Examiners' Report

NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

UNIT IC: INTERNATIONAL WORKPLACE AND WORK EQUIPMENT SAFETY



JANUARY 2019

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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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Any enquiries about this report publication should be addressed to:

NEBOSH Dominus Way Meridian Business Park Leicester LE19 1QW

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

General comments

Many 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 2019.

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 IC 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.

Question 1 A university has several students with a range of physical and mental disabilities. A fire risk assessment needs to be completed.

(a)	Explain why students with a physical or mental disability may be at increased risk.	(4)
(b)	Identify other categories of people especially at risk.	(2)
(c)	Outline control measures that may need to be included in a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).	(4)

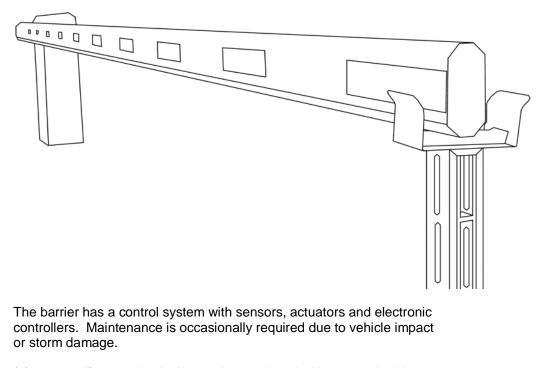
This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 3.5: Explain the purpose of, and essential requirements for, emergency evacuation procedures; and 3.1: Explain the processes involved in the identification of hazards and the assessment of risk from fire.

This was a practical question based around an everyday, accessible scenario.

In part (a) the question, required candidates to explain why physically and mentally disabled students may be at increased risk. Some candidates did not differentiate between physical and mental disabilities when giving the explanation. In part (b) most candidates only identified the elderly and pregnant women as the other categories that may be especially at risk. Other options could have included visitors, contractors and students of a second language. In part (c) many of the candidates did not have a good understanding of the requirements of a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP). Instead they generalised and described a general evacuation plan for all persons in an emergency situation.

There were three command words within the elements of this question and candidates appeared to be able to respond to them appropriately. Overall candidates were well prepared for these subject areas.

Question 2 Car park entry and exit is controlled by an automatic barrier of the rising arm type shown below.



- (a) **Outline** *mechanical* hazards associated with automatic rising arm barriers.
- (b) **Outline** control measures that should be considered to help reduce risk before starting any maintenance activity on the barrier.

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 6.2: Outline the principal generic mechanical and non-mechanical hazards of general workplace machinery; and 6.4: Explain the principles of control associated with the maintenance of general workplace machinery

(4)

(6)

Candidates and course providers need to note that the syllabus specifically refers to 'doors and gates' in relation to general workplace machinery. For clarity, a sketch was provided with this question.

Part (a) of this question asked for the *mechanical* hazards associated with automatic rising arm barriers with the command word 'outline'. Many candidates appeared to miss those two pieces of guidance in the question and in consequence did not gain good marks – typically listing non-mechanical as well as mechanical hazards.

In part (b) some candidates did not focus on the *maintenance* aspects of the question, instead considering control measures while the barrier was in normal operation.

Correct mechanical and electrical isolation and release of any stored energy were outlined by most candidates. Fewer candidates considered provision of safe access/platforms for replacing/releasing the existing barrier components and for protecting workers from moving traffic. **Question 3** A worker is carrying out a user check on an alternating current (AC) electric drill which is to be used with a residual current device (RCD).

- (a) **Outline** types of visible defect on the drill that may be found during the check. (8)
- (b) **Outline** the importance of an RCD. (2)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 8.5: Outline the main hazards, risks and controls associated with the use of portable electrical equipment; and 8.3: Outline the issues relevant to the installation, use, inspection and maintenance of electrical systems.

Electricity appears to be a challenging subject for most candidates. In part (a) some candidates regarded the drill as a pedestal or bench-mounted drill, rather than a portable device. Almost all candidates who gained marks identified flexible cable damage but did not give very specific examples of cable damage. Some answers provided included bearing damage, bent drill shaft and several answers about the condition of the drill bit, which did not gain marks. A few candidates provided an incorrect response stating that a lack of an approval mark meant the drill was unsafe.

In part (b) a few candidates regarded an RCD as being a device for safely discharging capacitors. There was a tendency to explain how an RCD works, rather than why it is important.

Question 4	An organisation can help ensure workplace transport safety by having safe vehicles and a safe site.		
	(a)	Outline control measures that should be considered to help ensure safe <i>vehicles</i> .	(5)
	(b)	Outline control measures that should be considered to help ensure a safe <i>site</i> .	(5)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 10.1: Outline the factors to be considered in a workplace transport risk assessment and the controls available for managing workplace transport risk.

Both learning outcomes are supported by content that refers to safe vehicles, safe sites and safe driver, and this question concerned the first two.

Control measures in part (a) could have included reversing klaxons, adequate vehicle lighting and vehicle designs to reduce blind spots.

For part (b) an outline of the requirements for a safe site including stable roadways, one-way systems, segregation of pedestrians, etc, would have gained marks.

The question did not stipulate a workplace environment so candidates were free to draw on their own knowledge and experience in order to answer this question. Workplace transport is a popular and accessible topic for the majority of candidates; however, common pitfalls included listing rather than outlining the answers. Also, providing answers to part (b) in part (a) did not gain any marks, or vice-versa.

Some candidates included matters concerning 'safe drivers'; while correct, these did not gain any marks because they were not asked for in the question. This reinforces once again the requirement to read and re-read the question carefully. **Question 5** Slips are a common cause of workplace accidents.

- (a) **Outline** what contributes to slip accidents at work. (6)
- (b) **Explain TWO** tests for measuring the slip resistance of surfaces. (4)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 1.1: Explain the need for, and factors involved in, the provision and maintenance of a safe working environment

Slips are a common cause of accidents at work and their prevention and analysis are therefore an important part of a health and safety practitioner's role. The expectation is that this topic is one with which most candidates would be familiar.

Testing of slip resistance is part of the analytical work that needs to be conducted; whether it be to advise on new or proposed surfaces or surface treatments, or to investigate incidents where slips have occurred.

Candidates are expected to be able to demonstrate a practical and theoretical knowledge of different Coefficients of Friction (CoF) between one surface and another; the effects of contamination on CoF; the effects of cleaning floors; the appropriateness of footwear for the working environment; and practical methods for managing the risks of slips at work.

Many candidates did not understand the meaning of a 'Coefficient of Friction'.

Candidates were rarely able to discuss more than one method of assessing slip resistance.

Course providers and candidates need to look at a range of methods including pendulum, sled and surface roughness tests. For the reasons described above, commissioning such tests and interpreting their results are important practitioner skills.

Question 6Outline what should be considered when developing a planned
preventive maintenance programme for safety-critical machinery.(10)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 5.3: Explain safe working procedures for the maintenance, inspection and testing of work equipment according to the risks posed.

This subject area was not understood by most candidates. The syllabus content specifically refers to three types of maintenance: planned preventative, condition-based and breakdown. The requirements for a planned preventative maintenance programme would include such factors as an inventory of the safety-critical machinery within the scope of the programme, its age, and the statutory requirements for its maintenance.

Most candidates referred to manufacturers' recommendations and the competence of maintenance staff. Better answers considered the timing of the maintenance (weekends/holidays/slack periods) and the need for specialist tooling.

Element 5 concerns work equipment and is an important subject that incorporates maintenance and candidates need to be better prepared for it.

Question 7 A rainwater gutter at a height of five metres is leaking.

Explain how you would apply the work at height hierarchy of control to the repair of the gutter.

(20)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes: 1.4: Explain the hazards, risks, and controls when working at height; and 9.4: Outline the hazards and control measures associated with working at height from fixed work or temporary platforms.

Candidates found this question challenging.

The command word of 'explain' requires candidates to make a link between the hierarchy of controls to the repair. Controls such as work using tools attached to extending poles and the use of an existing place of work would be linked to through the hierarchy to the avoidance of work at height. Similarly, the use of protective netting and soft bags would be linked to mitigating the consequences of falls.

Of those candidates who attempted this question, many just outlined controls without referencing them to the hierarchy.

Examples of incorrect answers included describing how to erect, use and inspect scaffolds and a detailed explanation of how to use a ladder.

Question 8	(a)	Outline hazards from the use of a scissor lift.	
	(b)	Outline control measures that would help protect <i>members of the public</i> when operating a scissor lift in a supermarket during opening hours.	(8)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 7.3: Outline the main hazards and control measures associated with access equipment and equipment for working at height; and 9.2: Outline the principal duties and specific responsibilities for the effective management of health and safety on construction sites.

In part (a) most candidates gained good marks by outlining a range of hazards. These included persons and materials falling from height, movement near other overhead obstructions and cables, and overturning. There were few answers concerning scissor mechanism failure, or of insecure handrails or foot panels. Very few candidates referred to unauthorised use or the mechanism seizing.

Part (b) was not answered as well, as many candidates did not give control measures as asked in the question. Instead they gave management controls, such as safe system of work and permit-to-work. Correct responses included temporary barriers, toe boards and warning signs. Most candidates linked their answers to the supermarket environment, although some gave generic construction answers.

Question 9	A storeroom is to be built for the storage of bulk stocks of palletised containers of highly flammable paints and thinners.		
	(a)	Outline what should be considered when designing and constructing the storeroom.	(10)
	(b)	Outline what should be considered in the use of the storeroom.	(10)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.2: Outline the main principles of the safe storage, handling and transport of dangerous substances.

Part (a) was mainly answered well by candidates who structured their answer around the typical elements of the building (roof, walls, bunding and floor construction). A structured approach helps candidates to optimise their marks.

Part (b) was not answered well. Many candidates repeated points made in part (a) that related to the design rather than the use of the building. Popular correct answers were controlling ignition sources, appropriate warning signs, having no smoking areas, and procedures in the event of an emergency and procedures for dealing with spillages.

Question 10	(a)	Outline the effects of a fire in a workplace on the following structural materials:		
		(i)	steel;	(4)
		(ii) concrete;	concrete;	(4)
		(iii)	wood.	(4)
	(b)		ne precautions that could be taken to prevent failure of materials in the event of a fire.	(8)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of two learning outcomes 2.2: Outline the behaviour of structural materials, buildings and building contents in a fire; and 2.3: Outline the main principles and practices of prevention and protection against fire and explosion.

Many candidates were familiar with the properties of steel in part (a) (i) and gained good marks. Part (a) (ii) was not answered so well, with many candidates having difficulty writing more than spalling and loss of strength. Part (a) (iii) was well answered with many candidates understanding about charring and types of timber.

Part (b) was challenging to most candidates. For example, limiting heat transfer through steel components and compartmentalising steel to prevent conduction was rarely given. Most correct answers were restricted to spray coatings, impregnating timber and increasing the thickness of the concrete.

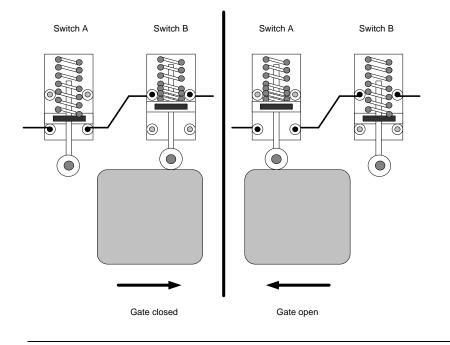
Question 11 An external lift on a construction site has an interlocked guard to prevent the lift operating when the gate is open. With reference to the diagram below:

- (a) **identify** the two types of switch shown (Switch A and Switch B); (2)
- (b) **identify** the functional components associated with **BOTH** switches;
- (c) outline the normal sequence of operation for the electricallyoperated, cam-activated switch assembly when the gate opens and closes;
 (6)

(4)

(8)

(d) **outline** ways in which electrically-operated, cam-activated switches may fail to operate as intended.



This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome: 6.3: Outline the main types of protective devices found on general workplace machinery.

Part (a) concerned 'normally open' and 'normally closed' switches whereas part (b) required candidates to name the functional components of the switches. The diagram prompted candidates and answers needed to refer to the electrical contacts, the plunger, the internal spring and so on.

In part (c) candidates needed to outline the sequence in both opening and closing. For example, the cam follower on Switch B is depressed as the gate closes. The internal spring is compressed and electrical contact is made while the gate is in the closed position. This proved challenging to candidates.

Part (d) required candidates to outline how electrically-operated cam switches may fail. Switches can be defeated by being taped up, or a fail due to a wiring fault among others.

It was clear that candidates were unfamiliar with the detail of safeguarding devices.

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 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: <u>https://www.nebosh.org.uk/i-am/a-student/</u> - from this page the document can be found by clicking on the relevant Qualification link, then on the 'Resources' tab.