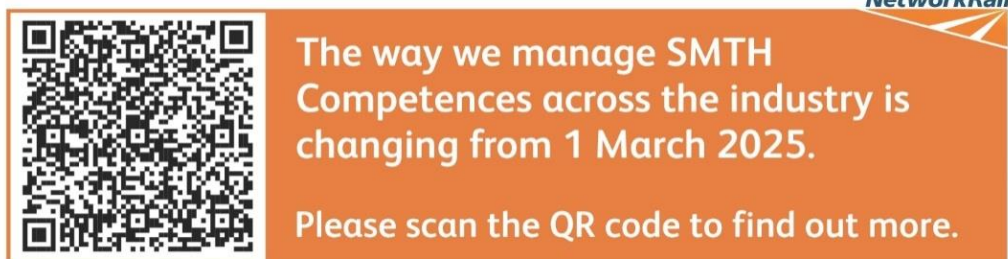# Signalling Maintenance Testing Handbook (SMTH) Online transition assessment

NetworkRail

Frequently Asked Questions

This document is split into two sections to assist you in finding a response to your query:

- Before the assessment
- During the assessment

Whilst this frequently asked question (FAQ) document aims to help with common queries it is not exhaustive, further detailed information can be found in the user guide and other information located in the Safety Central site. You can navigate to the Safety Central site by using the QR code on page one of this document or typing the following link into your browser:

User guide: User-guidance-notes-SMTH-assessment-platform.pdf

Safety Central Page: [SMTH Industry Competence Management Standardisation - Safety Central](#)

Before the assessment

Q: Why is Network Rail transitioning these competences to Sentinel?
A: Signal engineering failures were noted as a contributing factor at the Clapham Junction incident in 1988, which led to the development of the SMTH concept and competences. Following a series of recent incidents in which SMTH activities were not completed correctly, we are working to standardise the way in which Signal Maintenance Testing competence is trained, assessed, and recorded for everyone performing SMTH activities, whether they are employed directly by Network Rail or as an external contractor. The online transition assessment is part of that process for external contractors.

Q: What is the SMTH online transition assessment?
A: After 01 March 2025, paper evidence of competence for the Signal Maintenance Testing Handbook competencies of aspect testing, cable function testing, core skills, diversion of a circuit and points testing will no longer be accepted on Network Rail managed infrastructure. The six online assessments provided by Inspera on behalf of Network Rail will allow confirmation that competence holders meet the minimum knowledge requirements for transition into Sentinel.

Q: Is it mandatory for me to complete the assessment?
A: If you decide not to sit the online transition assessment or complete a recertification of your SMTH competence with a training provider, you will remain competent until your competence expires or 01 March 2025 (whichever is the soonest date).

From 02 March 2025, you will no longer be able to use your paper SMTH authority to work certificate as evidence that you hold the five SMTH competences affected by this change. From 02 March 2025 these competences will only be accepted for use on Network Rail managed infrastructure if they are evident on your Sentinel card or app.

Q: When does the online transition assessment window close for SMTH?
A: The online transition assessment window opened in November 2024 and will remain open until 01 March 2025.

Q: How long will the assessment period remain open?
A: The assessment platform will close on 01 March 2025. You will have three attempts to take and pass the assessment before the assessment platform closes. We would advise you to start your assessment as soon as possible after you receive your login credentials. If you do not pass the first attempt, then you can make a second attempt 24 hours later if you do not pass your second attempt a third and final attempt can only be taken after a 28-day period has elapsed since your second attempt.

Q: What happens if I do not complete my transition assessment by 01 March 2025?
A: If you have not successfully completed either the SMTH recertification with a training provider (on or after 01 October 2024) or the online transition assessment before the assessment platform (provided by Inspera) closes after 01 March 2025 you will no longer be able to undertake SMTH duties on Network Rail managed infrastructure. After that point if you would like to re-gain the SMTH competences included in the transition process you will need to successfully complete full initial training.

Q: Is there a grace period on the SMTH transition window?
A: There is no grace period, if you have not transitioned your SMTH competences into the Sentinel authority to work system by 01 March 2025 then you will need to undertake full initial training.

After 01 March 2025 all competence holders must be able to prove they hold the appropriate competences on their Sentinel competence profile by scanning their card or the app.

Q: What competencies are being assessed?
A: There are a total of six assessment modules allowing the transition of five competences. All candidates will need to pass the signalling principles assessment and CCS signal maintenance testing – core skills (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a) assessment to hold the remaining SMTH competences your Primary Sponsor notified us you hold from the list below:

- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b) – aspect testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c) – points testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d) – cable function testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f) – diversion of a circuit.

Details of the structure and scope of these competences can be found in NR/L2/SIG/50035/07.

Q: What should I do if I have system issues with Inspera?
A: In addition to the minimal system requirements guidance provided in the user guide, Inspera have several helpful documents which provide information to troubleshooting common issues. The most useful documents for candidates can be accessed by either clicking the link here or placing the address in your browser:

https://support.inspera.com/hc/en-us/articles/5118836955549-Troubleshooting-System-errors

https://support.inspera.com/hc/en-us/articles/4409547578769-Troubleshooting-Proctoring-and-Device-errors

If you remain unable to solve issues you are experiencing, then please contact:

signallingcompetencyframework@networkrail.co.uk

During the assessment

Q: Can I take the assessment anywhere?
A: The environment you choose to sit the assessment in will have an impact on your success, you should find a room where you will be alone. The proctoring software will record you and any noise so try to find a quiet space where you can be comfortable for the duration of the assessment(s) and if necessary, moving your computer. Busy background patterns or poor lighting could cause the software to focus on something other than your face or not capture your face at all so make sure that your location has a plain well-lit background.
You should make sure that those around you know that you are sitting an assessment and that you cannot be interrupted, interruptions from others entering the room could impact the validity of your result. You must take the test in the United Kingdom.

Q: When can I sit the test?
A: The platform is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can sit your assessment at a time convenient to you. You may however experience some delay in the administrative processing of results and appeals at times of reduced capacity such as weekends and bank holidays. You should plan to undertake the test in a suitable environment to meet the requirements provided in the user guide, the user guide can be accessed using the QR code or typing the link referenced on page one of this document into the browser.

Q: What type of device can I use to complete the assessment?
A: To use the assessment platform, you will need access to a desktop or laptop device meeting the minimum requirements for the Network Rail SMTH assessment platform. The platform has been tested on Windows, and macOS. You will not be able to use a tablet or mobile phone to access the assessment platform.

You can find further details of the system requirements in the user guide by using the QR code or link referenced on page one of this document..

Q: Can I undertake the test during working hours?
A: Your organisation will have its own arrangements for how candidates complete the assessments, please speak to your manager to clarify them.

Q: What happens if I have not received my logon details for the transition assessments?
A: If you have not received your individual logon details (username, password, and SEB or pin code), please email: SignallingCompetencyFramework@networkrail.co.uk. You will need access to all three logon credentials to access your assessment(s).

Q: What happens if I have an extended absence from work (sickness, maternity / paternity leave etc) during the process?
A: Cases of extended absence will be reviewed on an individual basis. We will clarify what evidence competence holders need to provide (medical evidence, line managers validation or other) after initial contact. Should this apply to you please contact us as soon as you can. If you are a Primary Sponsor or Line Manager of an individual who this will apply to, you can also contact us to seek guidance. All queries should be directed by email to: SignallingCompetencyFramework@networkrail.co.uk.

Q: How many online assessments will I see in the assessment platform?
A: There are six online assessments in the Inspera platform, the number of tests you need to take will depend on the elements of SMTH that your Primary Sponsor notified us that you hold. Everyone who goes through the transition assessment will be required to take a Signalling Principles assessment and Core SMTH assessment to successfully transition your SMTH authority to work into the Sentinel system.

If your Primary Sponsor has confirmed that you hold additional competences then you will see additional assessments mapped to the elements of SMTH such as point testing, aspect testing, cable function testing and diversion of circuits that you hold.

Q: What will I be tested on?

A: You can find an indication of the subject areas the assessment will cover in the user guide, details to access the user guide are provided on page one of this document.

The user guide also provides locations of additional information which will help you to refresh your memory.

Q: What is a proctored test?

A: Proctoring means that the software will allow you to sit the assessment whilst also recording your screen, audio from your microphone and video from your webcam. Recordings will be used to satisfy Network Rail that you completed the test independently and without access to additional information or support, they will be retained until all assessments and associated appeals are concluded.

Q: What would be a non-compliance with the proctoring guidelines?

A: During each assessment we ask you to make sure that you do not do any of the following so we can confirm that you undertook the test independently:

- You must not obscure your computer camera / webcam during your test.
- You should avoid leaving your computer during your test.
- You must not receive or make telephone calls during your test.
- You must not engage in conversation with others whilst taking the test.
- No one should be present in the room with you (including pets). The camera will monitor your movements and the room around you including to the side and behind your face.
- You must not take photographs or screen shots of the test.
- You must not refer to paper documents or other electronic devices whilst taking the tests.

The proctoring software will detect possible non-compliances with the guidelines which will then be reviewed by Network Rail before your test results are confirmed.

Q: Why complete my online transition assessment as soon as practical?

A: By completing your online transition assessment well before the end of the transition window you give yourself maximum opportunity to retake the assessment if required. If you decide not to take the assessment(s) until later in the transition window you may not have the opportunity to complete any required re-takes before the transition window closes on 01 March 2025.

Q: How long will the assessment(s) take to complete?

A: Candidates completing all six assessments would take an average time of four hours. However, you don't have to complete all the assessments at once, you can break them up into multiple sessions. However, once you start one of the assessments you do need to complete that assessment in a single session. The duration of your total assessment will depend on how many assessments you need to complete.

Q: If I do not pass the first attempt, can I reuse the same logon credentials after 24 hours?

A: The login credentials that you were sent by Network Rail in early December will allow you to access the assessment platform for each assessment and all attempts.

Q: Will I be able to refer to any materials during the assessment?

A: A copy of the Signalling Maintenance Testing Handbook and a copy of the Signal Maintenance specifications is loaded into the assessment platform so that you can refer to them on your computer during the assessment as we would expect you to in the workplace. Sections of these documents will be accessible as PDFs for you to use during the assessment.

Q: Can I appeal the assessment outcome?
A: You can appeal the result of any of your assessment(s) if you believe there are some extenuating circumstances that should be considered.

To appeal you should use the QR code or paste the link provided on page one of this document into your browser to navigate to the user guide, please read the relevant section where you will find details of the appeals process and associated forms to be completed. You should complete the forms and submit as directed.

Q: What happens to my other competences on my authority to work that are not in Sentinel?
A: Competences outside the scope of this transition will not be affected. They will continue to be managed within the business management systems in your primary sponsor organisations.

In the future, Network Rail may transition further competences to Sentinel but at present only five competences are included in this workstream.

Q: What happens if I don't pass the first or second attempt attempt(s)at the transition assessment?
A: If you do not pass your first attempt at the transition assessment you will be given a second opportunity, you must wait 24 hours to take your second attempt. If you do not pass your second attempt, you must wait 28 days to undertake your third attempt.

Q: What happens if I don't pass the third attempt at the transition assessment?
A: If you do not pass the third attempt, you will need to be retrained on the competences which you did not pass, or on the whole of the signal maintenance testing if you failed the assessments associated with the core skills competence. To transition successfully you must pass signalling principles assessment and CCS signal maintenance testing – core skills (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a) assessment to hold the remaining SMTH competences of:

- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b) – aspect testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c) – points testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d) – cable function testing assessment.
- CCS Signal maintenance testing (SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f) – diversion of a circuit.

When you have been notified that you have not passed the third attempt, please contact your line manager to understand next steps in your own organisation.

Q: Why is there a 28-day period before I complete the assessment for the third time?
A: If you have not been successful in achieving enough marks to pass the assessment(s) you completed in the first two attempts then you will need the opportunity to refresh your knowledge. The 28-day window between the second and third attempts will give you the time to complete revision and research.

Please use the QR code or paste the link provided on page one into your browser to navigate to the user guide where you will find details of suggested research topics and resources.

Q: After I have transitioned into Sentinel, what happens when my SMTH competence expires?
A: You have a maximum of four weeks after the expiry of your SMTH competence to undertake a recertification with a training provider. During this time, you will not be able to practice the competence on Network Rail managed infrastructure, if you are unable to undertake the recertification course within four weeks of expiry then you will need to follow the initial training route by undertaking a full SMTH training course.

Q: My SMTH competences look different to this or use numbers, what do I do?
A: Your organisation may be using the old BR SMTH structure which numbered the competences. Network Rail moved away from the BR SMTH structure four years ago, the current Network Rail SMTH competence structure can be found in NR/L2/SIG/50035/07.

The table below shows how the competences in the BR structure map to the competences in the NR/L2/SIG/50035/07 framework.

Competency Description	Old Competency Short Code	Competency Description	NR/L2/SIG/50035/07 Framework
Core Skills	SMTH.01	Core Skills	SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
Cable and Wire Testing*	SMTH.02		
Earth Testing	SMTH.03		
New Test Plans	SMTH.07		
Aspect Testing	SMTH.04	Aspect Testing	SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b
Point Testing	SMTH.05	Point Testing	SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c
Cable and Wire Testing*	SMTH.02	Cable Function Testing	SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d
Diversion of Circuits	SMTH.09	Diversion of Circuits	SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f

Q: What happened to cable and wire testing (SMTH.02)?
A: Cable and wire testing (SMTH.02) was split into two elements cable testing (defined tests B02 continuity test and B03 insulation test) and cable function testing (defined test B04 cable function test). Cable testing has been included into SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core skills and cable function testing has remained as SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d – Cable Function testing.

Q: What happened to earth testing (SMTH.03)?
A: Earth testing (SMTH.03) has been included into SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – core skills

Q: What happened to production of a new SMTH Test Plan (SMTH.07)?
A: Production of a new SMTH test plan (SMTH.03) has been included into SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core skills

Q: Can I complete a practical recertification early to transition into Sentinel?
A: Yes, you can choose to undertake a SMTH recertification with a training provider before 01 March 2025 to transition your SMTH authority to work into Sentinel. An SMTH recertification includes a knowledge test and a practical assessment.

Q: What will the expiry dates of my SMTH competences be after I have successfully completed the online transition assessment?
A: The expiry dates of your SMTH competences will not change and they remain the same as they were before you took the transition assessment.