
Examiners' Report

NEBOSH CERTIFICATE IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

UNIT EC1: MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

MARCH 2019



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Introduction

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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Any enquiries about this report publication should be addressed to:

NEBOSH
Dominus Way
Meridian Business Park
Leicester
LE19 1QW

tel: 0116 263 4700
fax: 0116 282 4000
email: info@nebosh.org.uk

General comments

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 EC1 examination sat in March 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 Certificate in Environmental Management' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for EC1 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 EC1 Management and control of environmental hazards

- Question 1** 'Interested parties' are the people and organisations who affect and/or could be affected by an organisation's activities.
- (a) **Identify** the *external* interested parties who may be affected by an organisation's environmental performance. (7)
- (b) **Outline** the importance of communicating environmental performance to *external* interested parties. (3)
- (c) **Identify** methods that can be used for *external* communication of environmental performance. (10)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.2: Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective EMS, ie, ISO 14001:2015.

Overall this question was well answered. Although most answers to part (a) were good, some learners included *internal* interested parties such as employees, rather than insurers or customers. In part (b) good answers took a strategic view – for example to build good relations. Ten marks were available for part (c) but some learners gave multiple versions of the same answer, such as 'internet' and 'website' – which would only qualify for one mark. It is important when identifying different examples that the answers given are sufficiently distinctive.

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- Question 2** **Outline** how an organisation can overcome the barriers to recycling waste. (8)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 6.2: Explain the importance of minimising waste.

This question was not well answered by some learners. Some gave answers based on the waste hierarchy or how to recycle, rather than how to overcome any barriers. Poor management or ignorance of the reasons for recycling, or the processes involved, are often what causes barriers to recycling. Explanations and training should therefore be part of the answer, along with methods to ensure that the processes are easy to follow. Good answers outlined the ways in which these could be achieved.

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- Question 3** A chemical spillage at a manufacturing facility has caused pollution to a major waterway. The organisation did not have an effective emergency plan in place and was slow to respond. The incident has been widely reported on by the media as the environmental damage caused is extensive.
- (a) **Outline** reputational issues that the organisation might experience following this incident. (3)
 - (b) **Identify** who should be contacted in the event of an environmental emergency. (3)
 - (c) **Outline** arrangements for dealing with the media that should be included in an emergency plan. (2)
-

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 9.1: Explain why emergency preparedness and response is essential to protect the environment; and 9.2: Describe the measures that need to be in place when planning for emergencies.

This question was well answered by many learners, and in particular parts (a) and (b). A damaged reputation can result in loss of customers or even a boycott. Immediate emergency contacts can be internal, such as designated response staff, or external – such as the regulator.

For part (c) it is important to recognise that media contact should only be conducted by authorised and trained personnel.

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- Question 4**
- (a) **Identify TWO** greenhouse gases released as a result of human activities **AND identify** a relevant source for **EACH**. (4)
 - (b) **Outline** how emissions of greenhouse gases may contribute to climate change. (4)
-

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.1: Outline the scope and nature of environmental management; and 4.2: Outline the main types of emissions to atmosphere and the associated hazards.

Learners gained most marks in part (a) with the majority of learners identifying suitable greenhouse gases and their sources. However, answers to part (b) were often confused with references to the ozone layer or acid rain, which gained no marks. Learners should be able to differentiate between key environmental issues, and understand the basic process of the greenhouse effect.

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- Question 5** (a) **Explain** why energy efficiency is important to an organisation. (6)
- (b) **Outline** practices that an organisation can encourage in order to reduce energy consumption from employees travelling to work. (2)
-

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 7.3: Explain why energy efficiency is important to the business; and 7.4: Outline the control measures available to enable energy efficiency.

Answers to this question were variable. Part (a) was an 'explain' question requiring more detailed answers. The main points of focus are typically reducing emissions, which in some cases may be a legal requirement, as well as the financial benefits of increased energy efficiency. There are several ways to expand on the details within these two categories.

For part (b), most learners mentioned transport choices but few mentioned the ways that fuel efficiency of vehicles could be optimised. There are also options available to avoid travel at all by the use of home working, for example.

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- Question 6** A construction project is planned near to a residential area and a local school. Residents and teachers are concerned about the possible noise that will be emitted from the construction site.
- Outline** *management* controls that could reduce the impacts of noise emitted from the construction site. (8)
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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 8.2: Outline the methods available for the control of environmental noise.

This question had a mixed response. Some learners outlined the use of barriers and other physical or engineering controls, even though the question asked for *management* controls. Therefore the main points should have been about controls such as site layout, or ensuring relevant training is provided. It is important for learners to read and re-read the question carefully and ensure they are answering it directly.

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- Question 7** A pipe carrying oil from a storage tank to a boiler has developed a leak resulting in significant pollution to several kilometres of a large water course.
- (a) **Outline** potential legal consequences for the organisation responsible for the leak. (2)
- (b) **Outline** potential financial consequences for the organisation responsible for the leak. (6)
-

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.2: Explain the ethical, legal and financial reasons for maintaining and promoting environmental management; and 1.4: Explain the role of national governments and international bodies in formulating a framework for the regulation of environmental management.

This question was well answered. Many learners gained full marks for part (a) and almost full marks for part (b). The financial consequences extend beyond fines to include both direct costs, such as cleaning up the pollution, and indirect costs such as a loss of business.

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- Question 8**
- (a) **Outline** the potential detrimental effects of poor air quality. (5)
- (b) **Identify** types of air pollution control device for reducing air pollution. (3)
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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 4.1: Outline the principles of air quality standards; and 4.3: Outline control measures that are available to reduce emissions.

Most answers to this question were good, however a few learners gained no marks, perhaps implying limited study or understanding of the topic. Part (a) asked for an outline of the effects of poor air quality – not just identifying causes. Good answers included health issues to people, animals and plants, but also potential physical damage to structures (from particulates or acid rain fallout).

Answers to part (b) were generally good, with identification of several suitable devices.

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- Question 9**
- (a) **Give** the meaning of the term '*environmental aspect*' as defined in ISO 14001. (2)
- (b) **Identify** possible environmental aspects of a coal-fired power station. (6)
-

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.1: Explain the reasons for carrying out environmental impact assessments; and 3.4: Explain the principles and practice of impact assessment.

This was another question that was well answered. In part (a) full marks were often awarded but in order to do this it was necessary to include 'activities, products and services' as part of the ISO 14001 definition.

Part (b) required responses relevant to a coal-fired power station but some answers were too general, such as 'noise'. Noise from turbines or other plant would qualify, reinforcing the importance of the guidance on command words such as 'identify'. Although an 'identify' question does not require a lot of detail in the response, answers do need to be specific.

Question 10 **Outline** the essential features and mechanisms of the water cycle. **(8)**

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 5.1: Outline the importance of the quality of water for life.

Answers to this question were generally limited. Marks were available for detail at each stage of the cycle, for example the different ways water vapour might be formed – evaporation, transpiration, or respiration. It is important to also recognise the storage of water in ice and glaciers (which is under threat due to global warming).

Question 11 A new cement works is being planned for construction on a site that has had no previous development.

(a) **Outline** the main aspects associated with the proposal. **(4)**

(b) **Outline** the main potential impacts associated with the proposal. **(4)**

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.4: Explain the principles and practice of impact assessment; 3.1: Explain the reasons for carrying out environmental impact assessments; and 3.2: Describe the types of environmental impact.

Confusion between aspects and impacts meant that some learners had difficulty in gaining many marks. Impacts in part (b) were better understood and identified than aspects in part (a). In many cases the two parts were linked: the aspect of emissions of carbon dioxide is linked to the impact of global warming; consumption of raw materials is linked to depletion of natural resources. However, putting the wrong answer in either part would gain no marks: it is important to understand the two definitions and correctly allocate them.

Examination technique

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

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 deforestation, or could be asked about the effects of deforestation. A question could require a response relating to the concept of water quality, or a question could require a response relating to the monitoring of water quality. Therefore, a learner should focus not only on the general topic area (eg deforestation, water quality) 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** types of waste found in an office', or a question on the same topic could ask learners to '**outline** ways to manage waste from an office'. Learners appear to focus solely on the object of the question (waste) and do not pay sufficient attention to the subject (waste types or waste management in the examples given) or the command word ('identify' or 'outline' in the examples given). There is often some confusion between aspects and impacts. If a question requires aspects of a given scenario, learners must be careful not to provide impacts, or even in some circumstances controls, 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 'resources', 'inputs', 'outputs', and 'processes'. 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 ISO, EMS, NGO, and BPEO 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 accredited 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** things that should be in place when planning for emergencies' an answer such as 'materials, plans, inventory' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, 'materials to deal with spillages, access to site plans showing drainage points, and inventory of materials stored on-site' 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 a gravity separator operates' or **'explain** why biodiversity is important'.

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** renewable sources of energy' or **'identify** external sources of environmental information'. 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.