Railway Operations Control and Performance Management Course for Senior Leaders

4 – 8 January 2027
Barcelona

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Programme Summary

Railway operations control and performance management is the subject of this one-week training course for railway operations directors, heads of function and senior officials, ending in a railway operations control and performance plan for one line. Many operators run trains, safety assurance and passenger messages separately, so delays are explained afterwards instead of prevented. The programme moves from the operating model and control room to timetable and performance diagnosis, safety assurance and disruption communication, then applies them in one plan. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on railway operations control and performance management to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Passengers, shippers and governments judge metros, intercity railways and freight corridors on whether services run on time and failures are handled openly. Leaders who control operations, performance and communication as one system make faster decisions during disruption and give owners and regulators evidence they can trust. Each gain depends on decisions taken in the control room and the data behind them.

- Punctuality: Improves when delay causes are traced to decisions and resources rather than to the last incident.
- Safety Assurance: Strengthens when operational risks are linked to the control room routines that manage them.
- Stakeholder Confidence: Grows when passengers, staff and oversight bodies receive consistent information during disruption.

Principles and Evidence Base

- EN 50126: Sets the systems approach to reliability, availability, maintainability and safety RAMS in railway applications, applied in Session 3 to the operational risk review.
- Performance Management Cycle: Links measures, review and corrective action, applied in Session 2 to the performance review dashboard.
- Disruption Management Cycle: Structures preparation, response, recovery and review, applied in Session 4 to scenario planning and communication.

Intended Participants

- Operations directors who answer for daily service delivery across a network.
- Heads of function who run control, planning, safety or customer service teams.
- Senior officials who oversee railway operators, concessions or public rail programmes.
- Strategy and performance leads who report service results to boards and owners.

Typical settings include metro systems, mainline passenger railways, freight operators and government transport agencies.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate the operating model and decision rights of a railway control centre.
2. Participants will be able to diagnose the causes of lost time in a timetable and its capacity.
3. Participants will be able to construct a performance review dashboard with measures that drive action.
4. Participants will be able to prioritise operational safety risks and the assurance evidence they need.
5. Participants will be able to design a communication protocol for passengers, staff and oversight bodies during disruption.
6. Participants will be able to justify a railway operations control and performance plan to a board.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Railway Operations Control Foundations

Who decides what, and from where, while trains are running?

- Railway Operating Model Map
- Control Centre Role Matrix
- Decision Rights Register
- Service Pattern Brief
- Interface Responsibility Chart

Day 2: Timetable, Capacity and Performance Diagnosis

Where does the railway lose time, and what causes it?

- Timetable Capacity Check
- Delay Attribution Review
- Punctuality and Reliability Measures
- Recovery Allowance Analysis
- Performance Review Dashboard

Day 3: Safety Management and Assurance in Operations

How is safe operation demonstrated rather than assumed?

- Safety Management System Review
- EN 50126 Lifecycle Map
- Operational Risk Register
- Hazard Log Reading Guide
- Safety Indicator Set

Day 4: Disruption Response and Stakeholder Communication

What is said, by whom and to whom when a service fails?

- Disruption Scenario Grid
- Passenger Information Protocol
- Staff Briefing Script
- Oversight Body Notification Outline
- Post-Incident Review Template

Day 5: Railway Operations Control and Performance Plan for One Line

Do the earlier tools combine into one plan a board can approve?

- Applying the Session 1 Decision Rights Register
- Testing the Session 2 Performance Review Dashboard
- Checking the Session 3 Operational Risk Register
- Rehearsing the Session 4 Disruption Scenario Grid
- Completing the Railway Operations Control and Performance Plan

Methodology

The programme uses structured exercises built on prepared case material for two railways, one urban metro line and one mainline passenger route, each with timetable extracts, delay logs and incident narratives. Participants work in groups, challenge each other's decisions and defend their plan to a peer board.

- Suggested activity: Tracing a day of delays back to timetable and control decisions.
- Suggested activity: Drafting passenger and staff messages for a signalling failure at peak time.
- Suggested activity: Briefing a board on a safety risk that conflicts with a punctuality target.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a railway operations control and performance plan for one line. It holds an operating model, a performance dashboard, a ranked operational risk list, a disruption communication protocol and an owner plan. The plan is used at work to brief a board, to set performance reviews and to align control, safety and customer teams on one routine.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a training programme on railway operations control and performance management suitable for senior leaders new to control rooms?

Yes. Railway operations control and performance management is taught through prepared cases. It assumes responsibility for service delivery or oversight, but no earlier work in a control centre.

Which standard does railway operations control and performance management rest on?

Railway operations control and performance management rests on EN 50126 for reliability, availability, maintainability and safety, with a performance management cycle and a disruption management cycle.

How is the plan from railway operations control and performance management used at work?

You use the railway operations control and performance plan to brief your board, set performance reviews, and align control, safety and customer teams.

How does railway operations control and performance management differ from a railway signalling programme?

Railway operations control and performance management concentrates on decisions, performance and communication across a service, while a railway signalling programme concentrates on the technical design of signalling systems.