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# Examiners' Report

## UNIT IGC1: MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

SEPTEMBER 2019

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For: **NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety**  
**NEBOSH International Certificate in Fire Safety and Risk Management**  
**NEBOSH International Certificate in Construction Health and Safety**

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# Introduction

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NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) was formed in 1979 as an independent examining board and awarding body with charitable status. We offer a comprehensive range of globally-recognised, vocationally-related qualifications designed to meet the health, safety, environmental and risk management needs of all places of work in both the private and public sectors.

Courses leading to NEBOSH qualifications attract around 50,000 learners annually and are offered by over 600 Learning Partners, with examinations taken in over 120 countries around the world. Our qualifications are recognised by the relevant professional membership bodies including the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM).

NEBOSH is an awarding body that applies best practice setting, assessment and marking and applies to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation regulatory requirements.

This report provides guidance for learners and Learning Partners for use in preparation for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content and the application of assessment criteria.

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## General comments

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Many learners are well prepared for this unit assessment and provide comprehensive and relevant answers in response to the demands of the question paper. This includes the ability to demonstrate understanding of knowledge by applying it to workplace situations.

There are other learners, however, who appear to be unprepared for the unit assessment and who show both a lack of knowledge of the syllabus content and a lack of understanding of how key concepts should be applied to workplace situations.

This report has been prepared to provide feedback on the standard date IGC1 examination sat in September 2019.

Feedback is presented in these key areas: responses to questions, examination technique and command words and is designed to assist learners and Learning Partners prepare for future assessments in this unit.

Learners and Learning Partners will also benefit from use of the 'Guide to the NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for IGC1 and tutor reference documents for each Element.

Additional guidance on command words is provided in 'Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers' which is also available via the NEBOSH website.

## Unit IGC1

### Management of international health and safety

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<b>Question 1</b>	(a)	<b>Give</b> the meaning of the term ' <i>permit-to-work system</i> '.	<b>(2)</b>
	(b)	<b>Identify</b> types of activity that typically require a permit-to-work.	<b>(4)</b>
	(c)	<b>Outline</b> the function of a permit-to-work system.	<b>(10)</b>
	(d)	<b>Outline</b> responsibilities of a permit-to-work user.	<b>(4)</b>

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.9: Explain the role and function of a permit-to-work system.

All parts of this question assessed knowledge and understanding of a permit-to-work-system and learners who had studied this topic could answer with confidence and gained marks. Those learners who had not studied permit-to-work systems found the question challenging.

In part (a) most learners gained one of the two marks but few gave the meaning in enough depth to gain both marks. Few learners were able to give a meaning that included that a permit-to-work system is used to control work in high-risk areas, while some learners described a safe system of work rather than what was required.

Part (b) was, generally, well answered with most learners identifying types of activity that typically require a permit-to-work such as confined space entry and hot work. Some learners correctly outlined sufficient types of activity to gain all four marks available. However, some answers identified a correct type of work, such as confined space entry, but then gave several examples of work in a confined space. These learners gained the mark for the type of activity (confined space entry) but not for the examples.

Part (c) was not well answered and some learners were not able to outline the function of a permit-to-work system. A few learners provided other details of a permit-to-work system rather than the 'function'. There were marks available for an outline including that a permit-to-work identifies isolation requirements and provides a formal handover procedure between shifts.

Some learners understood what the function of a permit-to-work system is, but did not outline sufficient points to gain most of the ten marks available. The marks available are an indication of the breadth of answer needed and in this case an answer outlining only one or two points (even where correct) would not achieve most or all of the marks available

Part (d) required an outline of the responsibilities of a permit-to-work user. A number of learners gave an answer that dealt with the responsibilities of the person who issues a permit, rather than the user. Some learners described general worker responsibilities at work rather than what this part of the question asked.

There were marks available for responsibilities of a permit-to-work user such as the user must understand the permit-to-work content and the user must hand back the permit-to-work on completion of the work.

Part (d) begins with the command word 'outline' which indicates the depth of answer needed. However, some learners only listed points in their answer. NEBOSH's guidance on command words document can help learners understand the depth of answer required. It is important that learners know what is indicated by a command word and are able to answer questions in sufficient depth.

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- Question 2** (a) **Outline** the main features of a health and safety inspection of a workplace. (4)
- (b) **Outline** why a health and safety inspection of a workplace might fail to identify a hazard. (4)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.1: Outline the principles, purpose and role of active and reactive monitoring

Part (a) had marks available for features of a health and safety inspection including that checklists can be used and that an inspection identifies remedial actions required.

Some learners did not answer the question asked, but instead gave details of types of inspection that might be carried out in a workplace, or listed things in a workplace that might be subject to inspection.

Part (b) had marks available for reasons why a hazard might not be identified, such as the hazard was not obvious and the inspector was not competent. Some learners gave answers that outlined general reasons for poor health and safety, such as a lack of management commitment, which was not required.

Most learners did outline one or two reasons correctly, but few outlined sufficient reasons to gain most or all of the four marks available. This may be because they outlined all the reasons they knew, but it could also be an indication of poor examination technique.

Both parts of this question begin with the command word 'outline' and learners needed to provide answers of sufficient depth to gain good marks.

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- Question 3** **Outline** why organisations may need to carry out refresher training on health and safety issues. (8)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.4: Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved.

This question was not, generally, well answered.

There were marks available for an outline of reasons including to update workers on new standards, refresher training enables workers to practice infrequently used skills, and refresher training can be an insurer's requirement.

A number of learners did not answer the question asked and wrote about training for new starters/induction training.

Some learners appeared to miss that the question asked about 'refresher training' and described the review of a risk assessment or reviewing a health and safety policy.

It is important that learners read and re-read questions carefully and ensure that they understand what is required in their answer. Where a learner does not do that, for example they outline the review of a health and safety policy and not, as needed here, 'refresher training', it is likely that the learner will miss out on most or all of the marks available.

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- Question 4** (a) **Outline** advantages of an external auditor carrying out a health and safety audit. (4)
- (b) **Outline** disadvantages of an external auditor carrying out a health and safety audit. (4)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 5.1: Explain the purpose of, and procedures for, health and safety auditing.

Both parts of this question were answered well by a number of learners with, in general, part (a) 'advantages' being better answered than part (b) 'disadvantages'.

Part (a) required an outline of advantages including that an external auditor is likely to have well developed audit skills and that they are unlikely to be biased.

Disadvantages in part (b) include that an external auditor may be less familiar with the workplace, and there may be increased financial cost to using an external auditor.

There were some limited answers that did not provide an outline of sufficient advantages and disadvantages to gain good marks for each part.

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- Question 5** **Outline** circumstances that may require a health and safety policy to be reviewed. (8)
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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.3: Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective health and safety policy.

Many learners gained reasonable marks for this question. However, two common weaknesses were noted in answers.

There were eight marks available for this question that indicate the breadth of answer needed. An outline of only one or two circumstances would not achieve reasonable or good marks. There were marks available for an outline of circumstances that might require a policy to be reviewed such as a change of key personnel, following consultation and after a period of time.

The other common weakness seen in the answers to this question was a lack of attention to the command word 'outline'. Some learners only listed points in their answer rather than providing an outline of circumstances that might require a review.

Some learners appeared to misread or misunderstand the question and described the review of a risk assessment or a safe system of work rather than what was required.

It is important that learners read and re-read the question carefully and fully understand what is required in their answer.

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- Question 6**
- (a) **Outline** how international standards, such as ISO, can contribute towards good standards of health and safety. (4)
- (b) **Outline** how enforcement agencies can contribute towards good standards of health and safety. (4)
- 

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 1.3: Explain the role of national governments and international bodies in formulating a framework for the regulation of health and safety.

This question was, generally, not well answered with part (a) being particularly challenging.

Good answers to part (a) could have included that international standards provide information on health and safety and international standards provide auditable standards.

Good answers to part (b) could have included that enforcement agencies provide advice, and enforcement agencies can prosecute organisations who are not complying with health and safety rules.

It is important that learners study all of the content of the syllabus. The content is set out in the 'Guide to the NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (November 2014 specification)'.

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- Question 7** **Outline** the roles and responsibilities of supervisors for health and safety. (8)
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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.1: Outline the health and safety roles and responsibilities of employers, directors, managers, supervisors, workers and other relevant parties.

Most learners understood the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, possibly through their own work experiences as well as from their studies. However, many learners outlined too few roles and responsibilities to gain a reasonable spread of marks for this question.

There were eight marks available for this question that indicate the breadth of answer needed. An outline of only one or two roles and responsibilities would not be sufficient.

There were marks available for an outline of roles and responsibilities such as supervisors instruct workers to work safely, supervisors must co-operate with other managers, and supervisors control contractors working in their own area.

Some learners appeared to misread or misunderstand the question and described the role and responsibilities of health and safety practitioners/health and safety specialists rather than what was required of 'supervisors'.

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**Question 8**      **Outline** why an organisation should investigate occurrences of work-related ill health. **(8)**

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.2: Explain the purpose of, and procedures for, investigating incidents (accidents, cases of work-related ill-health and other occurrences).

Some learners appeared to miss that the question asks about occurrences of work-related ill-health. It is important that learners read and re-read questions carefully and fully understand what is required in their answer.

Marks were available for an outline of reasons including determining causes of ill-health, planning health surveillance, and identifying trends in work-related ill-health.

There were eight marks available for this question, which indicate the breadth of answer needed, or the number of reasons why an organisation should investigate occurrences of ill-health. Learners who only outlined one or two reasons would not gain reasonable to good marks.

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**Question 9**

(a)      **Identify** types of emergency in the workplace for which people may need to be evacuated. **(4)**

(b)      **Outline** why it is important to have emergency procedures to evacuate people from the workplace. **(4)**

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.10: Outline the need for emergency procedures and the arrangements for contacting emergency services.

Part (a) of this question was, generally, better answered than part (b).

Most learners were able to identify types of emergency and gain marks for part (a). Some learners went further identifying sufficient, correct types to gain full marks for part (a).

There were marks available for emergencies such as fire and natural disasters. Some learners repeated similar points by writing about several different types of natural disasters. These learners gained the mark for natural disasters, but only the one mark.

Answers to part (b) were limited. There were marks available for reasons why it is important to have emergency procedures including to protect workers and to satisfy insurance requirements. However, some learners appeared to misread or misunderstand part (b) and detailed what might be included in an emergency procedure.

Part (b) begins with the command word 'outline' and some learners did not give a sufficient depth of answer to this part.



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**Question 10**    **Identify** possible costs to an organisation of a work-related fatality. **(8)**

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 1.2: Explain the moral, social and economic reasons for maintaining and promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace.

This question was, overall, well answered, with most learners gaining some marks and many learners gaining good marks.

Learners could have identified possible costs such as investigation time, compensation payable and loss of corporate image.

Some learners included sick pay in their answer, something not relevant to a work-related fatality.

There were eight marks available which indicate the breadth of answer. It may be that learners who identified too few costs included all those they knew, but this may also be an indication of poor examination technique.

Some learners wrote about direct and indirect costs. The question asked did not require learners to separate the costs of a work-related fatality between direct and indirect, nor did it require an explanation of the difference between direct and indirect costs. These learners spent valuable time on this content of their answer which did not have any marks available.

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**Question 11**    **Identify** methods that can be used to communicate health and safety information to workers. **(8)**

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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.4: Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved.

Learners who read the question carefully and understood what was required here gained marks for this question.

There were marks available for methods such as noticeboards, workplace intranet and safety training.

Some learners appeared to misread or misunderstand the question and wrote about other aspects of communication, for example the strengths and weaknesses of various types of communication, but not about methods that can be used to communicate information to workers.

It is important that learners read and re-read the question carefully and understand what is required to make sure that they answer the question asked.

## Examination technique

The following issues are consistently identified as the main areas in need of improvement for learners taking Certificate level qualifications:

### Learners misread/misinterpreted the question

Learners misreading or misinterpreting the question is by far the most common cause of learners not gaining the maximum marks available.

NEBOSH questions are systematically and carefully prepared and are subject to a number of checks and balances prior to being authorised for use in question papers. These checks include ensuring that questions set for the Certificate level qualifications relate directly to the learning outcomes contained within the associated syllabus guides. The learning outcomes require learners to be sufficiently prepared to provide the relevant depth of answer across a broad range of subject areas. For example, a learner could be asked about the causes of stress, or could be asked about the effects of stress. A question could require a response relating to the principles of fire initiation, or a question could require a response relating to the spread of fire. Therefore, a learner should focus not only on the general topic area (eg stress, fire) but also the specific aspect of that subject to which the question relates.

Learners must also pay attention to the command word. For example, a question could ask learners to '**identify** the hazards associated with demolition work', or a question from the same element could ask learners to '**outline** the control measures required during demolition work'. Learners appear to focus solely on the object of the question (demolition) and do not pay sufficient attention to the subject (hazards or control measures in the examples given) or the command word ('identify' or 'outline' in the examples given). There is often some confusion between hazard and risk. If a question requires an outline of hazards for a given situation, learners must be careful not to provide risks, or even in some circumstances precautions, as they will not be able to attract marks.

Examiners suggest that while many learners do begin their answer satisfactorily and perhaps gain one or two marks, they then lose sight of the question and include irrelevant information. Although further points included in an answer can relate to the general subject area, these points are not focused on the specific learning outcome and marks cannot be awarded. However, some learners appear to misread or misinterpret several questions. This situation is more likely due to learners preparing for the examination with a number of memorised answers obtained through rote-learning, that again can provide answers that are loosely associated with the subject matter but do not provide answers specific to the question. Such an approach is clearly evident to an Examiner and demonstrates little understanding of the subject matter and marks are not awarded.

Learners are advised to allow sufficient time to read and re-read the question in order to determine the key requirements prior to committing their answer to paper. Preparing a time plan before the examination will indicate how many minutes are available for each question and then part of this time allocation can be given to reading the question. Underlining or highlighting key words can assist in keeping focused on the salient points and simple mind maps or answer plans can also be useful. Maps and plans should be kept simple so as not to use up too much examination time.

### Learners did not respond effectively to the command word

A key indicator a question will be the command word, which is always given in **bold** typeface. The command word will indicate the depth of answer that is expected by the learner and relates to the amount of detail that should be included in each point of the answer.

The learning outcomes in each element of all syllabus guides include the relevant command word that dictates the level of detail that should be covered in a course of study and the depth of answer that a learner would be expected to provide in an answer to an examination question.

Examiners report that learners continue to incorrectly observe the command words and therefore compromise their ability to gain the marks available. The majority of cases where command words are not observed relate to insufficient detail being given by a learner in their examination answer. A significant number of learners, irrespective of the command word given in the question, provide all answers in the form of a brief list of one or two words. This would normally not be sufficient to gain marks where the command word given was 'outline', 'explain' or 'describe', all of which require answers of more than one or two words.

Some learners do provide too much information, which would not be required where a command word limits the expected answer to 'give' or 'identify'. Learners would not be penalised for providing excessive detail but this would not be an efficient use of the time allocated.

Learning Partners should ensure that learning materials complement the command words in the syllabus guide and the NEBOSH guidance on command words and that sufficient time is given to advising learners on suitable examination technique during a course of study.

### **Learners unnecessarily wrote the question down**

Developing a time plan is a key element in preparing for an examination. Advice included on Certificate question papers suggests that 30 minutes should be allocated for the answer to the long 20-mark question, and 90 minutes should be allocated to the answers for the remaining ten, 8-mark short questions. Therefore there are around 9 minutes available to answer an 8-mark question. This time will be required for reading the question properly at least twice, developing an answer plan, and then committing the answer to paper while regularly referring back to the question in order to maintain focus. Therefore any inefficient use of this time should be avoided.

The efficient use of this time is essential in order to ensure that all questions can be answered within the 2 hours available. Many learners feel it necessary to write out the question, in full, prior to providing their answer and although this practice will not lose marks it will lose valuable time. A significant number of learners do not answer all of the questions in the time permitted and do not complete the question paper, some of whom obviously run out of time.

### **Learners provided rote-learned responses that did not fit the question**

It is clear that there are a significant number of learners who seem to recite answers in the examination that have been rote-learned in advance and do not answer the question.

While knowledge of material forms a part of the study for a Certificate-level qualification, a key aspect being assessed is a learner's **understanding** of the subject and reciting a pre-prepared and memorised answer will not show a learner's understanding. In fact, if a learner gives a memorised answer to a question that may look similar, but actually is asking for a different aspect of a topic in the syllabus, it shows a lack of understanding of the subject and will inevitably result in low marks being awarded for that answer.

### **Learners repeated the same points but in different ways / Learners provided the same answer to different questions**

There are instances where learners repeat very similar points in their answers, sometimes a number of times. This is easily done in the stressful environment of the examination. However, once a point has been successfully made and a mark awarded for it, that mark cannot be awarded again for similar points made later in the answer.

Learners are advised to practise examination technique in their preparations to avoid this kind of pitfall. Writing an answer plan where points can be ticked off when made, or structuring an answer so that each point made is clearly shown, for example by underlining key points, can be of great use. This technique aids learners and makes it much clearer in the stress of the examination for learners to see which points have been made and reduce the chances of the same point being made several times.

### **Learners did not answer all of the questions**

It has been noted that a number of learners do not attempt all of the questions and of course where a learner does not provide an answer to a question, no marks can be awarded. This seriously affects the potential marks available and the possibility of achieving a pass. Learning Partners must emphasise the importance of attempting all questions in order to maximise the opportunity to attract marks.

There can be several reasons for this issue: running out of the allocated time for the examination, not knowing the answer to the question, or forgetting to answer a question.

Questions can be answered in any order and answers can be written in any order in the answer book provided. Learners are advised to clearly keep track of questions they have attempted, such as marking them on the question paper that would minimise the risk of inadvertently missing a question to answer.

If the subject of the question is unfamiliar or the answer is not known, then it will be challenging to provide an answer. This can result from rote-learning and preparing for an examination with a number of memorised answers, or simply not being adequately prepared for the examination across the breadth of the syllabus. There is always the risk of a learner 'going blank' in an examination situation, in which case learners should be prepared with some techniques to help. Rather than trying to remember what was taught or what has been read, ask yourself 'what would I do, in this situation?'. Reference to personal application or experience is sometimes enough to stimulate an answer that otherwise may have been missed. Alternatively, learners can go back to first principles and break a question down into elements such as 'people', 'equipment', 'materials' and the 'working environment'. Approaching a question in small sections can minimise the risk of being overwhelmed by it as a whole.

Running out of time can be avoided by having an examination time plan and working to it. The question paper advises that you should spend 30 minutes on the long answer (question 1) and 90 minutes on the remaining ten short answer questions. This will provide around 9 minutes per short answer, follow the clock and when the time per question has expired, move on. Answering a question partly is better than not answering at all.

### **Learners did not allocate enough time to the question / Time management**

In a number of cases question 1 is left until last or later in the question paper and does not appear to be answered completely. Other learners appear to rush the last one or two questions by providing very brief or bullet point answers, even when these questions require an outline. This indicates a lack of time management. It is advised that Learning Partners and learners spend time developing the skill of writing answers to questions bearing in mind the number of marks and time available. A 20-mark question requires significantly more detail than an 8-mark question.

Learners might benefit from writing abbreviations to save time and to recognise that there is no need to write out the question at the beginning of their answer. Standard abbreviations such as HSE, RIDDOR, COSHH, PPE and DSE are acceptable.

### **Learners' handwriting was illegible**

Sometimes Examiners have difficulty in reading the handwriting of some learners. Although allowances are made for learners under the pressure of an examination, Learning Partners must remind learners that their writing needs to be legible or valuable marks may not be picked up during marking.

There is a minimum literacy requirement for learners on NEBOSH qualifications. As stated in the syllabus guides the standard of English required by learners studying for Certificate level must be such that they can both understand and articulate the concepts contained in the syllabus.

NEBOSH recommends to Learning Partners that learners taking this qualification should reach a minimum standard of English equivalent to an International English Language Testing System score of 6.0 or higher in IELTS tests in order to be accepted onto a Certificate level programme.

For further information please see the latest version of the IELTS Handbook or consult the IELTS website: <https://www.ielts.org/about-the-test/test-format>

Learners wishing to assess their own language expertise may consult the IELTS website for information on taking the test: <https://www.ielts.org>

Learning Partners are reminded that they must ensure that these standards are satisfied or additional tuition provided to ensure accessible and inclusive lifelong learning.

## Command words

Please note that the examples used here are for the purpose of explanation only.

### Outline

The command word 'outline' is by far the most challenging for learners. Referring to the NEBOSH guidance on command words available on the NEBOSH website, 'outline' means *"To indicate the principal features or different parts of"*.

Many learners do not give sufficient detail in order to warrant an 'outline' answer. The NEBOSH guidance on command word states that *"an exhaustive description is not required. What is sought is a brief summary of the major aspects of whatever is stated in the question"*.

If the use of the command word in everyday language or conversation is considered it may help the learner understand what is required. If asked to '**outline** the risks to an operator when manually closing a valve' an answer such as 'cuts, bruises, burns and strains' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, 'cuts from contact with sharp edges of the hand wheel, bruises from impact with adjacent plant items, burns from contact with adjacent uninsulated pipe work and strains from using excessive force' would be sufficient.

### Explain

The command word 'explain' requires the learner to provide an understanding of the subject of the question and will usually be used in conjunction with 'why' or 'how'. Such as '**explain** how an interlocked guard operates' or '**explain** why a forklift truck may overturn'.

Some learners approach an 'explain' question the same as an 'outline' and provide a number of individual points rather than providing an explanation as to how something operates or why something occurs. While some learners do answer such questions sufficiently and satisfactorily, other learners have difficulty in explaining in a logical sequence and many repeat the same point.

### Identify

'Identify' questions require the name or title of an item, such as, '**identify** the effects of electricity on the human body', or '**identify** the features of a vehicle route'. In most cases one or two words will be sufficient and further detail will not be required to gain the marks.

For example, if asked to '**identify** types of equipment found in an office' appropriate answers could be personal computer, printer, telephone, photocopier, etc. There would be no need to embellish those points with a description of the equipment or its function.

However, in contrast to 'outline' answers being too brief, many learners feel obliged to expand 'identify' answers into too much detail, with the possible perception that more words equals more marks. This is not the case and Learning Partners should use the NEBOSH guidance on command words within their examination preparation sessions in order to prepare learners for the command words that may arise.

### Describe

The command word 'describe' clearly requires a description of something. The NEBOSH guidance on command words says that 'describe' requires a detailed written account of the distinctive features of a topic such that another person would be able to visualise what was being described.

If asked to describe the clock in the examination room, a person would have little difficulty in doing so and would most probably refer to its shape, its size, the colour of the clock and the style of numerals. Answers to such a question would almost certainly not result in general unconnected information about clocks, the history of clocks, or an explanation of why the clock is present in the room. Learners should consider the general use of the command word when providing examination answers.

## **Give**

'Give' questions require a statement that is relevant to the subject asked for in the question but additional explanation is not required. Often, 'give' questions ask for the meaning of a particular term. While detailed explanation of the application of the term would not be required, a correct knowledge of the term itself is needed in order for the Examiner to award marks.

For additional guidance, please see NEBOSH's '*Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers*' document, which is available on our website: <https://www.nebosh.org.uk/i-am/a-learner/> - from this page the document can be found by clicking on the relevant Qualification link, then on the 'Resources' tab.