23-023 Reviewing safety competence and training requirements for guards

Version:	1.4		
Purpose:	Approval to proceed to consultation		
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Lead industry committee:	Traffic Operation and Management Standards Committee (TOM SC)	**Date:**	25 March 2025

Decision

Traffic Operation and Management Standards Committee (TOM SC) is asked to:

APPROVE that the proposed new issue of GOGN3678 is consulted on.

In approving the standard for consultation, the SC has:

DECIDED that the proposed new issue of GOGN3678 delivers the intentions of the proposal for change.

DECIDED that the proposed new issue is in a suitable state for consultation.

IDENTIFY any specific organisations or individuals to be included in the consultation.

23-023 Reviewing safety competence and training requirements for guards

This business case for change has been developed to support standards committees in taking decisions related to changes to standards. It includes an assessment of the predicted impacts arising from the change.

Proposed new document

Number	Title	Issue
GOGN3678	Guidance Note on Competence and Training for Guards	1

Summary

Background and change

The role of onboard staff has developed over the history of the railways.

The position with modern trains is that, where trains are operated with a driver and a guard, the guard (who may be referred to by some train operating companies using other terms such as 'conductor', 'senior conductor' or 'train manager') has defined safety responsibilities for the train. Guards may also carry out customer service tasks, support the accessibility needs of customers, and have commercial duties such as checking and selling tickets. However, there was no existing common approach to guard training and competence available to the industry. The guard role may encompass different training needs as job titles and responsibilities vary according to the railway undertaking (RU). Because of these different training needs, the time taken to complete guard training and the training content varies considerably across the industry.

RSSB received a Request for Help (RfH) (23-REQ-051) that identified that there was an opportunity to focus guard training on core safety activities. Industry believed that standardised training would ensure the guard role is correctly specified for all operational contexts, taking into consideration key safety responsibilities.

The Operation and Traffic Management National Technical Specification Notice (OPE NTSN) requires that RUs define training and assessment processes for staff that accompany trains.

This project's proposed approach was to develop a standardised training syllabus for industry, derived from a risk-based training needs analysis (RBTNA), which was codified into a Rail Industry Guidance Note (GN). This will help the industry develop or update its training and competence frameworks.

Industry impact due to changes

Impact areas	Scale of impact	Estimated value
A. Legal compliance and assurance	N/A	No quantified benefits
B. Health, safety and security	Medium	1,103,009
C. Reliability and operational performance	Medium	£1,981,900
D. Design and maintenance	N/A	No quantified benefits
E. People, process and systems	Medium	£1,659,000
F. Environment and sustainability	N/A	No quantified benefits
G. Customer experience and industry reputation	N/A	No quantified benefits
Total value of industry opportunity over five years =		**£4,743,909**

The standards change contribution to the total value of industry opportunity				
☐ None or low	☐ Minor but useful	☑ Moderate	☐ Important / essential	☐ Urgent / critical

Detail

1. What were the objectives associated with this change?

Objective 1 – Create a Rail Industry Guidance Note

1.1 The approaches to guard training across industry currently vary greatly in both duration and content. They can be dependent on various factors, including the type of routes and trains on which staff carry out operational tasks. Many of the tasks that are carried out may not be related directly to operational safety. RfH 23-REQ-051 stated there was an opportunity to give industry guidance on the operational safety training requirements for guards that enabled a consistent approach and provided a starting point for the design of training programmes.

1.2 There was no existing common training and competence approach associated with train guards. The RfH identified that a recognised industry approach was to carry out an RBTNA. This RBTNA could help to identify how risks associated with tasks can be minimised, and support decisions about how best to manage competence.

1.3 For operational roles such as a guard, breaking down the role into tasks and mapping the necessary non-technical skills would inform where the risks lie, and where training needed to be prioritised. The analysis could be used in the design and implementation of training, focusing on essential areas and minimising irrelevant material.

2. How has the content in the standard changed to achieve the objectives?

Objective 1 – Create a Rail Industry Guidance Note

2.1 RSSB carried out an RBTNA for the guard role.

2.2 The output of the RBTNA was developed into a Guidance Note (GN), to be used by RUs to evaluate their approach to training onboard staff.

2.3 A GN is an industry-recognised document that supports compliance with legislation. The document gives guidance on using the RBTNA output, signposting of relevant industry documents and in creating a training, competence, assessment and review framework for staff undertaking guard activities and tasks. This will help the industry develop or update its training and competence frameworks.

3. How urgently did the change need to happen to achieve the objectives?

3.1 This project has the potential to increase overall safety and improve guard training efficiency. Rail Partners was particularly supportive of the work. This project is currently scheduled for publication in September 2025.

4. What are the positive and negative impacts of implementing the change?

Justification of impact, scale and quantification for the seven impact areas

A. Legal compliance and assurance

4.1 The Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 (ROGS) requires that transport operators establish and maintain a safety management system that provides programmes for the training of persons carrying out work, or voluntary work, directly in relation to the operation and systems to ensure that the competence of such persons is maintained and that they carry out tasks accordingly.

4.2 The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has published guidance that outlines the principles and factors that should be considered in any competence management system and how to ensure that the competence of individuals and teams satisfies the requirements of existing legislation[1]. The proposed document's framework was aligned with this guidance and will further help RUs comply with legislation. Any improvement notices or prosecution by the ORR will incur costs and negative outcomes for an RU. Although difficult to quantify due to the individual nature of such occurrences, previous examples of prosecutions related to a failure to provide adequate training to staff resulted in a fine of £1,400,000[2].

4.3 The OPE NTSN states that RUs and Infrastructure Managers (IMs) must undertake an analysis of training needs for their relevant staff and define a process for reviewing and updating their individual training needs.

4.4 The proposed document will provide RUs with a framework that, if adopted, will help them to satisfy their obligations.

B. Health, safety and security

4.5 Training based on a standardised core framework will enable staff across the network to receive the appropriate safety training specific to their role.

4.6 Guards who perform train dispatch duties can be factors in starting against signal (SAS) incidents. The prevention of one signal passed at danger (SPAD) event annually, as a result of actions taken by a guard, may save industry £148,110 over five years[3]. A reduction in SAS

[1] ORR Developing and maintaining staff competence - Railway Safety Publication 1 November 2016.

[2] Network Rail fine following serious injury to a member of staff on 19 September 2018 between Crewe and Chester.

[3] RSSB T1171 *Evaluation of Human Performance* listed that the cost of investigating a SPAD was £29,622. This does not include any additional costs through train delays and so on.

SPADs of 2.5% annually may save industry £15,194 over five years.[4] This quantification does not include the delays to services and the network following a SPAD.

4.7 Improved training for guards may reduce the incidences and consequences of onboard train assault or abuse, potentially saving industry £560,285 over five years.[5]

4.8 Improved training for guards may reduce the incidences and consequences of injuries to staff because of onboard train and Passenger Train Interface (PTI) slips, trips and falls and so may potentially save industry £379,420 over five years.[6]

C. Reliability and operation performance

4.9 Training efficiency may be improved by ensuring the appropriate time is given to each aspect of training by concentrating on the key competencies that guards require. Consistency and standardisation of training delivery may improve predictability through the setting of minimum requirements that align with the key responsibilities of the guard role and are tailored to the operational context. A quantification of this benefit is difficult; however, this benefit may improve the overall quality of the training output.

4.10 The tasks undertaken by guards contribute to train punctuality. A training framework enabling RUs to deliver standardised training may improve the overall system reliability and punctuality by improving guard performance and so reducing service delays. An example of possible quantification of this benefit would be a saving of £1,981,900 over five years for two train operating companies (TOCs) if an increase of 2% in overall performance was achieved by improving guard standards.[7]

D. Design and maintenance

4.11 This area is not directly applicable to the changes.

E. People, process and systems

4.12 Training quality may improve as delivery can be evaluated against agreed standards.

4.13 The project may facilitate the industry to work together in improving the training and competence of onboard staff.

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[4] RSSB T743 *A Review of Passenger Train Dispatch from Stations* states that the risk from SAS SPADs when train dispatch involves the driver and guard is 0.05 Fatalities and Weighted Injuries (FWI) A reduction of 2.5% may save industry £15,194 over 5 years (0.025*£2,431,000(Value of Preventing a Fatality 2023(VPF)) *0.05*5).

[5] The risk of onboard train assault and abuse is 3.073 FWI per year. A reduction of 1.5% in incidences of onboard train assault and abuse may save industry £112,057annually (0.015*VPF*3.073).

[6] The risk of staff onboard trains of Passenger Train Interface (PTI) slips, trips and falls is 2.081 FWI per year. A 1.5% reduction in incidences of onboard train and PTI slips, trips and falls may save industry £75,884 annually (0.015*(VPF 2023) *2.081).

[7] Total Delay Repay paid out by two TOCs in 2022/2023 was £19,818,887. A 2% reduction in delays due to improved performance by guards may save the TOC £396,380 annually.

4.14 As with most framework changes, there are direct costs of implementation due to the need for briefing or training. There may be a cost to adopting the framework as it may be inconsistent with current arrangements. The new framework is targeted at the organisational level and intended to deliver greater consistency across railway undertakings.

4.15 Standardised core training may enable RUs to focus additional training on company-specific requirements for guards. Where additional training is identified as not being required for the role in question, there may be a saving to industry through a reduction in training time. This has been quantified previously in this document.

4.16 Improvements to the training framework in the future may be considered and implemented by all RUs, leading to a consistent long-term improvement of training for guards. Improvements currently made by one TOC are not applied universally to all guard training across the industry. This may save time and therefore costs due to the consolidation of work required by each training department to implement changes in training. However, these cost reductions are disproportionate to quantify due to the unknown current costs of developing and implementing changes to training by each RU.

4.17 A standardised training framework may enable more efficient delivery of training so reducing the time taken to complete training. A reduction in total training time for new staff of 10% may save industry £1,659,000 in salary over five years. Additional savings for accommodation, instructor salary and training facility use may also be achieved but are difficult to quantify due to lack of available data.

F. Environment and sustainability

4.18 This area is not directly applicable to the changes.

G. Customer experience and industry reputation

4.19 The guard role is customer-facing. Standardised training may improve the skill level of staff who are most visible to customers while working on trains.

4.20 The impact of negative interactions between guards and passengers is difficult to quantify due to the numerous factors involved. An example of a factor is that social media has been adopted as a form of communication between passengers and RUs. It has been demonstrated that social media can have a direct impact on safety operations[8]. A standardised core framework of safety training for guards may ensure that learning points from previous events are delivered across the industry, potentially improving safety. This is likely to benefit customer experience and industry reputation, but this benefit cannot be easily quantified.

[8] Report 02/2019, *Self-detrainment of passengers onto lines that were still open to traffic and electrically live at Lewisham*, Rail Accident Investigation Branch, March 2019

5. What is the contribution of this standards change in realising the value to industry opportunity?

5.1 As demonstrated through the quantification of benefits in section four of this document, the introduction of a standardised training framework can contribute to improving training delivery effectiveness by ensuring staff responsibilities are matched to training delivery content; this can improve the level of training and, therefore, safety across the industry. Simultaneously, training efficiency may be increased, producing associated savings.

6. What was the effort required by RSSB to make the change?

6.1 RSSB engaged with TOCs, Non-passenger Operating Companies (NOCs), Operations Standards Forum (OSF), Passenger Operator Safety Group (POSG) and Trade Unions to identify good practices. RSSB undertook two workshops with stakeholders to discuss and agree guard activities.

6.2 A Rail Operations Specialist led the technical work. Input was also required from RSSB Policy and Risk Specialists. An RSSB Human Factor specialist assisted with the RBTNA technical work. Input was required by a Communications team member to lead the communication and implementation strategy.

7. Did RSSB deliver against industry's expected timescales?

7.1 This project is currently scheduled for publication of documents in September 2025.

8. How will the industry implement the change?

8.1 The content of the proposed published standard will enable RUs to review their existing arrangements and identify areas that could potentially be improved through the adoption of the new framework. The benefits associated with the project will be effectively communicated to the target audience. This is to encourage them to take the necessary action to realise the benefits applicable to their business context and those of the wider industry.

9. How will RSSB assess whether the change is achieving the objectives?

9.1 RSSB will review the resulting document one year after its publication to assess whether its content is fit for purpose. During the review, RSSB will seek specific feedback from railway undertakings and anyone else that has adopted and implemented the changes.