Examiners’ Report

UNIT NGC1:
MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

SEPTEMBER 2017

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

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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

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 NGC1 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 National 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 NGC1 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 NGC1 ‘Example question paper and Examiners’ feedback on expected answers’ which provides example questions and details Examiners’ expectations and typical areas of underperformance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>(a) <strong>Give</strong> the meaning of the following statutory duties:</th>
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<td></td>
<td>(i) absolute;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(ii) practicable;</td>
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<td>(iii) reasonably practicable.</td>
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<td>(b)</td>
<td><strong>Outline</strong> the duties of employers under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA).</td>
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<td>(c)</td>
<td><strong>Outline</strong> duties placed on employees by:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(i) sections 7 and 8 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(ii) the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR);</td>
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**AND give** a practical example for EACH duty.

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.3: Explain the legal framework for the regulation of health and safety including sources and types of law; and 1.4: Explain the scope, duties and offences of employers, managers, employees and others under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

This question related to statute law and part (a) required the legal meanings of absolute and qualified duties (practicable and reasonably practicable). For part (a) (i), ‘absolute’, many candidates were able to gain at least one mark by stating that action must be taken but were unable to demonstrate a deeper understanding.

Part (a) (ii), ‘practicable’, caused the greatest difficulty of the three terms. Some candidates understood that action must be taken if it is technologically possible but were unable to go further and discuss the cost issue. Part (a) (iii) required the meaning of ‘reasonably practicable’. Many candidates were able to explain the relationship between risk and cost as being a balance but did not understand that if balance is achieved then the duty has been fulfilled. There was confusion between a ‘practicable’ duty and one that is ‘reasonably practicable’ and occasionally candidates cited examples, which were not required.

For part (b) the majority of candidates outlined a range of duties and gained good marks. However, most of the marks were gained from knowledge of the duties under section 2(2) (a-e) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Relatively few candidates considered the duties to prepare a health and safety policy and to consult with safety representatives.

It was noted that some responses to this part of the question did not comply with the command word ‘outline’ and presented answers that identified or listed thereby restricting the number of marks that could be awarded.

Part (c) (i) sought employee duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 contained in sections 7 and 8. Of the two, section 7 was better understood with most candidates appreciating that they must ensure the safety of themselves and others. In some cases marks were missed by not going on to state that it was by their ‘acts and omissions’. Part (c) (ii) related to employee duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and produced a very limited response from the majority of candidates. In the absence of knowledge some candidates merely repeated their answer given for part (c) (i).
It did seem that part (c) was understood by most candidates. However, many did not read the question thoroughly enough and neglected to provide practical examples for each duty. It appears that some candidates had little understanding of how the law is applied in practice and so could not give suitable practical examples. Course providers should assist candidates by working with them to develop practical examples based on their own experience. This will deepen understanding and enhance the learning experience of the candidate.

**Question 2**

Outline how managers can improve the health and safety behaviour of employees. (8)

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.1: Outline the organisational health and safety roles and responsibilities of employers, directors, managers and supervisors; and 3.4: Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved.

The majority of candidates who responded well to this question understood its intent and answered from a manager’s perspective. A few candidates misinterpreted the question and gave reasons for having health and safety, basing their answer on legal, moral and financial arguments.

Some candidates presented answers that covered a narrow range of topics and restricted the marks that could be awarded. Those who focused on a single topic gained few marks, e.g. involvement in risk assessments, or development in safe systems of work or consultation.

Common points that were raised included: management commitment, and good communication systems. Less common points covered were praise and empowerment.

**Question 3**

(a) **Give** the meaning of the term ‘risk’ AND **give** a workplace example. (2)

(b) **Outline** the general principles of prevention that should be considered when managing health and safety risk. (6)

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.5: Explain the principles and practice of risk assessment; and 3.6: Explain the general principles of prevention.

For part (a) many candidates were able to explain that risk involves the likelihood of potential harm from a hazard being realised. This is in fact written in the syllabus content along with meaning of the terms ‘hazard’ and ‘risk assessment’. Some candidates were confused between ‘risk’ and ‘hazard’, erroneously giving the meaning of hazard and were awarded no marks.

Very few candidates were able to give an adequate workplace example of risk. Some gave an example of a hazard without explaining the risk.

Part (b) proved to be particularly challenging for the majority of candidates with many outlining a general hierarchy of control rather than the required general principles of prevention. The general principles of prevention are listed in the syllabus content along with a clear reference to their source, which is Regulation 4 and Schedule 1 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
Some candidates demonstrated good, almost textbook knowledge of the ‘principles’ but did not comply with the ‘outline’ command word and only identified, thereby missing out on valuable marks. Course providers need to advise their candidates to pay close attention to the command word and assist them by strict marking of mock examination questions. Further information on command words is included later in this report.

**Question 4**

(a) **Outline** why an organisation should carry out reactive monitoring of its health and safety performance. \(4\)

(b) **Identify** examples of reactive monitoring of health and safety performance. \(4\)

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

In part (a) many candidates appeared to either misread or misunderstand this part of the question. Some candidates gave an answer based on active monitoring rather than reactive monitoring. Some answers included outlining when reactive monitoring should be conducted and how to carry out an accident investigation. Marks could not be awarded in either case.

Few candidates were able to outline a range of reasons why reactive monitoring should be carried out. Many restricted their answers to identifying weaknesses and learning from mistakes, so few marks could be awarded. Better answers covered identification of legal breaches or non-compliance with its own internal standards.

Many candidates found part (b) to be particularly challenging and were able to identify very few examples of reactive monitoring beyond accidents or incidents. Again, some candidates were confused between the two means of monitoring and gave examples based on active monitoring such as inspection and audit.

This question produced the lowest scoring answer across the whole examination paper.

**Question 5**

**Outline** circumstances that may require a health and safety policy to be reviewed. \(8\)

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.3: Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective health and safety policy. The syllabus content requires the circumstances that may lead to the review of a health and safety policy.

This question was reasonably well answered, with the majority of candidates demonstrating that they understood the question and generally produced a wide range of points. However, the command word for this question was ‘outline’ which some candidates ignored and produced lists or bullet-point answers, thereby restricting the number of marks that could be awarded.

Some candidates seemed to have difficulty expanding on the valid points that they had raised, eg simply stating ‘change of premises’ or ‘workplace change’ lacks depth and is insufficient for an outlined answer.

One of the keys to this question is to understand the circumstances that arise from change. Better answers considered changes such as those to key personnel or technology. Also, there are external influences such as enforcement action.
Question 6  **Identify** published information that might be consulted when dealing with a health and safety issue in the workplace.  

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.7: Identify the key sources of health and safety information. The syllabus content includes information which is external to the organisation and gives several examples, e.g. manufacturer’s data.

Many candidates did not recognise that the focus of this question concerned ‘published information’ and not information that can be generated within the workplace, which is rarely published. Those candidates who concentrated entirely on internal information, e.g. risk assessments, were awarded very few marks.

Some candidates produced quite a narrow answer and concentrated only on information that is published by the Health and Safety Executive, e.g. Guidance Notes. This approach also restricted the number of marks that could be awarded.

On some occasions candidates missed marks by listing individual sets of regulations.

Again, some candidates failed to observe the command word, in this case ‘identify’. It appears that some candidates filled an entire page with text, thereby, wasting valuable examination time.

Question 7  An employer has found that employees are failing to use a safe system of work for operating a production machine.

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

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. The specific content deals with organisational, job and individual factors.

Generally this question was well answered. However, some candidates had difficulty distinguishing between the organisational and individual factors.

It appeared that a small number of candidates did not read or understand the question properly and based their answers on the consequences that might arise following an accident, e.g. enforcement action.

Part (a) produced a reasonable response from the majority of candidates with a good range of points raised. Some candidates confused organisational factors with job factors and included lighting, heating and space which could not gain marks. Issues such as failing to provide resources and an inadequate training programme were rarely mentioned.

Part (b) produced a good response from the majority of candidates. Some candidates repeated points from part (a) possibly because they were not sure into which category they should be placed. However, this practice wastes the valuable time available to answer other questions.
Question 8

(a) **Identify** who should take part in a review of an organisation’s health and safety performance.  

(b) **Outline** why records of health and safety management reviews should be maintained.

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 5.2: Explain the purpose of, and procedures for, regular reviews of health and safety performance.

For part (a) the majority of candidates could identify those who should take part in a review of performance and were awarded marks accordingly. Many did not recognise the importance of an independent person taking part in a review.

Some candidates restricted the marks that could be awarded by not fully making the point, e.g. simply stating ‘managers’ is insufficient, where ‘a manager from each level in the organisation’ is more appropriate. Some mistakenly suggested that the regulator should be involved.

For part (b) some candidates misread the question and focused on either the outcomes of a review or why a review should be conducted, rather than why records of reviews should be maintained.

Some candidates limited their responses to issues relating to legal defence and identifying trends and produced an answer of limited range. Very few candidates appreciated that the records can be used to demonstrate continuous improvement.

Question 9

**Identify** possible costs to an organisation of work-related ill-health.

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 1.2: Explain the moral and financial reasons for promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace.

Most candidates were able to identify a wide range of costs to an organisation. Some candidates chose to divide the costs between direct and indirect which was not asked for, wasted time and gained no additional marks.

Some candidates revealed that they did not read the question thoroughly and referred to ‘accidents’. However, the costs are quite similar to those that relate to a case of work-related ill-health and this did not prove to be too detrimental. However, neglecting to read the question thoroughly and answering out of context can result in missing out on marks.

While the range of points covered by most candidates was good most candidates did not mention costs due to health surveillance.
Question 10  
(a) Outline why an organisation would carry out a health and safety inspection.  

(b) Outline the benefits of using a checklist to carry out a health and safety inspection.

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.1: Outline the principles, purpose and role of active and reactive monitoring. The syllabus content also includes the use of checklists for inspection.

Part (a) was not well answered, with few candidates gaining more than half of the available marks. Many candidates lost sight of why an organisation would carry out a health and safety inspection from an organisational perspective and could not see beyond the identification of unsafe acts or conditions, and legal compliance.

Some candidates outlined when an inspection should be carried out, rather than why, while others based their answer on auditing.

Part (b) was well understood by most candidates although some missed the point of the question and outlined the benefits of an inspection rather than the benefits of using a checklist to carry out an inspection. A few candidates included items that might be found on an inspection checklist to which no marks could be awarded.

Many candidates realised that an inspection checklist is a valuable means of achieving consistency between different inspectors and that it reduces the chance of significant hazards or areas being missed.

Question 11  
Outline topics that could be covered on a health and safety induction training course for new employees.

This question assessed candidates’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.4: Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved. The syllabus content specifically requires candidates to know the key health and safety topics that should be covered during induction training.

Candidates generally responded well to this question and outlined that emergency procedures, welfare facilities and first aid provisions should be included on an induction.

Some candidates lost marks by focusing on topics that would either not feature on a health and safety induction, eg waste stream management, or that were not health and safety related, eg human resources issues.
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 (e.g., 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.