will be on site observations and end product checks rather than computer based knowledge tests. There will be six ways to maintain competence. These are the regimes people will apply depending on the competence they hold. By introducing an Annual Capability Conversation (ACC) we will gain a better understanding of the performance and development needs of our people.

Six ways to renew competence

1	**Renewal via re-training**
2	**Renewal via workplace assessment**
3	**Renewal includes site surveillance**
4	**Renewal includes checks on completed work**
5	**Renewal includes evaluation of known performance**
6	**Renewal via continuous monitoring**

There are six ways to maintain competence. These are the regimes that will be applied depending on the competence an individual holds.

Critical inputs

As part of an assessment all competences are analysed against a number of factors, including:

- The complexity of the task
- The types of decisions to be made
- The number of steps involved
- Whether there is any in-built system logic or safety features
- Whether there is any opportunity for error correction
- The impact of unsafe application

Once these have been determined for each activity the method to maintain the competence will be identified. High risk activities should be trained and assessed in a robust manner with validity periods that are suitably timed to avoid skill fade. Low risk activities can be assured using evidence of consistent safe application.

Who does what?

Individual

The person who is being trained, assessed or reviewed as defined by the process.

Approved Trainer

Qualified or certificated to deliver a formal training event. For most technical or skills training this refers to a Network Rail Workforce Development Specialist (WDS).

Mentor

Nominated to provide support and guidance to a newly trained individual. Must be able to demonstrate the competence in their own right, currently recorded as 'Level 4 – Competent and experienced' in Oracle.

Accredited Assessor

Formally trained in assessment techniques, (TAQA, A1, D32/33 or equivalent) and must hold the competence that they are assessing. Only required for the highest risk activities in Regimes 1 and 2.

Line Manager

Directly responsible for the line management of the individual concerned. In certain circumstances, Line Manager activities can be delegated to nominated deputies who have regular contact with the individual.

Skills Assessor

Successfully trained in assessment techniques (Line Managers can delegate this activity to a suitably trained person). This role is currently undertaken by individuals holding the 'AiTL Assessor' competence.

What is the ACC?

A vital component of the Skills Assessment Scheme is the mandated Annual Capability Conversation (ACC) which will shift focus onto performance and practice.

A key objective of the ACC is to promote a genuine discussion with individuals about their current competence and future development.

The ACC is designed to be conducted by the Line Manager on a one to one basis with each of their direct reports.

The objective of the ACC is for the Line Manager to gain a better understanding of an individual's performance and development needs.

Impact

This doesn't mean more work for you...

Extended validity periods and different assessment methods, together with the ability to delegate parts of the process, will release time which can be better used to focus on those few high risk activities that need additional scrutiny.

Step 1
Review of the individual's job description to confirm understanding and accuracy

Step 2
Brief review of competences not due to expire in next 12 months to confirm they are being practiced safely and are still required

Step 3
More detailed review of competence due to expire in the next 12 months

Step 4
Agree a Competence Development Plan

What is Action Learning?

Action Learning is a process designed to embed training principles into the working environment and enable the individual to put into practice what they have learnt to demonstrate competence.

Action Learning is a formal requirement for Regimes 1-3, this becomes more informal through to Regimes 4 -6.

Activities required for Action Learning follow a similar format per Regime and are tailored down proportionately to suit the risk that Regime carries.

Examples...

Action Learning for Regimes 1 should include:

- A formal Competence Development Plan post training

- Allocation of a "buddy" who is a more experienced member of staff

- Identification of other key people who could provide support and guidance

- Regular surveillance (in this context it should be included as part of the normal site visits by the Line Manager)

- Regular discussions with the person supporting them about progress with their Competence Development Plan

- A formal Workplace Assessment completed by an Accredited Assessor

Action Learning for Regimes 4 should include:

- A discussion between the Line Manager and the Individual after training to identify what, if any support may be required

- Allocation of a buddy who is a more experienced member of staff

- Identification of other key people who could provide support and guidance

- Confirmation by the by Line Manager that the Individual has satisfied any criteria/no longer needs support or direction

For further details on the Action Learning process a quick reference guide can be found on the Skills Assessment Scheme website via Connect.

Regime 1 (Particularly High Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training.

Individual successfully completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

B – Post Training Development (Action Learning)

Mentor develops **Individual** in their proven competence.

Action Learning ends after assessment by **Accredited Assessor**.

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.

D – Renewal of Competence (Re-training)

Approved Trainer delivers refresher training to renew competence.

Individual completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

Particularly High Risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competencies involves successful completion of a refresher training event. Stages **C** and **D** cycle to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
12 - 24 months.

Regime 2 (Fairly High Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training.
Individual successfully completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

B – Post Training Development (Action Learning)

Mentor develops **Individual** in their proven competence.
Action Learning ends after assessment by **Accredited Assessor.**

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.

D – Renewal of Competence (Workplace Assessment)

Accredited Assessor observes the **Individual** as part of a Workplace Assessment to renew competence. This must include a knowledge and practical assessment carried out in a natural environment.

Fairly High Risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competencies involves an assessment by an Accredited Assessor. Stages **C** and **D** cycle to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
24 - 36 months.

Regime 3 (Medium Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training.

Individual successfully completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

B – Post Training Development (Action Learning)

Nominated Person provides support.

Line Manager nominates and directs the level and duration of support. Action Learning ends after formal confirmation that the individual no longer needs support.

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.

D – Renewal of Capability (Work Checks and Test)

Skills Assessor completes work checks including evidence of Site Surveillance completed by a competent person.

Individual must also successfully complete a computer based knowledge test.

Medium Risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competences involves Site Surveillance and a computer based knowledge test. Stages **C** and **D** cycle to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
24 - 36 months.

Regime 4 (Medium – Low Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training.

Individual successfully completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

B – Action Learning

There is no formal requirement to complete Action Learning for regimes 4, but is to be considered where:

- the individual is newly trained; **and**
- the asset, system or subsystem is complex in its operation or application; or
- the individual's experiences new environmental conditions; or
- the individuals behaviour indicates additional support would be beneficial to their development, for example, building confidence training

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.

D – Renewal of Competence (Work Checks and Test)

Skills Assessor completes work checks including end product checks.

Individual must also successfully complete a knowledge test.

Medium – Low Risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competences includes evidence from end product checks completed by a competent person as well as completion of a computer based knowledge test. Stages **C** and **D** cycle to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
36 - 48 months.

Regime 5 (Low Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training.

Individual successfully completes a knowledge and practical assessment.

B – Action Learning

There is no formal requirement to complete Action Learning for regimes 5, but is to be considered where:

- the individual is newly trained; **and**
- the asset, system or subsystem is complex in its operation or application; or
- the individual's experiences new environmental conditions; or
- the individuals behaviour indicates additional support would be beneficial to their development, for example, building confidence training

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.

D – Renewal of Capability (Safe Performance and Test)

Skills Assessor reviews evidence of safe performance such as Supervisor feedback . **Individual** must also demonstrate knowledge either via computer based knowledge test or professional discussion.

Low risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competences involves evidence of safe performance and a test of knowledge. Stages **C** and **D** cycle to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
48 - 60 months.

Regime 6 (Lowest Risk)

A – Initial Development (Training)

Approved Trainer delivers the initial training. In some cases this can be delivered by a **Competent Person** as part of a formal briefing.

B – Action Learning

There is no formal requirement to complete Action Learning for regimes 6, but is to be considered where:

- the individual is newly trained; **and**
- the asset, system or subsystem is complex in its operation or application; **or**
- the individual's experiences new environmental conditions; **or**
- the individuals behaviour indicates additional support would be beneficial to their development, for example, building confidence training

C – Interim Checks (ACC)

Line Manager confirms in discussion with **Individual** that the competence is still required, is being practiced at the prescribed frequency and that quality and safety standards are being met.
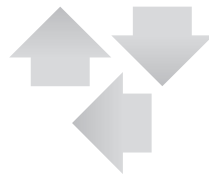
Lowest risk

The ongoing maintenance of these competencies is via the ACC based on regular safe performance. Stage **C** cycles to confirm ongoing competence.

Validity period:
50 years.

1. Where can I find information on the process?

You can find information on the Skills Assessment Scheme page using the search on Connect.

2. Will all competences still be assessed in the line?

Competences that have been identified as high risk will move to recertification by training or need a Workplace Assessment completed by an Accredited Assessor. Those that are identified as high-medium, medium or medium-low risk will continue to be assessed in the line by a Skills Assessor and those that are considered to be the low risk will require ongoing monitoring as part of the ACC process.

3. Will Line Managers still be responsible for competence assessments and for issuing an Authority To Work (ATW)?

- Training Delivery Teams, Accredited Assessors and Skills Assessors will be responsible for the competence assessment of staff
- Line Managers will be responsible for the Authority to Work decision as a result of the competence assessment (in most cases the Line Managers will be the Skills Assessors)
- Authority to Work will be as a result of updating the records held on Oracle, and which will be surfaced (displayed) on Sentinel

4. Will mentoring still be required?

Yes. A form of mentoring known as Action Learning will be needed, but the number of competences that this will apply to will reduce considerably.

5. Who deals with the Annual Capability Conversation (ACC) event for seconded staff?

The Line Manager who is managing the individual when the ACC is due will be responsible for completing the ACC.

6. When an ACC goes beyond the ACC Completion Failure (21 months) and all competences are withdrawn, how are they re-instated?

Where the ACC has not been completed by the end of the 21st month, all competences will be withdrawn. They will only be reinstated by completion of either re-training or re-assessment as described below.

- For Regime 1: Successful completion of the re-training event as required by the renewal phase for Regime 1
- Regimes 2 - 6 Successful completion of practical and theoretical assessments as prescribed by the initial development requirements of each regime

Where initial development requires briefing, the Line Manager or competent person (whichever specified) will complete the briefing activities as specified.

7. Will there still be a need for concentrated testing under the current system?

No. Where block testing was used the local teams will be able to plan when testing is completed and can choose to spread across the year to suit local needs. Additionally, as part of the Risk Based Assurance review the annual volumes should reduce through longer validity periods.

8. Where there are <u>mandated</u> minimum practice requirements and those have not been met, what action can I take?

If those requirements have not been met, competence is to be withdrawn.

9. Where minimum practice requirements are provided as <u>guidance</u> and these have not been met, what action can I take?

Where individuals are unable to meet these minimum requirements, Line Managers should consider the reasons for not achieving the criteria. Consider:

- whether the person needs the competence
- how does this affect the skill level when performing the competence
- how often the activity is required to be performed
- what alternative arrangements could be put in place to enable the person to confirm their skills (for example, installation of stillages or simulated exercises in training centres)

Note: Line Managers should not send people to undertake tasks unnecessarily just to satisfy minimum practice requirements.

10. What if no surveillance has been recorded?

Renewal of Regime 3 competence must include Site Surveillance. If no surveillance has been completed, the competence cannot be renewed.

11. What are 'completed work checks'?

'Completed work checks' are where the Skills Assessor has seen examples of work completed by the person even though they were not necessarily directly observing the work. This would normally be achieved through Supervisor's inspections.

12. Who will carry out accredited assessments?

Those who have been identified and authorised as Accredited Assessors. This could come from a number of sources including Professional Development and Training, external contractor community or even the business themselves. This will be dependent on the skill, the level of the demand and availability of the resources required.

13. Who is eligible to be a Skills Assessor?

Line Managers of people holding competence and those who are nominated by their Line Managers to complete specific elements in the Scheme (such as Site Surveillance).

14. How do I become a Skills Assessor?

Current AiTL Assessors will automatically migrate across but will need to complete the e-learning modules within 12 months. People new to the process need to attend the full Skills Assessor training event.

15. Will there be confirmation that Supervisors can undertake Line Manager duties when it comes to assessment?

As part of the Skills Assessment Scheme process Line Managers will be able to delegate certain activities to Supervisors (such as Site Surveillance) providing that they have received the appropriate training. The ACC element can only be completed by the Line Manager or their nominated deputy.

16. Where can I find copies of the forms I will need?

Copies of the forms and documents will be available in the following locations:
- the Skills Assessment Scheme Connect website for the majority of forms
- the Oracle E-business suite for: ACC record forms (generated from the specific individuals record)
- the Training Toolkit for: Workplace Assessments

17. Will the amount of paperwork needed for our competence assessments reduce?

Yes. Under the Skills Assessment Scheme many of the forms currently used will be removed or consolidated into a simpler version of one form. There are fewer mandated forms and more flexibility on what can be used as evidence sources.

18. Will we be removing the Competence Development Plan?

No. The Competence Development Plan will still be required as part of the process. There will be two types of Competence Development Plan:
- as part of the ACC process a Competence Development Plan has been incorporated into the ACC record form
- for other purposes a generic Competence Development Plan has been created for use by the business if required (note: the generic Competence Development Plan is not a mandated document)

This page is intentionally blank

Transitional Arrangements

Current training frameworks are being updated in line with Role Based Capability (RBC).

Further information will be sent fully explaining RBC, what frameworks have gone through this process, and what this means for you, along with the full transitional arrangements that will be in place.

March 2015
Version 4.0

Network Rail Skills Assessment Scheme
For general queries please contact:
skillsassessment@networkrail.co.uk