
Examiners' Report

UNIT IGC1: MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

SEPTEMBER 2017



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

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 candidates annually and are offered by over 600 course providers, 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 candidates and course providers 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

Many candidates 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 candidates, 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 standard date IGC1 examination sat in September 2017.

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

Candidates and course providers 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.

Candidates and course providers should also make reference to the IGC1 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

Unit IGC1

Management of international health and safety

- Question 1**
- (a) **Give** the meaning of the term '*permit-to-work system*'. (2)
- (b) **Identify** types of work permit that may be used in a chemical plant. (8)
- (c) **Explain** the function of a permit-to-work system. (10)
-

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

Overall, the performance by candidates on this question was not strong and the topic of the question, a permit-to-work system, was not well understood. Although most candidates appeared to have some knowledge and understanding of a permit-to-work system, this was often not in sufficient depth to enable them to provide a reasonable to good answer to this question.

Most candidates gained only one of the marks available for part (a). Some candidates appeared to confuse a permit-to-work with a safe system of work for routine work.

Part (b) was generally the most strongly answered, with candidates being able to identify several valid types of work. There were eight marks available for part (b), which indicates the breadth of answer required. Candidates who only identified two or three types of work, even if correct, would not gain all of the marks available for this part of the question.

There were marks in part (b) for types of work permit, for example hot work. Some candidates went on to provide too much detail in their answer and having identified a valid type of work, for example work at height, went on to provide a lot of detail about working at height activities and risk controls. There were no marks for this additional detail which would have wasted valuable time.

Part (c) of the question was, generally, the weakest answered. A number of candidates missed or did not act on the requirement to '**Explain** the function' and gave answers that detailed the possible content of a permit-to-work or provided detailed accounts of the issuing and receipt of permits. It cannot be clear whether these candidates misread or misunderstood the question, or did not understand permit-to-work systems and wrote what they could on the topic.

Marks were available for an explanation such as that a permit-to-work identifies the scope of work, or the hazards involved, and ensures authorisation of work.

There was a common weakness of breadth of answers to part (c). This part of the question had ten marks available and required an appropriate number of valid points to be explained to gain those marks. A candidate who explained only one or two points, even if valid, would not gain a reasonable to good mark for this part of the question.

Question 2 **Outline** the benefits of communicating health and safety information by using:

- (a) toolbox talks; (4)
- (b) worker handbooks. (4)
-

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

Some candidates were able to provide reasonable to good answers to both parts of this question and gained marks as a result.

Some candidates may have not read the question carefully as they did not outline the benefits but wrote about other aspects of these two means of communication. Answers were provided that outlined the possible contents of both a toolbox talk and of a worker handbook, but as these did not include 'benefits' marks were missed.

Some candidates wrote very generally about communication with workers and did not focus their answers to what was required in part (a) or part (b) of the question.

Both parts of the question had four marks available, which indicates the breadth of answer needed to each part. Answers that outlined too few valid points would not gain all of the marks available. Similarly some candidates missed out on marks to both parts of the question because they did not pay full attention to the command word and provided answers that were not in sufficient depth for an 'outline' question.

Question 3 **Identify** possible costs to an organisation of work-related ill-health. (8)

This question assessed candidates' 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, on average, the strongest answer to questions on this paper, with most candidates gaining marks. Some candidates gained most of the marks available giving a good breadth of answer, ie an appropriate number of valid costs being identified.

There were eight marks available for possible costs of work related ill-health that could have included production delays, and insurance excess, for example.

Although, overall, performance was strong on this question, there were some common errors. Some candidates did not focus on the costs of 'work-related ill-health' and provided answers covering other costs, such as the costs of injuries and/or property damage.

There were answers provided that described potential costs in a lot of detail, or discussed whether costs were 'direct' or 'indirect'. This was not what this question asked and there were no marks for this content.

The marks available for this question indicate the breadth of answer needed. As with other questions on this paper, some candidates identified too few points in their answers to achieve full marks.

Question 4 **Outline** reasons why accidents in a workplace should be reported and recorded. **(8)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.3: Describe the legal and organisational requirements for recording and reporting incidents.

Candidates' performance varied considerably on this question. There were some reasonable to good answers, but other candidates either misread or misunderstood the question.

Some answers provided that did not focus on what the question asked, for example, answers that described risk assessment processes, which would not gain marks.

Reasons why accidents should be reported and recorded that could have been outlined in answers included: to enable investigation to establish facts, to understand the causes of accidents and identify weaknesses.

This question contains the command word 'outline', indicating the depth of answer needed. There were candidates who had knowledge of the topic of the question and knew 'reasons', but who did not provide sufficient depth of answer an 'outline' question and missed out on marks.

Question 5 An employer has found that workers are failing to use a safe system of work for operating a production machine.

(a) **Outline** possible organisational factors for this situation. **(4)**

(b) **Outline** possible individual factors for this situation. **(4)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.3: Outline the human factors which influence behaviour at work in a way that can affect health and safety.

In part (a) some candidates' answers included factors that were not 'organisational' such as the working environment. Organisational factors that would have gain marks included: management pressure, or production being prioritised over safety, and unrealistic or unclear safe system of work.

Better answers to part (b) would have included an outline of possible individual factors such as poor motivation, poor attitude, lack of competence and low skill.

Some candidates provided answers that confused organisational and individual factors, ie giving answers to part (a) that were more appropriate to part (b) and vice versa. It cannot be clear whether this was an error due to a lack of knowledge of the topic of the question, or an error related to examination technique.

Some candidates missed marks on both parts of this question because they provided answers that were not of sufficient breadth, ie they included too few points in their answer. Other answers were not in sufficient depth; points in these answers were listed and not given the 'outline' that both parts of the question required.

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- Question 6**
- (a) **Outline** advantages of an internal auditor carrying out a health and safety audit. (4)
- (b) **Outline** disadvantages of an internal auditor carrying out a health and safety audit. (4)
-

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

Most candidates gained some marks to both part (a) and part (b) of this question, but there were a number of common weaknesses observed.

Some candidates did not appear to have sufficient knowledge of what a health and safety audit is and of its requirements. These candidates had difficulty with both parts of the question.

In part (a) an outline of advantages including that an internal auditor will be familiar with the workplace and the use of an internal auditor will be fairly low cost and is easier to arrange, would have gained marks.

Some candidates misread or misunderstood part (b) of the question and provided an answer related to external auditors. This may be an indication of rote-learning.

Part (b) had marks available for an outline of disadvantages such as an internal auditor would be less likely to have developed audit skills and may miss things as they are familiar with workplace, would have gained marks.

The question did not require a description of audit processes nor of the things that an auditor might check and those candidates who gave answers that included these missed out on marks available.

As with other questions on this paper, a number of candidates did not provide sufficient depth of answer to meet the requirement of an 'outline'.

More positively, those candidates who had good knowledge of the question topic, who understood what was required in the question and who followed the requirement of the 'outline' command work performed well and gained good marks for this question.

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- Question 7** **Identify** internal documents that could be examined when investigating a workplace accident. (8)
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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.7: Identify the key sources of health and safety information; and 4.2: Explain the purpose of, and procedures for, investigating incidents (accidents, cases of work-related ill-health and other occurrences).

Most candidates gained marks for this question and it was on average the second best performing question on this paper.

There were marks available for 'internal documents' such as training records, witness statements and complaints.

There were some common errors and weaknesses. Some candidates appeared to misread or misunderstand the question and provided answers that detailed accident investigation processes and practice. Other candidates missed the requirement in the question to identify 'internal' documents and gave answers that included external publications and documents that would not have gained marks.

Many candidates identified that the release of staff for training and encouraging staff development, along with consultation with workers were valuable ways that line managers could implement their organisation's health and safety policy.

Part (b) of the question had five marks available that indicated the breadth of answer (number of valid points) required to obtain a good mark for this part of the question. Part (b) required an 'outline', so an answer that only listed say, 'training' would not gain the mark for a point that needed to be outlined.

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- Question 10**
- (a) **Give** the meaning of the following terms:
- (i) health; (2)
 - (ii) safety. (2)
- (b) **Explain** moral reasons for promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace. (4)
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.1: Outline the scope and nature of occupational health and safety; and 1.2: Explain the moral, social and economic reasons for maintaining and promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace.

Although there were some good answers to this question, generally candidates did not perform well.

In answers to part (a) (i) and (ii) few candidates could give comprehensive, correct meanings to gain both of the marks available. Candidates need to have knowledge and understanding of these terms.

Part (b) had marks available for moral reasons such as a duty of care to workers and that good standards of health and safety are part of corporate social responsibility. However, some candidates missed the requirement to explain 'moral' reasons and provided answers detailing other reasons such as financial and/or legal reasons.

Other candidates gave answers detailing general health and safety management requirements and did not address what was actually asked in part (b) of the question. This error may have been due to a candidate misreading or misunderstanding the question, or the candidate may have understood the question but could not answer what was asked and wrote something very general.

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- Question 11** **Outline** what an organisation should consider when determining the frequency of health and safety inspections. (8)
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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.1: Outline the principles, purpose and role of active and reactive monitoring.

Some candidates did not attempt question eleven. This may have been because they did not have the knowledge and understanding to answer it, or it may have been that they were answering the questions in numerical order and ran out of time.

There were marks available for considerations such as legal requirements, the activities carried out in the workplace and insurer's requirements.

Some candidates gave answers that did not deal with considerations that might determine 'frequency' of inspections, but instead provided answers outlining other aspects of inspections such as how they might be carried out.

Once again the command word 'outline' proved difficult for some candidates who only provided a list of points and not the appropriate depth of answer to gain good marks.

Course providers and candidates are reminded to ensure they understand the depth and breadth required for command words. NEBOSH's guidance on command words can be found on the NEBOSH website and there is a link to the document later in this report. There is also further information on command words in the Command word section of this report.

Examination technique

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

Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question

Candidates misreading or misinterpreting the question is by far the most common cause of candidates 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 candidates to be sufficiently prepared to provide the relevant depth of answer across a broad range of subject areas. For example, a candidate 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 candidate 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.

Candidates must also pay attention to the command word. For example, a question could ask candidates to **identify** the hazards associated with demolition work', or a question from the same element could ask candidates to **outline** the control measures required during demolition work'. Candidates 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, candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates appear to misread or misinterpret several questions. This situation is more likely due to candidates 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.

Candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidate 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 candidate would be expected to provide in an answer to an examination question.

Examiners report that candidates 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 candidate in their examination answer. A significant number of candidates, 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 candidates do provide too much information, which would not be required where a command word limits the expected answer to 'give' or 'identify'. Candidates would not be penalised for providing excessive detail but this would not be an efficient use of the time allocated.

Course providers 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 candidates on suitable examination technique during a course of study.

Candidates 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 candidates 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 candidates 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.

Candidates provided rote-learned responses that did not fit the question

It is clear that there are a significant number of candidates 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 candidate's **understanding** of the subject and reciting a pre-prepared and memorised answer will not show a candidate's understanding. In fact, if a candidate 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.

Candidates repeated the same points but in different ways / Candidates provided the same answer to different questions

There are instances where candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidates and makes it much clearer in the stress of the examination for candidates to see which points have been made and reduce the chances of the same point being made several times.

Candidates did not answer all of the questions

It has been noted that a number of candidates do not attempt all of the questions and of course where a candidate 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. Course providers 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. Candidates 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 candidate 'going blank' in an examination situation, in which case candidates 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, candidates 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.

Candidates 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 candidates 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 course providers and candidates 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.

Candidates 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.

Candidates' handwriting was illegible

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

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

NEBOSH recommends to accredited course providers that candidates 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>

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

Course providers 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 candidates. 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 candidates 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 candidate 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 candidate 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 candidates 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 candidates do answer such questions sufficiently and satisfactorily, other candidates 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 candidates 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 course providers should use the NEBOSH guidance on command words within their examination preparation sessions in order to prepare candidates 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. Candidates 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: www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=1345&ct=2.