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# Examiners' Report

## NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

### UNIT IB: INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF HAZARDOUS AGENTS IN THE WORKPLACE

**JANUARY 2018**

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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 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

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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, which is an essential requirement at Diploma level.

This report has been prepared to provide feedback on the standard date examination sitting in January 2018.

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 Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for Unit IB 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 Unit IB 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

## Unit IB

### International control of hazardous agents in the workplace

**Question 1**      **Outline** what an employer should consider when carrying out an assessment to determine the first-aid provision needed in the workplace.      **(10)**

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 10.4: Explain the provision for first aid in the workplace.

This question was generally answered well. Candidates were able to outline the various considerations, such as the hazards and nature of the risks in the workplace and the number of workers, including vulnerable workers, who worked there. Few candidates went into more complex matters such as arrangements in a shared workplace and in those workplaces where other people who were not workers were present. Candidates had difficulty outlining a broad range of answers, with many expressing the same consideration in a different way and therefore not gaining additional marks.

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**Question 2**      (a)      **Give** the meaning of the term '*occupational health*'.      **(2)**

A large organisation is outsourcing its occupational health service to a contractor. It has been advised to choose a contractor that carries the SEQOHS logo.

(b)      (i)      **Identify** what SEQOHS stands for.      **(1)**

(ii)      **Outline** how SEQOHS operates.      **(5)**

(c)      **Outline TWO** benefits to a *worker* of having access to an occupational health service at work.      **(2)**

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.1: Outline the nature of occupational health; and 1.3: Outline the management of occupational health (including the practical and legal aspects).

In part (a) candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the meaning of '*occupation health*' with regards to the promotion of health and prevention of ill-health in the workplace.

For part (b) candidates who had not read about, or had experience of, SEQOHS found it challenging and had difficulty identifying what SEQOHS stands for and how it operates.

Answers for part (c) included many general comments about health and well-being rather than candidates demonstrating an understanding of how an occupational health service can benefit an organisation.

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**Question 3** Workers in a chemical plant are provided with gloves to protect against the harmful effects of the chemicals, but a significant number of workers are reporting hand and lower arm skin complaints.

**Outline** possible reasons why these skin complaints may be occurring even though workers are provided with gloves. **(10)**

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.4: Explain the effectiveness of various types of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the factors to consider in selection of PPE.

This question was answered very well with the majority of candidates outlining reasons such as misusing the gloves, the gloves being faulty and the wrong type of gloves being used.

Candidates are reminded to read and re-read the question carefully as this question stated that gloves were *already* being worn. For those candidates who included consultation with the workforce about the kind of gloves and trialling the use of different gloves to find the most suitable gloves, no marks were awarded.

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**Question 4** An employer wants to use a local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system to control workers' exposure to a hazardous gas generated during a manufacturing process.

(a) (i) **Outline** control options that the employer should consider *before* deciding an LEV system is the appropriate means of control. **(4)**

(ii) **Outline** what the employer should consider when specifying an LEV system to control this hazardous gas. **(4)**

(b) *Other than* the employer, **identify TWO** other persons with responsibilities in relation to an LEV system. **(2)**

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.1: Explain the principles of prevention and control of exposure to hazardous substances (including carcinogens and mutagens); and 3.3: Explain the uses and limitations of dilution ventilation and the purpose and operation of local exhaust ventilation, including assessing and maintaining effectiveness.

The use of an LEV system should only be considered as part of a hierarchy of control so those candidates who were able to outline a hierarchical approach in part (a) (i) gained marks. Some candidates' answers related to managing the exposure time of the individuals by suggesting more frequent rest breaks and job rotation, which were not appropriate answers to the question.

Part (a) (ii) was not answered very well as most answers detailed the various components of an LEV system, the maintenance requirements and how to test and inspect the system. Those answers that considered the source of the gas and its hazardous properties to help design the LEV gained marks. Part (b) assessed candidates' understanding of the roles and responsibilities in relation to LEV and in this case what the employer needed to consider. Most candidates were able to identify two other persons with responsibility in relation to an LEV system.

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**Question 5** Norovirus is a common cause of gastroenteritis that can spread rapidly in closed communities such as hospitals, care homes and cruise ships.

- (a) **Explain** how the virus is transmitted. (3)
- (b) **Identify** the symptoms of norovirus. (3)
- (c) **Outline** how the spread of the virus can be minimised. (4)
- 

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 5.1: Explain the types and properties of biological agents found at work.

In part (a) many candidates provided answers that identified various routes of entry for biological agents into the human body but not in enough detail for an 'explain' command word, or specifically with relation to norovirus, to gain marks. Most candidates gained maximum marks for part (b) that asked them to identify the symptoms.

In part (c) some candidates focused on the welfare and treatment of workers, which did not gain marks. Some candidates provided very short answers such as 'cleaning the workplace' and 'hand washing' without the detail required for an 'outline' command word, while others gave very unspecific answers demonstrating a lack of knowledge about the spread of viruses.

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**Question 6** A survey of an industrial building has revealed extensive use of asbestos material.

- (a) **Identify** where asbestos might have been used in the building. (2)
- (b) **Outline** control measures that could help protect workers in the industrial building from exposure to asbestos. (8)
- 

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.2: Outline the specific requirements for working with asbestos and lead.

Part (a) was generally answered well. However, some candidates identified the roof or walls without being specific as to where it might have been used in the workplace such as in roof tiles, wall panels or coatings on walls.

Part (b) appeared to be misunderstood by some candidates who chose to answer the question as if the workers were *working with* asbestos rather than protecting them from the asbestos that had been found in the workplace. Additionally, some candidates referred to how to carry out a survey and what to do with the results, but the question clearly stated that a survey had already been carried out. There was a lack of a range of control measures outlined. Candidates who gained marks for this part of the question outlined control measures to avoid disturbing the asbestos and restricting access to areas where asbestos is present.

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**Question 7**

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE's) manual handling assessment charts (MAC) is a tool that can be used to determine manual handling risks of various types of activity, including *lifting operations*. The MAC tool assigns numerical scores to a range of risk factors.

- (a) (i) **Identify FIVE** risk factors in the MAC tool that should be considered for a *lifting operation* carried out by an individual. (5)
- (ii) For **EACH** of the risk factors identified in (a) (i), **describe** how the numerical scores vary as the *lifting operation* changes. (5)  
*Reference to the exact numerical scores is not required.*
- (b) **Explain** why using the MAC tool alone may not result in a fully '*suitable and sufficient*' risk assessment. (5)

An internet-based delivery organisation operates a large warehouse where workers pick loads weighing between 2kg and 20kg. The workers carry these loads to an area where the items are stacked on to pallets.

The organisation decides to use the HSE's variable manual handling assessment chart (V-MAC) to assess the manual handling risks to its workers, who work 8-hour shifts.

- (c) **Outline** why the V-MAC tool is suitable in this scenario. (4)

Delivery drivers use pallet trucks to load the stacked pallets on to delivery vehicles.

- (d) **Comment** on the use of the V-MAC tool in this situation. (1)
- 

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 9.2: Explain the assessment and control of risks from repetitive physical activities, manual handling and poor posture.

Parts (a) and (b) of this question were designed to assess theoretical knowledge of the HSE Manual Handling Assessment Tool (MAC).

If a candidate approached part (a) (i) as a manual handling question the application of TILE would have provided a good framework to identify the risk factors to consider for a lifting operation. Part (a) (ii) required candidates to have knowledge of the MAC tool in order to describe how the numerical scoring system is applied. Those candidates who were able to identify the risk factors also did well in this part of the question, being able to describe that as the risk factors increase so do the scores.

Part (b) was not well answered, with few candidates being able to explain why the MAC tool may not result in a '*suitable and sufficient*' assessment.

Part (c) and (d) set a scenario to which the HSE Variable Manual Handling Assessment chart (V-MAC) could be used. Candidates appeared to misunderstand the V-MAC and why it would be more suitable, except for the fact it would help for varying load weights or the amount of time a task is carried out.

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**Question 8** Dental practitioners and receptionists often work alone and can be subject to work-related violence/aggression from patients.

- (a) **Outline** why dentists and receptionists may be at risk of work-related violence/aggression from patients. (5)
- (b) **Outline** control measures that could help reduce work-related violence/aggression from patients. (15)
- 

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 8.3: Explain the scope, effects and causes of work-related violence/aggression; and 8.4: Explain the identification and control of work-related violence/aggression with reference to relevant standards.

Candidates who attempted this question generally gained good marks. Part (a) was answered well with candidates outlining that dentists may be lone workers and that the patient may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Some candidates did not identify the requirement for 'risk' and answered this part of the question in terms of controls; while others did not identify broader reasons such as patient frustration about waiting times.

There were 15 marks available for part (b) as it was not limited to practical or administrative control measures only. Candidates who logically thought about a zero tolerance policy, communication, procedures and training, in addition to practical control measures relating to both the dentist and the receptionists, gained marks.

A number of candidates did not understand the context of the question and gave answers including home visits to patients. Answers such as car parking arrangements for quick getaways and not taking valuables to patients' homes were demonstrative of candidates either not reading the question properly or not being able to provide a range of control measures relating to this scenario. This was an example of where candidates needed to provide a broader range of answers, and those who did gained better marks.

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**Question 9** A new health club is planning to install ultraviolet (UV) tanning equipment. The equipment uses UV sources with a higher intensity than normal sunlight to accelerate tanning.

- (a) **Identify** effects that could result from exposure to UV radiation. (4)
- (b) **Outline** control measures that could be put in place for workers and customers for the safe operation of this equipment at the health club. (12)
- (c) **Identify TWO** other workplaces where sources of UV radiation are found **AND identify** how exposure to UV radiation occurs in **EACH** workplace. (4)
- 

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 7.1: Outline the nature of the different types of ionising and non-ionising radiation; and 7.2: Explain the effects of exposure to non-ionising radiation, its measurement and control.

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of non-ionising radiation, specifically UV radiation associated with tanning equipment. Candidates were unable to differentiate between non-ionising and ionising radiation as the effects and control measures provided in their answers addressed both. Candidates did not gain any marks for answers referring to ionising radiation.



Answers given for part (a) were generally a list of all the potential effects of exposure to radiation, rather than being targeted specifically at non-ionising radiation. Since the command word was 'identify' most candidates did well in part (a).

For part (b) candidates appeared to think that UV is *ionising* radiation and outlined control measures accordingly, to include monitoring of areas with Geiger counters, that staff should wear thermoluminescent dosimeters with some answers suggesting using lead screening and lead aprons – none of which could be awarded marks.

Better answers correctly outlined locating workers away from the tanning equipment, safety controls on the equipment and that regular maintenance of equipment was necessary. However, few candidates related this to changing tubes, calibrating the timer, or for PAT testing. Generally, there was not the range of answers required to gain all 12 marks.

Candidates are reminded to read and re-read the question carefully and pay attention to those words in bold and/or capital letters or italics, as the answers to part (c) seemed to indicate that candidates could identify the workplace but not how exposure to UV radiation would occur. In this instance, because the question clearly stated that the candidate needed to identify the workplace **AND** how exposure to UV would occur, if they did not do both they limited the marks that could be awarded.

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**Question 10** A night club hires musicians and DJs to play live and pre-recorded amplified music daily, from a stage. In the same room is a bar where workers are employed serving drinks.

Following personal noise exposure monitoring, a high risk of excessive noise exposure was identified for all workers in the bar area. Suitable hearing protection has been provided to all the bar workers.

*Other than* the provision of hearing protection, **outline** control measures that could help reduce the risks to the bar workers' hearing.

**(20)**

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 6.3: Explain the measurement and assessment of noise exposure; and 6.4: Explain the principles and methods of controlling noise and noise exposure.

This question was generally not well answered and had a low average mark. Candidates did not seem to consider the scenario given and instead outlined general noise control principles such as the use of a noise enclosure. Candidates did not provide the level of detail required to demonstrate understanding of how the control measures they stated would reduce the risk. General answers such as frequent breaks, training of workers and the use of acoustic materials did not provide enough depth to be awarded good marks.

Better answers outlined frequent breaks away from the noise or in a quiet room, training of workers in the risks associated with exposure to high noise levels and the control measures implemented in the workplace and installation of acoustic materials in the walls, ceilings or floors.

This question did not require candidates to have detailed engineering knowledge of noise control – a general range of control measures relating to the scenario would have gained good marks. However, candidates had difficulty demonstrating how general noise control principles could be applied.

Additionally, some candidates chose to discuss the provision of hearing protection, how the correct hearing protection could be selected and noise surveys. Candidates are reminded to read and re-read the question carefully to ensure they understand what is required. In this case, the question clearly states that suitable hearing protection had *already* been provided to the bar workers, therefore no marks were available for those answers.

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**Question 11** (a) **Outline** the purpose of a heat stress index when assessing the thermal environment. (3)

The most widely used heat stress index in industry is the wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT) index.

(b) (i) **Identify** the measurements that need to be taken to determine the WBGT index. (3)

(ii) **Outline** the principle of operation of the instruments that should be used to make **EACH** of the measurements identified in (b) (i). (7)

(c) A manufacturing process produces high levels of heat and steam.

**Outline** control measures that could help reduce heat stress among workers in this environment. (7)

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This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 10.1: Explain the need for, and factors involved in, the provision and maintenance of temperature in both moderate and extreme thermal environments.

This question had the highest average mark in Section B. Answers to part (a) were generally not precise but most candidates outlined that heat indices are a single representation of several parameters and give an indication of the severity of the thermal environment.

Answers to parts (b) (i) and (b) (ii) demonstrated a good understanding of the measurements that need to be taken and the instruments that are used to take them. It is a common error for candidates to refer to ambient temperature rather than air temperature, and radiant heat rather than radiant temperature. Candidates also found the principles of the black globe thermometer more difficult to outline.

In part (c) most candidates were able to outline a good range of control measures to be applied in a process producing high levels of heat and steam. Those candidates who followed a systematic and hierarchical approach gained good marks. However, some candidates mentioned the possible use of LEV to ventilate the working environment and the use of PPE with no specific reference to the appropriate PPE for the hot working environment. Candidates must take care to read and re-read the question and understand the command word, as those candidates who simply listed control measures limited marks that could be awarded.

## **Examination technique**

The following examination techniques are consistently identified as the main areas in need of improvement for candidates:

### **Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question**

Careful and thorough preparation for the examination is vital for candidates. Accredited course providers should assist candidates in setting out and applying sound revision and examination practice and preparation techniques to ensure that they are well prepared for the examination. This includes ensuring that candidates carefully read the question to determine exactly what is being asked and answer accordingly.

Examiners noted that there was evidence of candidates not understanding the question that was asked and therefore providing an answer that was not relevant to the question.

The range of English language skills demonstrated in the examination by candidates varies enormously. Examiners often find themselves faced with scripts where candidates do not appear to have understood the question and struggle to write a coherent answer in English. Candidates for this examination should satisfy the required IELTS Level 7 language requirements. Course providers are reminded that it is incumbent on them to provide appropriate advice and guidance to candidates to help ensure that they stand a reasonable chance of success in the study of the NEBOSH Diploma.

There were numerous examples of quite long, detailed answers that suggest practical experience but do not focus on the question being asked. This may be a result of candidates either not reading the question properly, or because of possible language issues where candidates do not understand what the question is asking.

The examination is assessing candidates on their understanding of 'managing' health and safety and a number of candidates did not seem to grasp this resulting in long, detailed answers on such issues as 'what to look for in an audit' rather than how to prepare for and manage an audit.

Examiners ask questions based on the syllabus. Points, no matter how valid, but unrelated to the question being asked, will not attract any marks. Candidates should note that where there is emphasis in a question (eg by the use of italics) it is to guide candidates towards a particular point. Reading and re-reading the question encompasses taking due note of this emphasis.

### **Candidates' handwriting was illegible**

The examination situation is a stressful time for candidates and while the examination is not a test of the English language or handwriting, scripts must be legible for Examiners to mark them fairly. As the examination progresses, candidates can become both mentally and physically tired. In an increasingly electronic age, professional people do not have the same need to write text in longhand. However, to pass this examination it is an essential and necessary part of the preparation to rehearse writing questions in full and in the time allocated.

When practicing examination technique, candidates should hand-write their answers and get feedback from their course providers on legibility (as well as how they performed).

Course providers need to identify those candidates whose handwriting is illegible and provide them with appropriate advice. Examiners cannot award marks for answers that they are unable to read.

### **Candidates unnecessarily wrote the question down**

There are 15 minutes to answer a 10-mark question in Section A and 30 minutes available to answer a 20-mark question in Section B of the question paper. This time will be required for reading, re-reading and understanding the question, developing an answer plan on the answer booklet and finally committing the answer to the answer booklet. The efficient use of time is essential in order to answer the 9 questions within the 3 hours available. The majority of Examiners reported that candidates felt it necessary to write the question out in full, before providing the associated answer, and this limits the time available. Course providers should remind candidates that it is not necessary to include a question with their answer.

Good examination technique is followed where the candidate frames the answer in the context of the question, rather than rewriting the whole of the question. As with the other examination technique points above, good examination technique is developed through practice and good preparation.

### **Candidates repeated the same point but in different ways**

In some cases candidates tended to make the same point more than once, eg training. Once a valid point has been made and the mark awarded Examiners will not be able to award the mark again. Unless otherwise stated, most questions require candidates to respond with a wide range of issues to gain high marks. Consequently candidates should take care when using terms that contain numerous points that should be made separately.

Accredited course providers should brief candidates on examination technique by way of understanding what points are mark worthy in an answer and those that are not.

### **Candidates did not respond effectively to the command word**

A key indicator in an examination 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.

Generally, there has been an improvement in response to command words, but a number of candidates continue to produce answers that are little more than a list even when the command word requires a more detailed level of response, such as 'outline' or 'explain'. This is specifically addressed in the following section dealing with command words, most commonly failure to provide sufficient content to constitute an 'outline' was noted. Failure to respond to the relevant command word in context was also a frequent problem hence information inappropriate to the question was often given.

Course exercises should guide candidates to assessing the relevant points in any given scenario such that they are able to apply the relevant syllabus elements within the command word remit.

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

Examiners report a high incidence of candidates writing down answers they have memorised from previous Examiners' Reports. These answers often relate to a similar, but different question, to which the memorised answer is not wholly applicable. For example, it may require a different aspect of the topic or relate to a different scenario.

Candidates are expected to apply their knowledge and understanding to the actual question given, not the question they think they see. This is why it is extremely important that candidates understand and are able to apply their knowledge, and not just memorise. Course providers should help candidates apply their knowledge to a range of different scenarios to aid understanding of the topic.

### **Candidates did not allocate enough time to the question**

Some candidates were unable to give answers of sufficient depth to warrant good marks and sometimes spent more time on questions carrying fewer marks than was warranted by the command word.

Candidates need to take note of the fact that answers in Section A are worth 10 marks and those in Section B are worth 20 marks. The Examiners' expectation is that more detailed answers are required in Section B. Some candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time in writing long answers to Section A questions at the expense of time spent on the more in-depth answers demanded in Section B. Proper preparation and 'mock' examinations can help to correct this.

Accredited course providers should ensure that candidates are given adequate opportunity to develop examination skills to ensure that answers are provided to the depth and breadth required.

## **Structured Answers**

It is important for candidates to structure their answers as this helps cover all the requirements of the question without losing focus. It is good examination technique to look for the principles or the concepts that underpin the topic and to use those as a basis for delivering a structured answer.

### **Candidates answered by posing a question**

Candidates need to resist the temptation to present their answers as merely a series of questions. 'Outline' requires candidates *'To indicate the principal features or different parts of'* and this is not done through posing questions to the Examiners.

## Command words

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

The following command words are listed in the order identified as being the most challenging for candidates:

### Outline

*Outline: To indicate the principal features or different parts of.*

Most candidates are familiar with the requirements of 'outline'. However, a number of candidates expect that by listing or giving bullet points that will be sufficient. At this level of qualification candidates are expected to be able to construct sentences around their answers.

An 'outline' question requires candidates to give the main issue and then provide the key features in the context of the question. Where a question that requires candidates to '**outline** the issues to be addressed in the development of an audit system' the response should provide adequate context to the issues in order to gain the marks. An answer that merely includes issues such as 'scope, training, commitment, etc' will not gain good marks since while the issues are relevant there is no context to the issues in relation to the question asked.

Candidates should provide context to the point being made to demonstrate understanding of the subject.

As required by a Diploma level qualification candidates should be able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the subject matter and therefore be able to summarise and contextualise technical points in the field of health and safety. Those candidates who did provide good outlines to questions demonstrated understanding of the topic without going into too much detail.

If asked to '**outline** the purpose of local exhaust ventilation' in a given scenario, an answer such as 'contaminant removal, exposure limits' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, removal of contaminant at source (as far as possible) and ensuring exposure limits are not exceeded would higher gain marks.

If asked to '**outline** how health risks from exposure to lead should be managed...' in a given scenario, an answer such as medical tests, PPE, RPE would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, surveillance tests for lead in blood/urine, the use of PPE such as overalls, the use of RPE such as respirator with appropriate particulate/fume filters would gain marks.

### Explain

*Explain: To provide an understanding. To make an idea or relationship clear.*

Many candidates are still not properly prepared for this command word. A list of points (no matter how relevant) will not satisfy Examiners when the command word is 'explain'. So for example, where candidates were asked to explain the circumstances where heat and smoke detectors would be inappropriate, Examiners were looking for candidates to explain that heat detectors would be inappropriate in environments where temperatures fluctuate suddenly during normal work activities. Just saying 'workshops', for example, is not enough to provide an answer to an 'explain' question.

Commonly, candidates do not provide adequate detail in relation to this command word, eg '**explain** limitations of relying on accident numbers only as a measure of health and safety performance'. An appropriate response would provide the reader with reasons why relying solely on accident numbers would not provide a comprehensive view of the organisational performance in health and safety, eg accident numbers do not indicate incidence of ill-health and accident data may go up following initiatives following underreporting, etc.

Candidates are generally unable to provide clear answers where this command word is used but that may be due to lack of knowledge rather than not understanding what is required, since an explanation requires the candidate to provide reasoning for their answer. For example, when a question specifies 'explain' the candidate is required to provide an understanding or make clear an idea or relationship. For example '**explain** how malaria is transmitted to humans'. If a candidate responded with *mosquito bites humans* this would be insufficient to merit full marks as this does not provide a deep enough understanding or relationship from the specified command word or the context in which the question is asked. However, a candidate would get full marks if they elaborated on this stating that the disease originates with the plasmodium parasite that is then transmitted to humans via a bite from a feeding female mosquito that carries it; the parasite then transferring to the human blood stream, travelling to the liver.

## **Describe**

*'Describe. To give a detailed written account of the distinctive features of a subject. The account should be factual without any attempt to explain.'*

Candidates are required to provide a word picture in response to this command word and therefore the candidate needs to have a good understanding of the subject of the question in the examination in order to gain good marks. Typically, a limited response to this command word will be an inadequate amount of detail in the answer.

For example, when asked to describe the contents of a safety policy candidates should provide the Examiner with relevant information about the contents of the policy, eg 'the policy should contain details of the organisational commitment to health and safety'. This would be supported with specific targets and commitment resource to ensuring compliance as a minimum but developing the health and wellbeing of the employees, etc'. An answer that goes no further than listing the subjects of to be covered in the policy would not attract good marks in the examination.

In the examination, lists and single word answers will rarely satisfy the requirement of the Examiners in terms of answering the question at this level. It is noticeable that the well prepared candidate has less trouble deciphering command words and tends to gain good marks whereas those candidates who use single word answers will tend not to have the knowledge to write anything further in the context that is required.

## **Give**

*Give: Only a short answer is required, not an explanation or a description.*

'Give' is normally used in conjunction with a further requirement, such as '**give** the meaning of' or '**give** an example in **EACH** case'.

In some circumstances candidates may spend too much time giving unrequired detail in response to this command word. It is often used in conjunction with the meaning of a phrase or statement and candidates can over-elaborate the required answer. Time management is important in the examination and candidates should ensure that they respond with appropriate brevity where the command word and available marks suggest that is all that is required.

When asked to '**give** the meaning of motivation', it would be appropriate to say that 'motivation is the driving force that leads an individual to behave in a certain way'. It would not be appropriate to discuss in detail different motivational theories.

On the whole most candidates respond well to this command word, often by offering a definition. There is evidence where candidates go into too much detail that left those candidates writing large amounts of text for very few marks.

## **Identify**

*Identify: To give a reference to an item, which could be its name or title.*

As with 'give' above it is not uncommon for candidates to over-elaborate their answers in response to this command word. It is adequate for a candidate to provide the key point to the Examiner without further developing the point with supporting theory or examples unless they are specifically asked for.

When providing a response to 'identify' the mental selection and naming of an answer that relates to the question should be sufficient. In most cases, one or two words would be sufficient to be awarded corresponding marks. Any further detail would not be required and impacts negatively on the time limit for completing the examination. For example, if the question was '**identify** possible effects on the body when someone is exposed to lead' suitable responses would include developmental effects in unborn babies, anaemia, nausea/vomiting in order to be awarded a mark.

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](http://www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=1345&ct=2).