



SENTINEL SCHEME RULES FAQ – DECEMBER 2024



Sentinel Scheme Rules FAQ – Version 1 (December 2024)

English Language Assessment

Q: How is it foreseen that the requirement for English language proficiency be implemented by Sponsors?

A: A Sponsor must check an individual's English language capability as part of the pre-sponsorship checks. Where a Sponsor wants additional assurance of an individual's English language capability then an independent assessment body must be used for this purpose.

Q: Will independent language assessors need to be APPROVED SUPPLIER ASSURANCE PROVIDER-approved?

A: No, the Sentinel Scheme does not require independent language assessors to be APPROVED SUPPLIER ASSURANCE PROVIDER-approved. It is up to the sponsor to select a recognised independent assessment body.

Q: Are there recognised independent assessment bodies available for these tests?

A: Network Rail, as custodians of the Sentinel Scheme, cannot make recommendations for who Sponsors should use. However, it is recommended that Sponsors can adopt industry good practice and should liaise with industry bodies who can provide guidance and signposting for appropriate Independent Assessment Bodies.

Q: Could an internal English test be used instead of an independent one?

A: No, the Sentinel Scheme Rules specify that the assessment must be conducted by a recognised independent assessment body.

Q: When should the English language test be conducted—before pre-sponsorship checks, during PTS training, or at another stage?

A: English language assessment should be undertaken as part of the pre-sponsorship checks.

Q: What is the benchmark for assessing English proficiency?

A: It is up to the sponsor to determine what they consider to be the minimum expected standard of English language comprehension.

Q: Do existing Sponsored Individuals need to be tested or is it only for new hires?

A: It applies only to new Sponsored Individuals during the pre-sponsorship process.

Q: Could training providers conduct the language assessment instead of an independent assessor?

A: No, the assessment must be done by an Independent Assessment Body. As this is part of the Pre-sponsorship checks the assessment would be prior to training.

Physical vs. Virtual/Electronic Sentinel Cards

Q: Some training providers and COSSs (Controllers of Site Safety) only accept physical Sentinel cards. How will the rule change be enforced? And, do Sponsored Individuals need to purchase a physical Sentinel card if they have a virtual one?

A: Information relating to these questions can be found in the communication issued in May 2023 through the below link:

<https://info.railsentinel.co.uk/2023/05/03/sentinels-digital-make-over-will-be-launched-on-17th-may-2023/>

Sponsorship and Sub-Sponsorship Checks

Q: What additional checks are required to confirm the identity of a sub-sponsored individual?

A: The sub-sponsor must ensure that the individual is who they claim to be, verifying details provided by the primary sponsor and confirming the identity of the Sponsored individual. This is for the Sub-sponsor to determine the appropriate level of checks.

Q: Will additional audits be conducted on sub-sponsorship checks?

A: The current requirements remain unchanged, but all sponsors must have robust processes in place for verifying information.

De-sponsorship and Sentinel Breaches

Q: If a worker has a medical condition that affects their fitness (e.g., seizures), does an investigation need to be completed?

A: The requirement for investigation completion prior to de-sponsorship (see 4.1.4 of the Sentinel Scheme Rules) is required where an incident/accident has occurred and de-sponsorship is sought as a consequence of a Sentinel Scheme Rules breach.

Where a medical condition results in an individual no longer being able to undertake duties, then the normal process for de-sponsorship may be applied.

Q: How should breaches of the Sentinel Scheme Rules be recorded in Sentinel?

A: Breaches themselves are not recorded in the Sentinel System, but where a takedown of competence is undertaken this is recorded in the Sentinel system and will be available for the Sponsor to view.

Sentinel Scheme Briefings and Communication

Q: Will there be a standardised briefing format for sponsors to use when updating staff on rule changes?

A: No. Sponsors should already have processes in place to manage the briefing and communicating of rulebook, standard and/or Sentinel Scheme Rules changes and this should already form part of an organisation's safety management system.

Site Swiping and Fatigue Monitoring

Q: Whilst Swipe-in is now mandated, there is no reference to Swiping-out. Is it also mandated that everyone needs to Swipe-out?

A: Swiping-out should already be a part of the process for leaving site. However, this will be considered as an update to the next revision of the Sentinel Scheme Rules.

Provision of Equipment and PPE

Q: Does the new requirement mean that all tools and equipment must be provided by the Sponsor to the Sponsored Individual, or just safety-critical equipment?

A: The rule primarily applies to equipment needed for a safe system of work, such as possession limit boards, marker boards, and live-line testers. It does not include general tools like hand-tools, etc., unless they are related to Safety Critical activities such as Insulated tools used in conductor rail areas.

Sentinel Audits & Compliance

Q: Will Approved supplier assurance provider audits be updated to reflect Sentinel Scheme Rules Version 5 and, if so, when will that happen?

A: Yes, the APPROVED SUPPLIER ASSURANCE PROVIDER audit will be updated to align with the new rules, including checks on English language assessments, sponsorship responsibilities, and PPE provision. As of publication of this FAQ this is being finalised.

Q: Will the auditing of sentinel scheme administrators be picked up within the Approved Supplier Assurance Provider audit or will Network Rail be auditing separately?

A: The auditing of Sentinel Scheme Administrators will be incorporated into the Approved Supplier Assurance Provider audit.

Sentinel Training

Q: Will training be provided for administrators to ensure compliance?

A: Currently, no formal Sentinel administrator training is planned, but this issue has been raised and will be considered.

Q: Will a copy of the Sentinel Scheme Rules briefing be available?

A: The briefing slides will be uploaded to Safety Central and the Sentinel website after all scheduled briefing sessions are complete.