SMTH Industry Update

Thursday 19th February
Tuesday 24th February
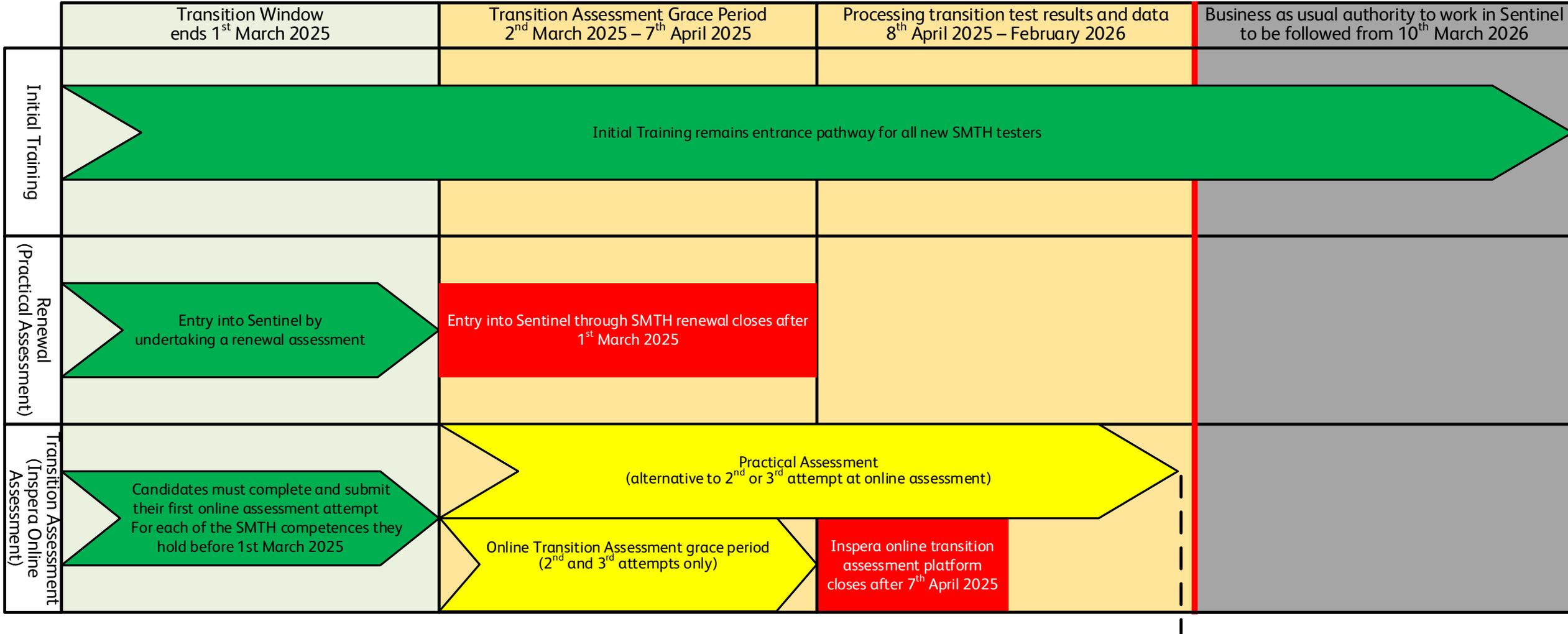
Issue 1

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Current Position

Progress with SMTH

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Transition Window ends 1ˢᵗ March 2025	Transition Assessment Grace Period 2ⁿᵈ March 2025 – 7ᵗʰ April 2025	Processing transition test results and data 8ᵗʰ April 2025 – February 2026	Business as usual authority to work in Sentinel to be followed from 10ᵗʰ March 2026

Initial Training

Initial Training remains entrance pathway for all new SMTH testers

Renewal (Practical Assessment)

Entry into Sentinel by undertaking a renewal assessment

Entry into Sentinel through SMTH renewal closes after 1ˢᵗ March 2025

Transition Assessment (Inspera Online Assessment)

Candidates must complete and submit their first online assessment attempt For each of the SMTH competences they hold before 1st March 2025

Practical Assessment (alternative to 2ⁿᵈ or 3ʳᵈ attempt at online assessment)

Online Transition Assessment grace period (2ⁿᵈ and 3ʳᵈ attempts only)

Inspera online transition assessment platform closes after 7ᵗʰ April 2025

A refresh on key SMTH information

- SMTH Competencies in scope
- Levels of SMTH Competencies

The SMTH competence Lifecycle
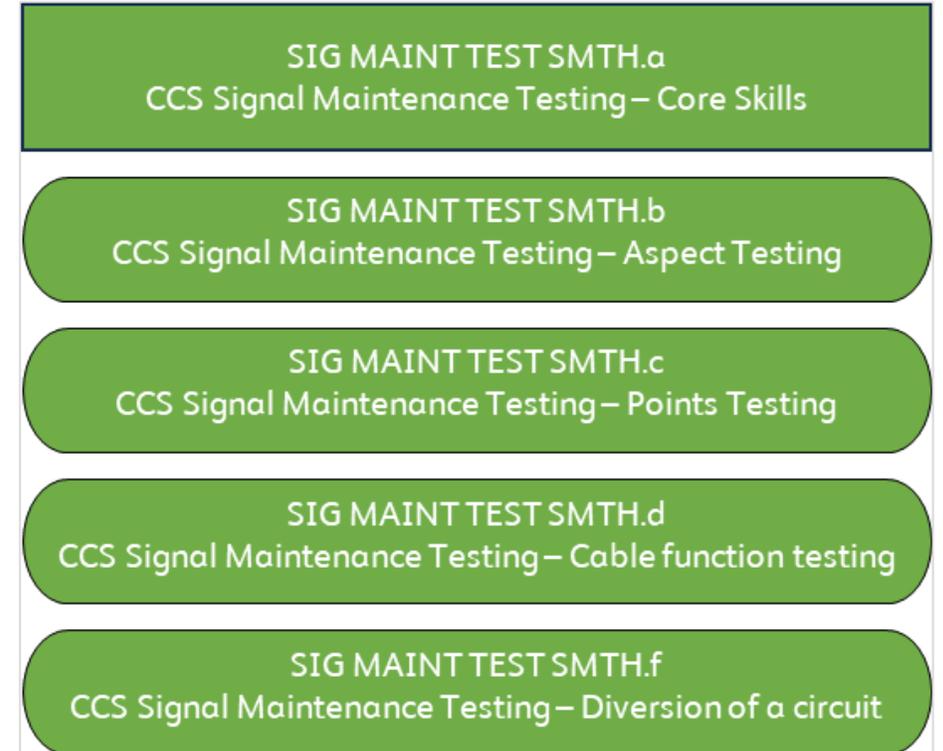
Introduction

This slide pack details the SMTH competence lifecycle for:

- SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core Skills
- SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b – Aspect Testing
- SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c – Points Testing
- SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d – Cable Function Testing
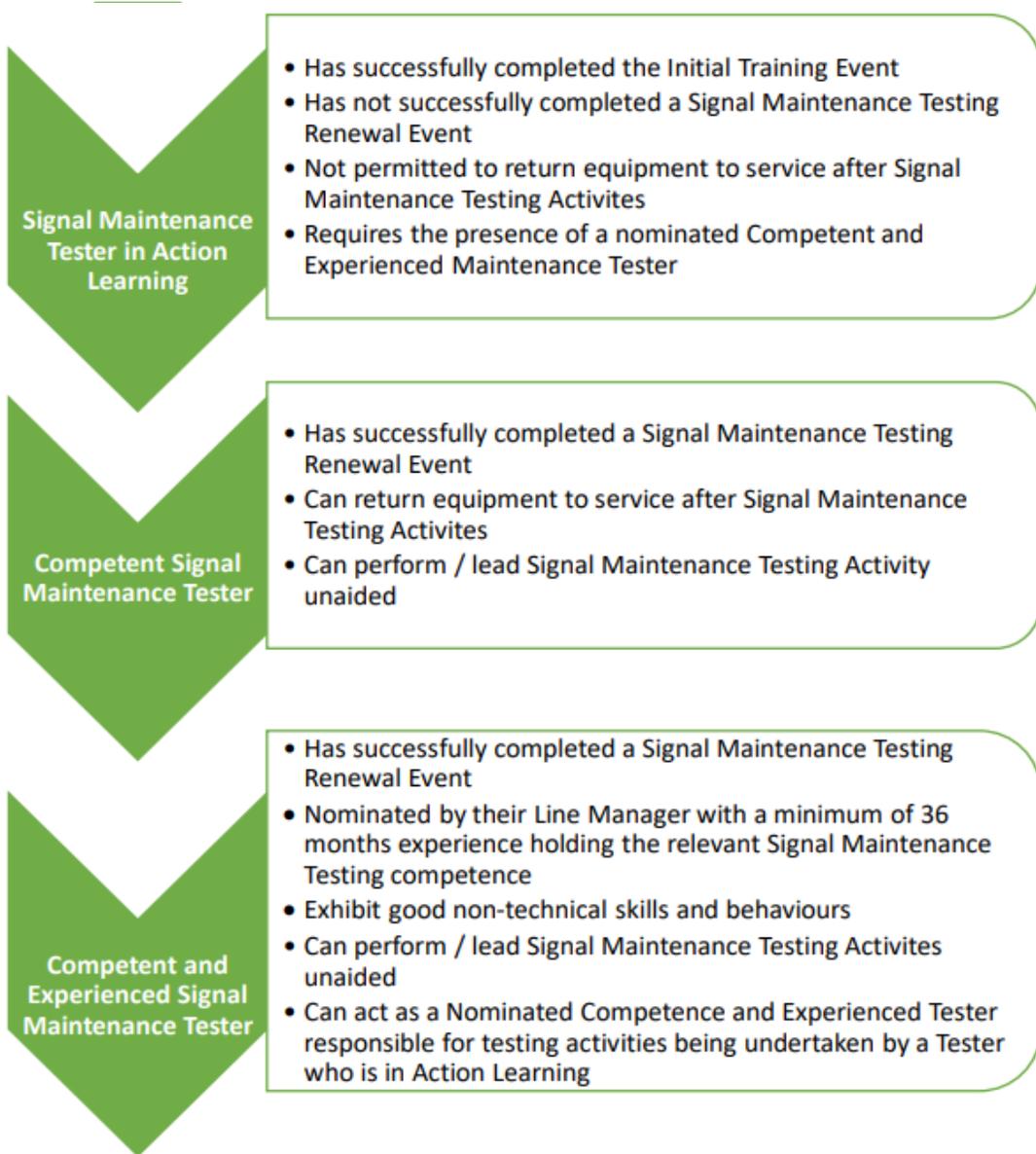- SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f – Diversion of a Circuit

The aim is to provide more detailed information on how the lifecycle for these SMTH competences are intended to work to allow management of these competences as part of a business-as-usual process.

It is intended for:

- All SMTH Competence Holders
- Line managers of staff holding one or more of these SMTH competences
- Primary Sponsors of SMTH competence holders
- Training Providers / Trainers and Assessors providing SMTH training and assessment

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Core Skills

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Aspect Testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Points Testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Cable function testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Diversion of a circuit

A refresher on SMTH competence levels

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Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning
- Has successfully completed the Initial Training Event
- Has not successfully completed a Signal Maintenance Testing Renewal Event
- Not permitted to return equipment to service after Signal Maintenance Testing Activites
- Requires the presence of a nominated Competent and Experienced Maintenance Tester

Competent Signal Maintenance Tester
- Has successfully completed a Signal Maintenance Testing Renewal Event
- Can return equipment to service after Signal Maintenance Testing Activites
- Can perform / lead Signal Maintenance Testing Activity unaided

Competent and Experienced Signal Maintenance Tester
- Has successfully completed a Signal Maintenance Testing Renewal Event
- Nominated by their Line Manager with a minimum of 36 months experience holding the relevant Signal Maintenance Testing competence
- Exhibit good non-technical skills and behaviours
- Can perform / lead Signal Maintenance Testing Activites unaided
- Can act as a Nominated Competence and Experienced Tester responsible for testing activities being undertaken by a Tester who is in Action Learning

- Competence levels are as defined, with further information, in NR/SMTH/Part01/Module/04

- Sentinel does not currently distinguish between "Competent" and "Competent and Experienced". This will need to be identified in an organisation's Competence Management System and reflected on any authority to work paperwork for relevant individuals.

- A Competent and Experienced SMTH Tester should:
  - Be nominated by their line manager*
  - Agree to hold the relevant SMTH competence at this level
  - Have a minimum of 36-months experience holding the relevant SMTH competence
  - Exhibit good non-technical skills and behaviours

*The line manager should consider both the technical and non-technical skills of the individual. Mentors can have an impact on new testers skills and behaviours.

Lifecycle configuration

Key High-Level Changes to SMTH Life cycle

Since the last industry sessions, the SMTH Life cycle has been reviewed and changes made to make the process as simple as possible for end users to follow and align key milestones for both internal and external staff.

A high-level summary of the changes are:
- Removal of the proposed interim assessment
- Changes to simplify the movement from a Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning to a Competent Signal Maintenance Tester
- Introduction of the requirement to review SMTH competencies held annually
- Map the lifecycle out to give clarity of the learner journey for the impacted SMTH competencies

This session will go through the lifecycle as configured and supersedes any previous communications.

Assessment outcomes

There are up to 3 possible outcomes for a training / assessment event, as described in the table below. Information on which outcomes are possible from which training / assessment event is summarised later in this presentation.

Assessment Outcome	Description	Life cycle position
Not Competent	The individual has not met the required assessment criteria. The individual may have a gap in their knowledge or have made a significant error.	**Individual requires Training:** Individual requires to attend an approved training event for a training intervention. *Note: See the initial training pathway slides for the activities required to progress to being a Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning.*
Not-yet-Competent	The individual has successfully completed initial training or may have made minor errors during an assessment event that requires workplace experience to address any gap in their knowledge	**Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning:** Individual requires workplace experience (up to 12 months) under the direct supervision of a Competent and Experienced SMTH Tester. *Note: See the initial training pathway slides for the activities required to progress to being a Competent Signal Maintenance Tester.*
Competent	Individual has met the required assessment criteria to test un-supervised	**Competent Signal Maintenance Tester or Competent and Experienced Signal Maintenance Tester:** Continue to manage competence through annual review and renewal. *Note: See earlier slide for the additional criteria relevant to being appointed as a Competent and Experienced Signal Maintenance Tester.*

SMTH Initial Training Lifecycle

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
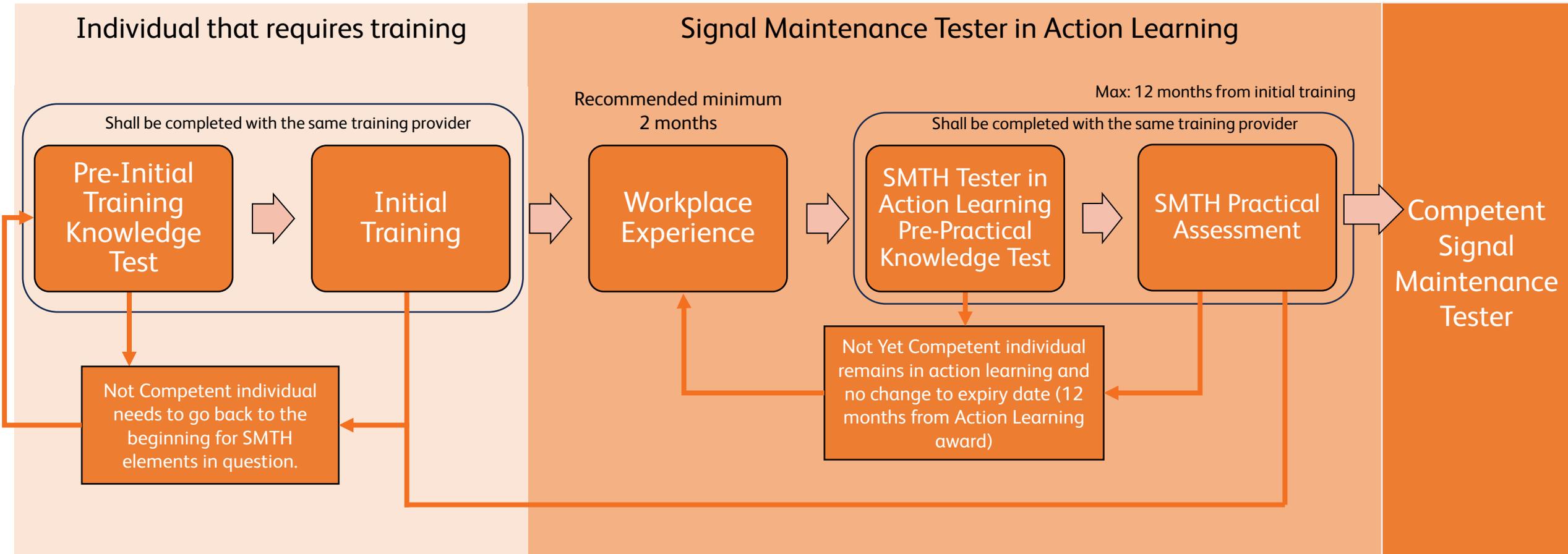SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f

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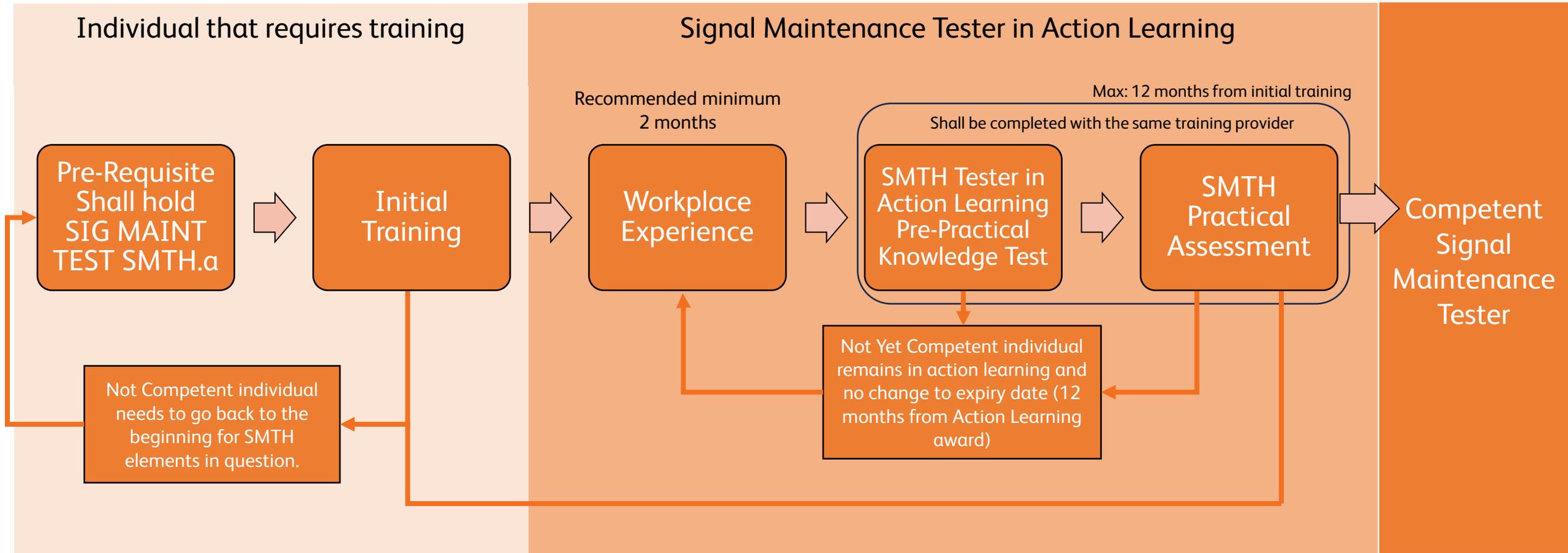Greener.

Initial Training Pathway: SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core skills

The diagram below sets out the pathway to gain the SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core skills competence

Individual that requires training

Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Pre-Initial Training Knowledge Test → Initial Training

Recommended minimum 2 months

Max: 12 months from initial training

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Workplace Experience → SMTH Tester in Action Learning Pre-Practical Knowledge Test → SMTH Practical Assessment → Competent Signal Maintenance Tester

Not Competent individual needs to go back to the beginning for SMTH elements in question.

Not Yet Competent individual remains in action learning and no change to expiry date (12 months from Action Learning award)

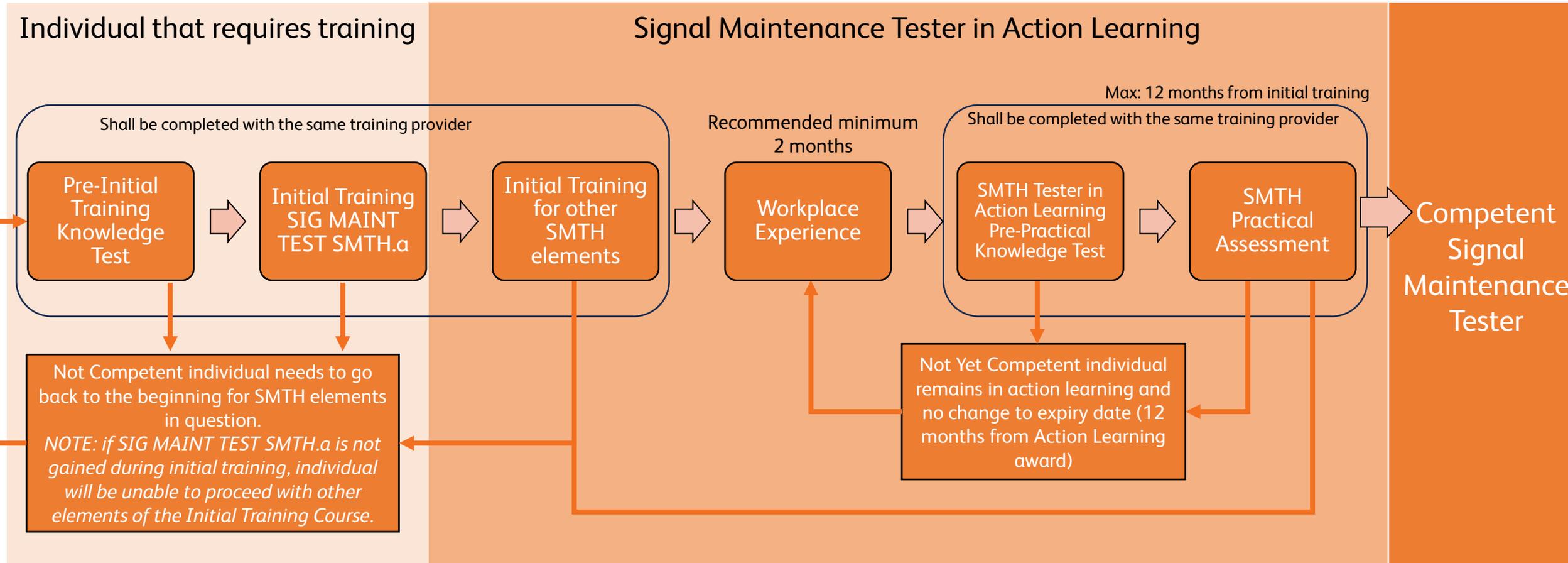➡ successful completion of event ——→ Unsuccessful outcome of event

Initial Training Pathway: Child Competences

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The diagram below sets out the pathway to gain the SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b, SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c, SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d and SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f competences

Individual that requires training

Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning

Recommended minimum 2 months

Max: 12 months from initial training

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Pre-Requisite Shall hold SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a

Initial Training

Workplace Experience

SMTH Tester in Action Learning Pre-Practical Knowledge Test

SMTH Practical Assessment

Competent Signal Maintenance Tester

Not Competent individual needs to go back to the beginning for SMTH elements in question.

Not Yet Competent individual remains in action learning and no change to expiry date (12 months from Action Learning award)

Typical full SMTH initial training pathway

The diagram below sets out the pathway to gain these 5 key SMTH competences when they are packaged into a single 10-day initial training event
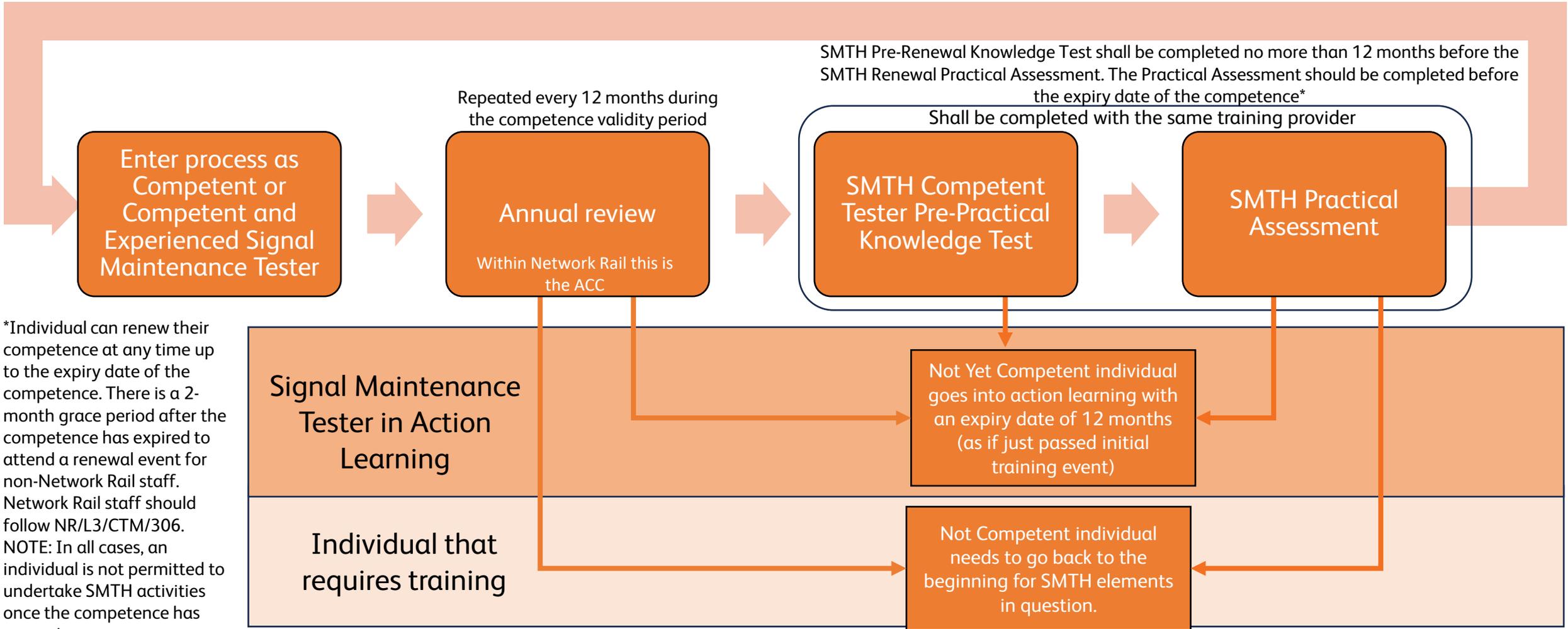
Individual that requires training

Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Recommended minimum 2 months

Max: 12 months from initial training

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Pre-Initial Training Knowledge Test → Initial Training SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a → Initial Training for other SMTH elements → Workplace Experience → SMTH Tester in Action Learning Pre-Practical Knowledge Test → SMTH Practical Assessment → **Competent Signal Maintenance Tester**

Not Competent individual needs to go back to the beginning for SMTH elements in question.
NOTE: if SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a is not gained during initial training, individual will be unable to proceed with other elements of the Initial Training Course.

Not Yet Competent individual remains in action learning and no change to expiry date (12 months from Action Learning award)

SMTH Renewal

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f

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SMTH Renewal Pathway

The diagram below sets out the pathway to renew the SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a, SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b, SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c, SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d and SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f competences

SMTH Pre-Renewal Knowledge Test shall be completed no more than 12 months before the SMTH Renewal Practical Assessment. The Practical Assessment should be completed before the expiry date of the competence*

Shall be completed with the same training provider

Repeated every 12 months during the competence validity period

Enter process as Competent or Competent and Experienced Signal Maintenance Tester

Annual review

Within Network Rail this is the ACC

SMTH Competent Tester Pre-Practical Knowledge Test

SMTH Practical Assessment

*Individual can renew their competence at any time up to the expiry date of the competence. There is a 2-month grace period after the competence has expired to attend a renewal event for non-Network Rail staff. Network Rail staff should follow NR/L3/CTM/306. NOTE: In all cases, an individual is not permitted to undertake SMTH activities once the competence has expired.

Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning

Not Yet Competent individual goes into action learning with an expiry date of 12 months (as if just passed initial training event)

Individual that requires training

Not Competent individual needs to go back to the beginning for SMTH elements in question.

successful completion of event   Unsuccessful outcome of event

Where on the lifecycle

Receiving a Not Competent outcome places the individual at the beginning of the initial development activities (Red Arrow)

Note: the diagram shows core, the Pre-Initial Knowledge Test is only required for SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a

When a Signal Maintenance Tester receives a Not-Yet-Competent result as an assessment outcome from the Annual Review, Pre-Renewal knowledge test or SMTH renewal Practical Assessment the induvial is placed at the Blue Arrow
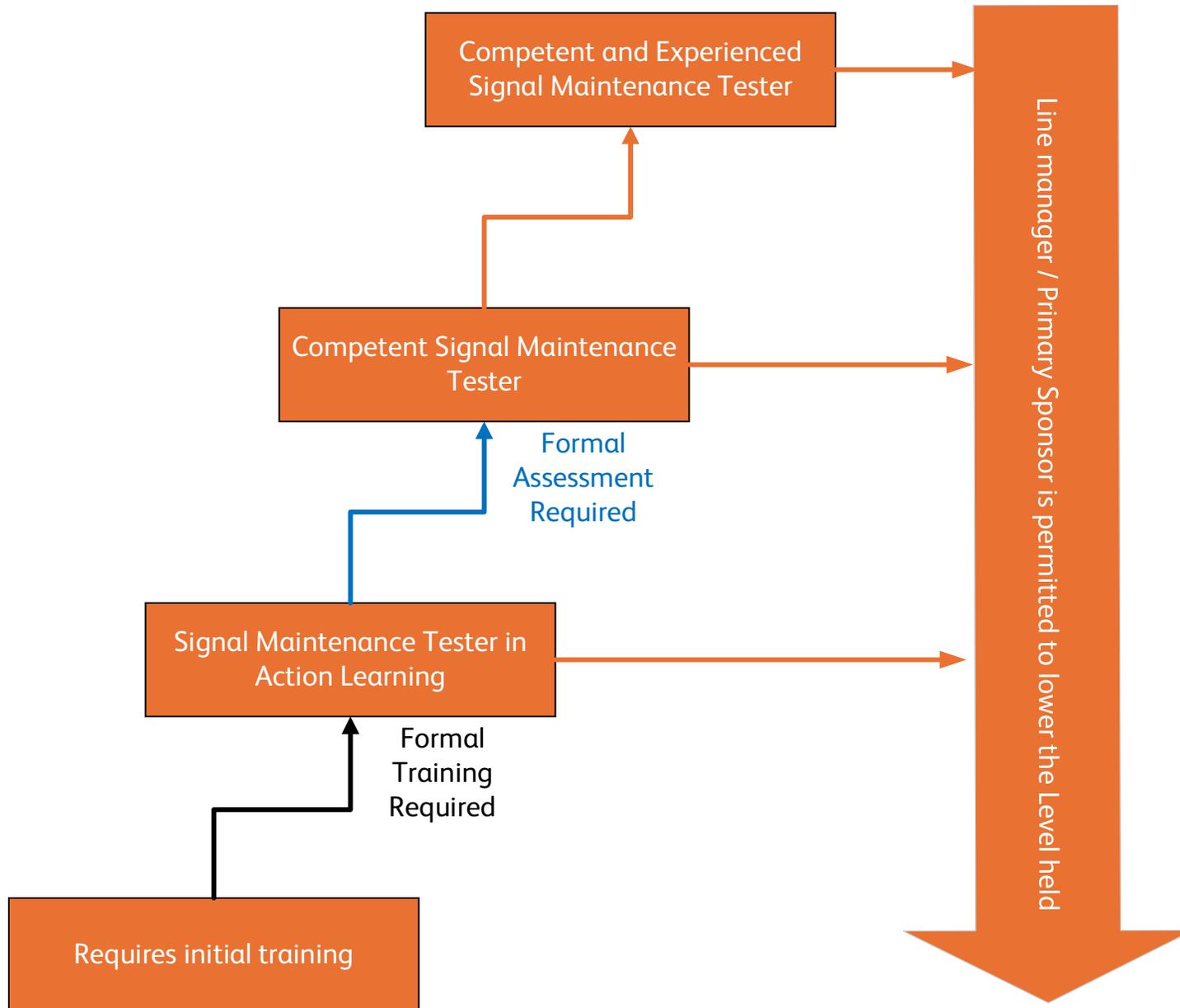
Assessment outcomes
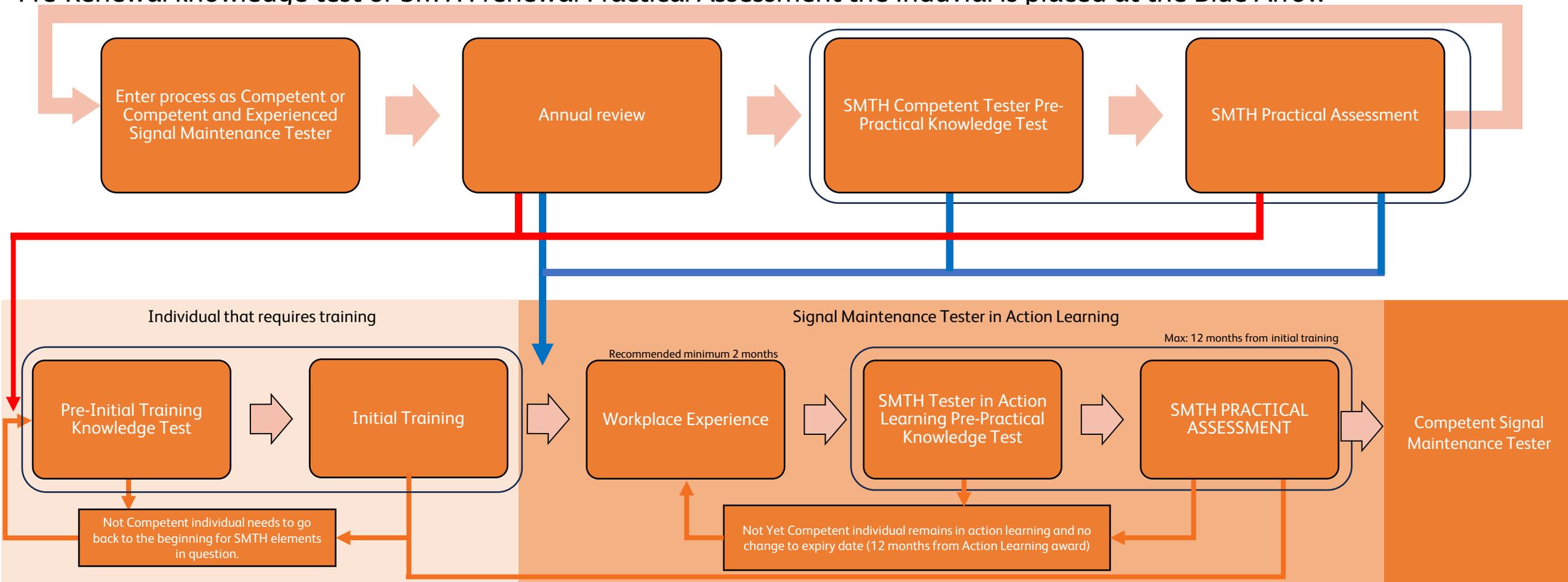
Assessment Name	Not Competent Outcome	Not-Yet-Competent Outcome	Competent Outcome	Comments
Pre-Initial Training Knowledge Test	Possible	Not possible	Not possible	A "pass" of the Pre-Initial Training Knowledge Test allows an individual to attend Initial Training – it does not change their level of competence.
Initial Training	Possible	Possible	Not possible	-
SMTH Tester in Action Learning Pre-Practical Knowledge Test	Not possible	Possible	Not possible	A "pass" of the Post Initial Training Knowledge Test allows an individual to attend Post Initial Training Practical Assessment – it does not change their level of competence.
Annual Review	Possible	Possible	Possible	-
SMTH Competent Tester Pre-Practical Knowledge Test	Not possible	Possible	Possible	-
SMTH Practical Assessment	Possible	Possible	Possible	-

SMTH Lifecycle Management

Further information on movement between competence levels, the annual review and the opportunity to align SMTH competences to core skills

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Movement between SMTH Competence Levels

Competent and Experienced Signal Maintenance Tester

Competent Signal Maintenance Tester

Formal Assessment Required

Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning

Formal Training Required

Requires initial training

Line manager / Primary Sponsor is permitted to lower the Level held

A Competent and Experienced SMTH Tester should:
- Be nominated by their line manager*
- Agree to hold the relevant SMTH competence at this level
- Have a minimum of 36-months experience holding the relevant SMTH competence
- Exhibit good non-technical skills and behaviours

A Review of SMTH competences between Line manager and individual

The SMTH competences held by the individual should be reviewed annually to confirm the individual's competence requirements for their role and that the competence is still required.

This review should consider:
a) The number of occasions the competence has been practiced in the preceding 12 months.
b) where a competence has not been used within the last 12 months, line managers shall consider whether the individual still requires the competence; and if the competence needs to be retained consideration shall be given as to whether any intervention is required;
c) the quality of work that has been completed;
d) feedback from the individual regarding existing level of competence; and
e) the non-technical skills required to fulfil the competence.

The line manager shall:
1. determine the individual's development needs e.g. initial or additional training, or action learning;
2. determine changes in the level of competence held by the individual e.g. 'competent' to 'competent and experienced' or vice versa;
3. develop and agree a plan to address any identified competency gaps

Where continued competence of the individual cannot be confirmed through the Annual Review, the line manager shall arrange for their competence to be withdrawn.

Alignment of SMTH competence validity dates

- To efficiently manage the suite of SMTH competences held, an individual should aim to have the validity dates of all their SMTH competences aligned to that for their SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core Skills competence.

- This is not always possible as element of SMTH may be gained at different times during the competence lifecycle.

- A competence shall be renewed before expiry to continue SMTH duties OR within 2 months after expiry (the individual is unable to practice SMTH activities after the competence has expired).

- Where the validity dates of SMTH competences do not align there are two reasonable opportunities to bring them into alignment:
    1. When the first SMTH assessment is due (likely moving from a Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning to a Competent Signal Maintenance Tester for the most recently acquired competence). All other SMTH competences held by the individual can be assessed early.
    2. When the expiry of SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a – Core Skills occurs. Any elements gained between the last renewal assessment will be assessed early.

Next Steps

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Implementation date for impacted SMTH Competencies

From Tuesday 10th March 2026 the Sentinel system should be used as the Authority to Work system for the five SMTH Competencies

Impact on All Staff

- Once Sentinel is used as the Authority to Work system the Sentinel Scheme rules apply to these SMTH competencies.
- Sentinel cards should be checked before using any of the five SMTH competencies in scope on Network Rail Managed Infrastructure.
- That those holding SMTH competencies as a "Signal Maintenance Tester in Action Learning" (indicated by the symbol P for probationary) are to be accompanied on-site by a "Competent and Experienced" SMTH holder who is accountable for the testing undertaken. ⓟ
- Check whether your SMTH competence record in Sentinel is accurate.
- Please identify any possible errors to your Primary Sponsor who will be able to discuss them with Network Rail.
- Continue using your paper ATW for SMTH competencies in scope until Tuesday 10th March 2026.
- Prepare to scan and use your Sentinel Card/profile for SMTH authority to work for all SMTH competencies in scope from Tuesday 10th March 2026.
- All other SMTH competencies not in scope are unaffected by this transition and will continue to use a paper ATW.
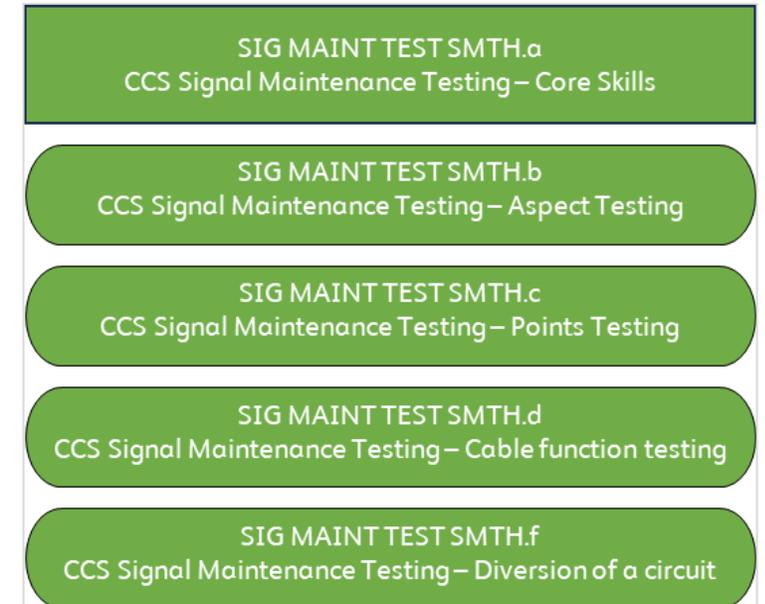
SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Core Skills

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.b
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Aspect Testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.c
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Points Testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.d
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Cable function testing

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.f
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Diversion of a circuit

Implementation date for impacted SMTH Competencies

From Tuesday 10th March 2026 the Sentinel system should be used as the Authority to Work system for the five SMTH Competencies

Training and Assessment
- For the five SMTH Competencies, Assured SMTH Training and Assessment providers are required to upload their SMTH training and assessment outcomes directly to the Sentinel system for all events that are in progress or start on or after Tuesday 10th March 2026.
- Assured SMTH Training and Assessment providers are required to upload their SMTH training and assessment outcomes directly to the Sentinel system for all events that are in progress or start on or after Tuesday 10th March 2026.
- Any trainers / assessors / providers that have not completed the NSAR Assurance application process cannot be used to deliver SMTH training or assessments for the five SMTH competencies in scope for Network Rail employees from Tuesday 10th March 2026

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Core Skills

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Implementation date for impacted SMTH Competencies

From Tuesday 10th March 2026 the Sentinel system should be used as the Authority to Work system for the five SMTH Competencies

Primary Sponsors and line managers of SMTH staff
- Review Sentinel records for each SMTH holder you sponsor.
- Report any discrepancies to SignallingCompetencyFramework@networkrail.co.uk.
- Visit the NSAR skills backbone directory to source future training and assessment providers. Please use this link to access SkillsBackbone.
- You are now responsible for managing SMTH Authority to Work (ATW) in Sentinel for your sponsored competence holders, including issuing, renewing, suspending, or revoking ATW.

SIG MAINT TEST SMTH.a
CCS Signal Maintenance Testing – Core Skills

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Support approaching 10th March 2026

There are different briefing sessions for different internal and external audiences. These will be communicated to the required audience.

There are two briefing sessions:
- Thursday 19th February 2026 13:00 – 14:30
- Tuesday 24th February 2026 13:00 – 14:30

There are Q&A drop-in sessions currently planned for:
- Thursday 26th February at 13:00
- Tuesday 3rd March at 13:00
- Thursday 5th March at 13:00
- Tuesday 10th March at 13:00
- Thursday 12th March at 13:00

These drop-in sessions are there to support any issues you may have as we approach the 10th March 2026 and are intended to be 45 mins in duration.

Information required when requesting a data change up until 10ᵗʰ March 2026

Please send an email to signallingcompetencyframework@networkrail.co.uk with the individuals details below:

- Name *(as it appears on Sentinel)*
- Sentinel Number
- Details of competence requiring change
- Details of the change required

To speed up our processing of the request, it is helpful to provide:

- A copy of the training / Assessment certificate
- Additional supporting information

The project team will then raise a helpdesk ticket for the data correction. If we are unable to verify the competence, then we may need further information.

Thank you

- Thank you all for your support in getting these SMTH competences into the Sentinel System and standardising training and assessment events.

- SMTH will move to a business-as-usual management process from Tuesday 10th March 2026

- For more information visit the SMTH Industry Competence Management Standardisation page on Safety Central

- If you have any further questions, please contact your Primary Sponsor in the first instance

- Please use the email address below for any queries that cannot be resolved by your Primary Sponsor.

signallingcompetencyframework@networkrail.co.uk