



COSS Pre-course Workbook (Manager)

Introduction

The completion of this workbook is to help the Sponsor or the line manager of a candidate determine if an individual has the right experience and non technical skills before they are put forward to attend a COSS course. It also has a section for the individual to complete so they can prepare themselves before attending a COSS course. Section A must be completed and registered by the Sponsor or line manager before an individual can attend a COSS course. Section B should be completed by the individual.

More information on non technical skills can be found on the Safety Central website www.safety.networkrail.co.uk

The workbook is split into three sections:

Section A

- Parts 1 and 2 are for the Sponsor to complete which will aid them in determining if the individual is suitable to attend the COSS training and comprises of an Employers Experience Checklist and a COSS Pre-Training Non Technical Skills Evaluation.
- *Note: Section A is mandatory and completion of this section must be recorded on Sentinel (or Oracle for Network Rail line managers) before a COSS training course can be booked.*

Section B

- This is a set of 12 questions for the individual to complete to get them to think about what it is like to be a COSS.
- *Note: Section B must be completed unless the Sponsor has a documented alternative method for preparing an individual prior to attending a COSS course.*

Section C

- Is guidance for Line Managers that relates to the questions in Section B. It covers the things that a COSS should be thinking about when completing Section B to help the line manager to determine if the individual is suitable to attend training.



1. Employer Experience Checklist

The experience checklist is devised so that an employer can determine if an individual has gained enough relevant experience on track before undertaking COSS training. This list is not an exhaustive list, but gives details of a range of experience that an individual should have before attending a COSS course.

Work experience on track	Met? Y/N	Justification if not met
Not undergoing learning support		
Minimum of 320 hours		
At night		
During the day		
During fog/snow/adverse weather conditions		
At more than 5 different locations		
Under 5 different COSS's		
With unassisted lookouts		
With equipment warning (e.g TOWs/LOWs)		
With a Site Warden		
In a line blockage		
In an engineering possession		
When OTM's/OTP's have been working		
In an OLE/DCCR area		
In a tunnel		
With a hand trolley		
With tools and equipment		
At a junction with 4 or more lines		
In a siding		
Holds other competences & undertakes those duties(e.g IWA/LKT/AOD)		



2. COSS Pre-Training Non Technical Skills Evaluation

COSS Pre-Training Non Technical Skills Evaluation

Introduction

Non Technical Skills are an important element of competence: they help us apply the technical knowledge and skills we have more effectively and underpin safe performance. This is why Network Rail has a Non Technical Skills Framework which is integrated into our competence management systems for key safety roles such as Controllers of Site Safety (COSS).

NTS are sometimes known as behavioural skills and are characterised as being more general than technical skills, applicable to a range of tasks and procedures. They cover such skills as team working and how to behave in ways that promotes cooperation; communications, how to build and maintain situation awareness, decision making and how to manage workload for example. They are skills that allow individuals to identify and manage their own errors more effectively and proactively manage their work activities.

In order to help us identify and develop the right individuals into the role of COSS, we have developed the Non Technical Skills Evaluation checklist to help you, a line manager, identify whether the individual already demonstrates or has the potential to demonstrate those non technical skills that are key to being an excellent COSS. The checklist is intended to **support** your decision to appoint an individual to the position of COSS.

To confidently answer each question, you may need to discuss these behaviours with other people who have also worked with the individual being considered for attendance at the COSS training. For example, a Section Manager may consider talking to their relevant assistant and team leader to gain a clearer picture of how an individual consistently behaves while on track.



Controlled Under Pressure



Conscientious



Communications



Attention Management



Willingness and Ability to Learn



Relationships with People



Multi Task Capacity



Planning & Decision-Making



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Instructions

Below are the performance criteria relevant to the role of COSS. Read the definitions for the criteria carefully before doing your evaluation. Use the negative and positive indicators to help you rate on the 5-point scale the extent to which you believe the candidate demonstrates good performance in each performance criteria.

Making your decision

Review the ratings you have given against each performance criteria and convert the rating into a score:

Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Slightly Agree = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5

Transfer the scores into the Summary Score table below.

Performance Criteria	Score
Conscientious	
Relationships with People	
Attention Management	
Planning and Decision Making	
Communications	
Multi-Task Capacity	
Controlled Under Pressure	
Willingness and Ability to Learn	
Overall score	

As a minimum

A candidate must score 4 or more on Conscientiousness, Communications Relationships with Others and Emotional Stability aptitudes. Candidates scoring less are not deemed suitable for COSS training at this stage. A candidate must score 3 or more on all the non technical skills. Candidates scoring less than 3 on any of the non technical skills are not deemed to be ready for COSS training at this stage.

Score Results

Score	Action
31 – 40	Register result on Sentinel (Oracle for NR) and proceed to COSS training
28 – 30	May be deemed suitable for training but a justification is required and an action plan detailing how the COSS will be mentored post training.
Less than 28	The individual is not ready for COSS training at this stage but with further coaching and experience may develop into the role.



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Justification

This section only needs to be completed if the candidate scores between 28 and 30 on the assessment. As the candidate's Sponsor you must be confident that the candidate shows sufficient potential to develop into the role of COSS.

Please give details of the additional support the candidate will be provided in the workplace (i.e., mentoring, coaching, shadowing more experienced colleagues) to ensure that, having completed the training, they can demonstrate the non technical skills required for safe and effective COSS activities.

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Feedback

For candidates who are deemed not yet ready, feedback must be provided. The feedback should be specific about why they were not deemed ready and the areas that they should develop in order to be considered as suitable in the future. There are some suggestions and resources for developing NTS on Safety Central.

- Prepare what you want to say & in what order – it is usually better to give positive feedback first before moving to the negative aspects of the evaluation.
- Use the behavioural indicators to describe the sorts of behaviours that are associated with good COSS performance.
- Avoid criticising the candidate personally.
- Acknowledge & address that the candidate may have feelings of anger or disappointment and agree a suitable action plan to provide the development and support needed to go forward.



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1. Conscientious

All COSSs need to be able to be responsible and work in accordance with the rules and procedures, taking a systematic and thorough approach to what they do and checking what they do without the need for constant supervision.

Does the candidate demonstrate the ability to be conscientious?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive indicators	Negative indicators
Pays proper attention to detail such as recording details in logs and checking sources of information	Is sloppy in his/her work – does not appreciate the need to attend to details
Stops to think about what could go wrong and what the risks might be	Makes assumptions and that issues have been thought through by others
Performs tasks in a systematic, logical manner	Unorganised approach to tasks, often rushed
Reports for work fit for duty (i.e., well rested and in the right frame of mind)	Is unprepared for duty and consistently prioritises other (inappropriate) commitments over work
Seeks and reads through all relevant information in advance of tasks/shift	Does not read through information as required.
Does more than the minimum required to get the job done e.g. seeks out and accepts additional tasks or responsibilities	Reluctantly carries out basic requirements of the job and not motivated to do more than everyday tasks
Takes action if others do not correctly adhere to safe working practices	Takes no action if aware that others are not correctly adhering to safe working practices, knowingly allows bad practice to continue
follows the rules in all circumstances, - doesn't take short cuts even when under pressure	Ignore rules and procedures for whatever reason e.g. this is the way have always done it, no one has got hurt yet, we haven't got time
Reports unsafe acts, behaviour and situations promptly and in a constructive way	Avoids/ignores reporting unsafe acts, behaviour and situations or delays in reporting them



2. Relationships with People (Team Working)

COSSs must be able to work with others in the team in a positive, respectful and supportive manner, providing support and help when needed, and managing conflict when required. Underpinning the ability to be positive, respectful and supportive is the ability to take others' views into account and be aware of the effect of your own actions on others.

Does the candidate demonstrate the ability to work with others in the team and provide support and help when needed?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
Being polite and professional at all times, even when others may be difficult	Rude or aggressive in dealing with others e.g. uses offensive language
Treats others with respect regardless of their culture, age, background etc	Demonstrates sexist, racist or other intolerant behaviours
Is aware of impact of own behaviour on others and takes time to understand other's points of view	Doesn't take into account other's views and what impact this has on their behaviour
Supports others when they need assistance, particularly in challenging circumstances	Hesitates to help others in demanding situations – does not offer assistance
Takes notice of others suggestions	Overreacts and sticks to own position without considering others perspective or need for compromise
Has good rapport and can build relationships quickly with key interfaces	Dismissive and puts up barriers to open communication



3. Attention Management

All COSS's must be able to maintain a high standard of safety awareness by remaining alert, vigilant and focussed. They must be able to monitor their situation continuously and concentrate on specific activities.

Can the candidate remain alert and focussed?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive indicators	Negative indicators
Remains alert to critical elements of the work environment	Allows mind to wander, is not alert to work situation
Regularly assesses the situation and can anticipate more easily	Does not regularly assess situation, simply responds to events as they happen
Can balance attention between specific tasks and an overall perspective of the situation	Gets overly absorbed in detail of one particular task and loses awareness of the overall situation
Not easily distracted – able to block out irrelevant information/activities	Easily distracted by unimportant events, information or objects – struggles to maintain focus
Is able to keep their mind on a relatively unchanging / boring task	Often becomes lost in thought
Remains focussed during repetitive/monotonous tasks	Seeks distractions or varies task when undertaking monotonous and/or repetitive tasks
Can focus attention over a relatively long period of time	Unable to focus on one thing for a period of time – looks for something else to do after a short period of time



4. Planning and Decision Making

COSSs must be able to anticipate, plan and prioritise activities and make good decisions in a timely manner.

Can the candidate plan and make decisions having thought them through properly?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
Proactive monitors, searching for information to facilitate planning	Complacent or over relaxed approach to tasks and situation, not expecting anything to happen
Has the “what ifs” in mind, thinking ahead and working out a plan	Over-anticipation; becomes overly focused on what may happen (at the expense of other tasks)
Prioritises activities to maintain safe and efficient performance	Tries to do everything when prioritising would be the most effective approach
able to adapt to rapidly changing conditions by real-time contingency planning	Has a fixed way of working and is reluctant to re-prioritise tasks based on changes in the situation
Makes decisions and takes associated actions at the right time (i.e., can identify urgent actions)	Deliberates for too long, by the time a decision is made the situation has changed or risk has been introduced
Considers options and alternative actions before making a decision	Does not consider alternative courses of action – rushes into decision, or indecisive and cannot choose between the different options



5. Multi-Task Capacity

COSSs must be able to successfully carry out more than one task at a time. This requires prioritisation of demands on the basis of information coming from a number of different sources and switching between activities. This is most important where an individual is a COSS and performing other duties, such as being a team leader.

Does the candidate demonstrate the ability to multi-task?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
Able to perform different tasks in parallel when safe to do so	Struggles to do more than one task at a time
Switches attention between sources of information	Difficulty in switching attention, or does so at inappropriate times
Reprioritises, defers or delegates tasks as a way of managing multiple activities	Tries to respond to all tasks with no strategy for identifying critical tasks and those that can be left until later



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6. Communication: Communicates Clearly with Work Colleagues

All COSS's must be able to communicate clearly, concisely and accurately and to stand their ground as necessary.

Does the candidate communicate clearly with colleagues?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
challenges and prompts others if communications not clear	accepts vague reports, does not challenge even if does not understand or believe information conflicts
clarifies understanding through asking for repeat backs or summarising	Fails to check a clear understanding has been reached with the other person
Uses a confident tone of voice when relaying information	Becomes aggressive or meek/submissive when relaying a message or putting across point of view
listens with undivided attention so can accurately pass on information	distracted by other things in the environment so that not fully attentive when listening
allows speaker to finish	interrupts speaker before complete message has been relayed
gives accurate and concise instructions/reports	Goes off on a tangent will irrelevant information, waffles
Plans/structures what they are going to say beforehand	rushes into communication, missing key information or making the message incoherent and/or unstructured



7. Controlled Under Pressure

All COSS's need to be able to act quickly and decisively in an emergency or other pressurised situations and respond positively when things don't go to plan. They must be able to maintain the same quality of behaviour and performance in all situations.

Will the candidate remain controlled under pressure?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
Thinks rationally, logically and clearly under pressure	Easily confused and starts acting irrationally or in a haphazard manner under pressure
Remains calm and professional	Becomes anxious
remains decisive in an emergency or other high pressure situation	Becomes indecisive, needs others to intervene to help support decision making
Does not resort to inappropriate behaviour in high pressure situations	Becomes aggressive and/or panicked (emotional) in high pressure situations



8. Willingness and Ability to Learn New Skills

All COSS must be willing and able to learn and retain information and apply it in the work environment. This is not simply about demonstrating ambition and a desire to be promoted, it is about the drive to maintain and develop one's own skills, recognising that there are always opportunities for improvement.

Is the candidate willing and able to learn new skills?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Positive Indicators	Negative Indicators
Willing to tackle new experiences	Allows knowledge to lapse or does not update knowledge (i.e., unaware of Rule Book changes)
Remains open to new information and ideas	Not open to learning
Will challenge and question material they do not understand	Forgets information easily and needs it repeating frequently
Receives feedback positively and actively engages in adapting and changing accordingly	Responds badly to feedback – lacks interest in what others think of performance
takes responsibility for own development and gets involved in activities that will broaden their experiences	Over confident in own abilities and does not recognise need for development or improvement: assumes they are always right

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COSS Pre-course Workbook (Delegate)

Section B

Delegate Name _____ Signed _____

What is it like to be a COSS?

This workbook is designed to give you some pointers to help you find out what its like to be a COSS before you attend COSS training. It's really important that you understand the challenges and responsibilities that a COSS has before you take any further steps to becoming a COSS. It is not a written test.

Work through the sections of this workbook and either write answers to these questions or reflect on them with your employer or a mentor.

1. Why do you want to become a COSS?

2. What do you think being 'fit for work' means?



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3. What do you think makes a good COSS?

4. What kinds of tasks do you think that a COSS has to do as part of their duties?

5. What documents do you think a COSS needs to be able to understand?



6. Why do you think the COSS briefing is important?

7. Think of a time when you were given a really good and effective COSS brief. What made it good and effective?

8. Why do you think that some safety briefs may not be as effective?



9. What do you think the challenges are when taking to an ES, PICOP or signaller?

10. What things do you think you can do to make these communications effective?

11. How would you report an incident where something went wrong and someone could have been hurt?



Section C

1. Why do you want to become a COSS?

If an individual's only motivation for becoming a COSS is because they may get paid more, then you should question if this is a valid reason. The best COSSes want to be a COSS because they believe that they are ready, want to develop and want the additional responsibility.

2. What do you think being 'fit for work' means?

Being fit for work is more than just making sure that no one in the group is under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Fitness to work is also about fatigue -the number of hours worked and the time it takes you to get to and from site. It's also about an individuals state of mind – are they distracted? Is there something on their mind that means they are not thinking clearly? Prescribed and over the counter drugs can also affect an individuals ability to work safety, and these need to be checked before starting work. As a COSS they will need to be aware of these things, as the fitness of the group is their responsibility – would they want to appoint someone as a lookout if they looked tired and distracted? How would they deal with someone who you suspected was under the influence of drugs or who may be tired after having driven several hours to site before shift?

3. What do you think makes a good COSS?

This is about more than just having the right training. Being a good communicator, being able to follow instructions, making decision, delivering an engaging safety brief, leading by example, timekeeping, being a good leader, being trustworthy, not cutting corners....the list could go on. These things cannot necessarily be taught in a classroom, but hints, tips, coaching and mentoring can be given and a candidate can be developed over time.

We call these types of skills 'Non-Technical Skills' as they are skills that help you when being a COSS.

4. What kinds of tasks do you think that a COSS has to do as part of their duties?

This is about the technical knowledge, things like checking SSOW packs, giving a briefing to the group, appointing lookouts, testing the SSOW, taking a line blockage, understanding limits of an isolation, giving up a line blockage, amending the SSOW...there is a long list here too. These are things that the individual will be expected to learn during the COSS course so it would be useful if they are familiar with them before hand.

5. What documents do you think a COSS needs to be able to understand?

This is not an exhaustive list, but they should be familiar with these documents:

- Rule Book Handbooks
- Sectional appendix
- Hazard directory
- Green Zone access guide
- Safe System of work pack
- RT9909 form or similar COSS record of arrangements
- RT3181 form line blockage



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6. Why do you think the COSS briefing is important?

It is important, not just because the Rule Book says a COSS has to do it. The safety brief informs the group of the details of the SSOW. The group needs to know anything that could hurt them whilst going to site, during the work and leaving site and the COSS needs to tell them what measures have been put in place to help protect them from hazards. It is also important to check the group's understanding of the brief, so the COSS knows that they understand what protection and warnings are in place for them to work safely.

7. Think of a time when you were given a really good and effective COSS brief. What made it good and effective?

An effective brief is an engaging one, which gets the group listening and more importantly checks their understanding of what they are being briefed on. It needs to be clear, loud enough for everyone to hear and be able to grab the group's attention. It also needs to check that they have understood the brief.

8. Why do you think that some safety briefs may not be as effective?

General comments don't have as much impact as specific hazard warnings, mentioning specific hazards such as 'watch out for the catch pit just inside the access and some brambles just before the site of work', is much better than saying 'watch out for underfoot conditions'. Being too quiet, not being assertive enough and not challenging people that are not listening can lead to an ineffective briefing. Complacency, not bothering to go through the briefing properly because it is assumed the group already know what the risks are, can also lead to the COSS delivering a poor briefing.

9. What do you think the challenges are when taking to an ES, PICOP or signaller?

Time pressure and rushing communications, accents or simply having a bad phone connection can all make communications challenging, but communication is a key part of the COSS role.

Communication safety critical information is really important. If you don't make it clear and block the wrong line with a signaller, then train movements won't be stopped. If you take to the ES and don't make it clear that the work is not finished then they could give up the worksite with the group still working. You must check that the person you are giving a message to has understood it.

If they don't clearly understand the limits of an isolation then there is a danger they won't pass on the correct information to the group. They must check that they have understood the message they are being given.

10. What things do you think you can do to make these communications effective?

Using the phonetic alphabet and learning key phrases will help, as will describing the message in a different way to help the person receiving the message understand it. Repeating back the message or getting your message repeated back is the best way to make sure that a message has been understood. Simply taking louder is rarely effective.



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11. How would you report an incident where something went wrong and someone could have been hurt?

They should know the company procedures for reporting incidents.

Any incident that has an effect on the operational railway needs to go through the Network Rail Control Centre for them to take action, and this includes where an accident has actually happened. If the operational railway has not been affected and an accident could have happened, but didn't, then this would be a close call, which also needs to be reported.

12. What would you do if you were asked by someone to do something that you thought was unsafe or against the rules?

They should know the company work safe procedure and how to report an issue anonymously.

It is important they can stand their ground and say no when put under pressure when undertaking COSS duties, especially if someone is asking them to break the rules. If they are still having problems they can use the industry's confidential reporting service CIRAS.