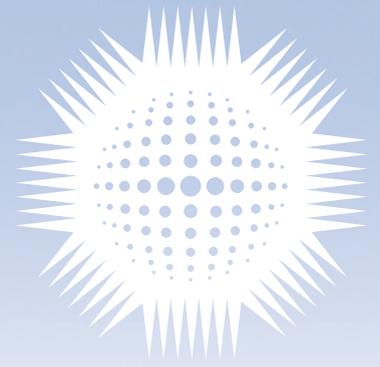January 2017

Examiners' Report

NEBOSH International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety (Unit A)

Examiners' Report

NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

UNIT IA:
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

JANUARY 2017

CONTENTS

Introduction

NEBOSH (The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health) was formed in 1979 as an independent examining board and awarding body with charitable status. We offer a comprehensive range of globally-recognised, vocationally-related qualifications designed to meet the health, safety, environmental and risk management needs of all places of work in both the private and public sectors.

Courses leading to NEBOSH qualifications attract around 50,000 candidates annually and are offered by over 600 course providers, with examinations taken in over 120 countries around the world. Our qualifications are recognised by the relevant professional membership bodies including the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) and the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM).

NEBOSH is an awarding body that applies best practice setting, assessment and marking and applies to Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Accreditation regulatory requirements.

This report provides guidance for candidates and course providers for use in preparation for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content and the application of assessment criteria.

© NEBOSH 2017

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 2017. This report covers both 2011 and 2015 specifications.

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 IA 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 IA 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

Question 1   *Outline* societal factors that influence health and safety standards.   *(10)*

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 1.2: Outline the societal factors which influence health and safety standards and priorities (Outline the societal factors which influence an organisation's health and safety standards and priorities in the 2015 specification).

The concept of influences on health and safety standards from factors that are rooted in society, broader culture and external factors to the organisation is important for the practitioner to understand. Campaigns and actions that develop the health and safety performance of an organisation may of course be influenced by such factors.

There were many candidates who recognised some of the issues and gained good marks by clearly outlining several of the key areas as identified in the syllabus. Areas such as economic climate, government policy, union representation, effect of media, risk profile of business/industry, globalisation, migrant worker awareness, equality expectations and corporate social responsibility were all included. Fewer candidates mentioned many of the other factors that were worth marks, such as ageing workforces, level of fatalities, individual's readiness to litigate, caring reputation of employers, etc.

There was evidence that several candidates focused on in-company factors such as level of training, peer pressure and management commitment that while influencing standards, cannot be described as *societal factors*, which are specifically listed in the syllabus. Similarly, candidates who responded to the question by providing answers more to do with local, site-specific issues rather than societal factors, did not gain good marks.

Course providers and candidates who had referenced the syllabus during their studies and had read about *societal factors* certainly would have fared well in this question.

Question 2   *(a)*   *Outline* how safety tours could contribute to improving health and safety performance in an organisation.   *(5)*

     (b)   *Outline* how safety tours could contribute to improving health and safety culture in an organisation.   *(5)*

     *Discussion of the specific health and safety requirements, problems or standards that such tours may address, is **not** required.*

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.3: Describe the variety of monitoring and measuring techniques (equivalent to 4.3: Describe the variety of health and safety monitoring and measurement techniques in the 2015 specification).

Monitoring and measuring is a key part of the role of the health and safety practitioner and therefore a detailed understanding of the methods and influences of the processes is essential knowledge.

The key to gaining good marks in this and many other questions at this level is to be able to link the actions with the outcomes. Where candidates had difficulty they tended to talk about tours and what to look for, but not link to how the tour would improve health and safety performance. Consequently, there were candidates who stopped short in their answers because they did not link it to performance. So while candidates mentioned that tours would involve discussions with workers (for example) they did not say how this improved the culture – they simply said that it did.

In part (b) most candidates outlined commitment, remedial actions, communication, unsafe behaviour and involvement of workers, and answers were marginally better than part (a). However, the general standard and construction of answers was limited.

Generally, marks were awarded in part (a) for the identification of compliance or non-compliance with performance standards; talking to workers during the tour; and tours influencing behaviour. For part (b) most candidates gained a mark for reference to management showing commitment, taking remedial actions, communication, and removal of unsafe behaviour and also involvement of workers in tours improving ownership.

Answers to part (a) of this question highlighted the pitfalls of failing to read the question thoroughly before attempting an answer. Despite the advice given by the addendum to the question, several candidates gave details of what the tour should be looking for (hazards, risks, housekeeping standards, welfare facilities), others concentrated on the benefits of carrying out a tour, and a few more on tours as an active monitoring tool. There were also some candidates who perceived little difference between parts (a) and (b) of the question and duplicated their answers.

Influencing performance and influencing culture are tools for the health and safety practitioner to use and this question sought to give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate how they might achieve this.

In preparing for examinations at this or any other level, course providers should help ensure that candidates are instructed to read and re-read the whole question carefully before answering in order that they understand and follow the instructions provided.

Question 3 (a) ***Outline*** key principles of the following risk management strategies **AND give** an example of ***EACH***:

    (i)   *risk transfer;*   ***(3)***

    (ii)   *risk reduction.*   ***(3)***

    (b) *When applying a risk reduction strategy,* **outline** *factors that affect the choice of risk control measures.*   ***(4)***

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 5.1: Outline common risk management strategies (equivalent to 6.1: Explain the use of common risk management strategies in the 2015 specification); and 5.2: Outline factors to be taken into account when selecting risk controls (6.2 in the 2015 specification).

Risk management and decision making around controls is the cornerstone of health and safety and therefore a deep and thorough understanding is required by the health and safety practitioner and candidates of the International Diploma. The vast majority of candidates successfully identified the principles of both risk transfer and risk reduction.

In part (a) (i) most candidates could outline that risk transfer involved transferring responsibility to a third party, but only a small number of candidates stated that the organisation would have to pay a premium for this. Nearly all candidates gave the example of transferring risk to an insurance company.

In part (a) (ii) few candidates were able to outline that risk reduction involved evaluating risks and developing risk reduction strategies or defining acceptable levels of risk to be achieved. Candidates merely said that it was about reducing risk. Most candidates gave practical examples but the question asked for strategies, eg using the hierarchy of controls.

In answer to part (b) many candidates gained marks for correctly outlining cost. Following this, several candidates gained marks for legal requirements and employee competence requirements. Many candidates also included whether the strategy would be for the long term or the short term.

A common error in part (b) was to simply give a hierarchy of control as opposed to the factors that might affect the choice of control measures. Marks could only be awarded for an outline of the factors to consider when selecting controls. This type of error in the examination suggests that there is a failing of examination technique that may be due to a lack of instruction by course providers or a lack of examination practice for candidates.

Preparing thoroughly for the examination, including examination technique, is essential for success.

Question 4   ***Explain** the domino and multi-causality theories of accident causation, including their respective uses and possible limitations in accident investigation and prevention.*   ***(10)***

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.1: Explain the theories of loss causation (equivalent to 3.1: Outline theories/models and use of loss causation techniques in the 2015 specification).

There appeared to be a distinct lack of knowledge around accident theory. There were several examples of candidates who only drew a line of dominoes with no further explanation, while there were also those candidates who did not attempt the question at all.

As always there were candidates who were well prepared and knowledgeable in the theory of accident causation and investigation and this question provided good marks for them.

The candidates who were well prepared successfully referenced Heinrich and/or Bird and Loftus with each element clearly illustrated. Distinguishing between domino and multi causality theories was an important element to the answer to this question and many candidates gained marks for recognising that accidents often have multiple causes and require in-depth investigation in line with the multi causality theory of causation. Subsequently they were able to then link that this is a more complex model and requires more resources.

Limitations in relation to the domino theory of accident causation and subsequent investigation could have included points such as being limited to single cause linear analysis and therefore can over simplify causation.

Question 5　(a)　***Give*** the meaning of the term 'contract'.　***(1)***

(b)　***Outline*** elements required for a contract to be legally enforceable.　***(4)***

(c)　***Outline*** factors that make a contract potentially unenforceable.　***(3)***

(d)　***Outline*** actions taken by the contracted parties that make a contract completed.　***(2)***

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 8.1: Describe comparative governmental and socio-legal, regulatory and corporate models (equivalent to 2.2: Outline the purpose of enforcement and laws of contract, in the 2015 specification).

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of the some of the main principles of contract law. The question was broken down into four areas and it was expected that candidates would be able to structure their responses.

While legal provisions vary in different countries around the world the key principles associated with contracts tend to remain the same. The principles of contract arrangements apply where parties make a legally binding agreement. In order for the contract to be enforceable the parties need to agree the offer and acceptance of the service with the passing of consideration (something of value) between them. Therefore, to be potentially unenforceable, rules such as coercion or lack of capacity may have been broken. Finally, when all parties have fulfilled their obligations the contract can be said to have been completed, or when the parties agree to release the other of any obligations.

Once again examination technique seems to play a large part in candidates' performance in these questions. Those candidates who had a knowledge of contract working in their organisations tended to launch into client contractor relations which was not the point of the question.

Once again candidates are reminded to read and re-read the whole question carefully before beginning an answer to help ensure that they have the best chance of gaining good marks.

Question 6　*For a range of internal information sources:*

(a)　***outline*** how ***EACH*** source contributes to risk assessment;　***(7)***

(b)　***outline*** the limitations of these information sources.　***(3)***

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.1: Describe how to use internal and external sources of information in the identification of hazards and the assessment of risk (5.1: Explain how to use internal and external information sources in identifying hazards and the assessing of risk in the 2015 specification).

This question specifically assessed candidates' knowledge of sources of information and their contribution to risk assessment. Despite the question referring directly to *internal information sources* several candidates chose to refer to sources that were external to the organisation. Additionally, although the question asked for *how **EACH** source contributes to risk assessment* numerous candidates did not pick up on this and only provided an outline of the information. In part (b) candidates were expected to outline limitations such as out of date or incomplete information, although this part of the question was not well answered suggesting that the limitations of data were not well understood.

Many of the errors seen in this question seem to point to a lack of understanding of the question as well as the subject matter. Examination technique, which includes reading and re-reading the question thoroughly to understand what the candidate is being asked is an essential skill for this and other examinations. Both course providers and candidates should ensure that they improve this area of teaching and learning to have the best chance of success.

Question 7   *Outline* content of typical behavioural change programmes.   *(20)*

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 7.7: Outline the principles, conditions and typical content of behavioural change programmes designed to improve safe behavior in the workplace (8.7 in 2015 specification).

This question was the least popular of the questions in Section B of the question paper and those candidates who attempted it did not appear to have a good understanding of behavioural change programmes. There was widespread discussion about behaviour in the workplace generally and while this is an important area for organisations to influence this was not what the question was asking. Candidates should have provided an outline of the content of a behavioural change programme that leads the Examiner through who would be involved; such as behavioural safety champions, supervisors, etc; training requirements, management input such as commitment, praise, support and promotion of the programme, measurement and monitoring of desired and undesired behaviour and trends along with communication and feedback in various forms.

A question such as this requires the candidate to structure their answer so that they follow a logical progression through it. Candidates could have used a Plan Do Check Act approach which would have been a logical format. Few candidates did this and many wrote extensive narratives that while hitting the occasional point did not yield sufficient marks.

It would appear that the subject of behavioural safety programmes is not one that is well known among this group of candidates, which given its importance in shaping health and safety performance needs more attention from course providers and candidates.

Question 8   *(a)*   *Organisations are said to have both formal and informal structures and groups.*

Outline the difference between 'formal' and 'informal' in this context.   *(4)*

(b)   *The development of a health and safety culture requires control, co-operation, communication and competence.*

Outline what 'co-operation' means in this context **AND give** examples to support your answer.   *(8)*

(c)   *Outline* reasons why a negative health and safety culture may result if organisational change is not managed.   *(8)*

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 6.2: Outline the different types of organisation, their structure, function and the concept of the organisation as a system (7.4 in the 2015 specification); 6.4: Explain the role, influences on and procedures for formal and informal consultation with workers in the workplace (7.6 in the 2015 specification); and 6.7: Outline the factors that can both positively and negatively affect health and safety culture and climate (7.8 in the 2015 specification).

This was a reasonably popular question and assessed candidates' understanding of some of the organisational factors that can affect health and safety. Many candidates showed a good understanding of the formal and informal organisational concepts by providing an outline of formal structures, roles and responsibilities and contrasting them with social relationships and friendships which are usually seen in the formal structure and influenced by individual personality.

In part (b) of the question candidates were required to provide an insight to *co-operation* in the context of influence on the culture of the organisation. The four C's of control, co-operation, communication and competence should be well known by candidates. Many of those candidates who attempted the question recognised that co-operation was about management and worker relationships and gained good marks by outlining elements of involvement through toolbox talks, risk assessments, consultation and sharing ideas.

In part (c) the influence on culture through failure to manage change effectively proved a difficult part of the question for many candidates. Candidates could have outlined factors such as concern about job security leading to risk taking and poor safety behaviour, personnel changes causing loss of experience, lack of appreciation of impact of change leading to poor assessments, etc.

A number of candidates listed points and did not outline the factors as was required in the question. Once again examination technique seems to have been missing for many which is a must for this and any other examination at this level.

Question 9 *A train driver has passed a stop signal resulting in a collision with another train. Investigation of the incident concluded that the driver had seen the overhead signal but had not perceived the overhead signal correctly. There had been a number of previous similar incidents at the signal, although the driver was not aware of this.*

The driver concerned was inexperienced and had not received information and training associated with that route. The signal was difficult to see being partly obscured by a bridge and affected by strong sunlight. In addition, the arrangement of the lights on the signal was a non-typical formation. The driver had approached the signal with no expectation from previous signals that it would be on 'stop'.

(a)   ***Give*** *practical reasons why the driver may not have perceived the signal correctly.*   *(7)*

(b)   ***Outline*** *the steps that could be taken to help reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of this incident.*   *(13)*

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 7.2: Explain the nature of the perception of risk and its relationship to performance in the workplace (8.2 in the 2015 specification); 7.3: Explain the classification of human failure (8.3 in the 2015 specification); 7.4: Explain appropriate methods for improving human reliability in the workplace (8.4 in the 2015 specification); and 7.5: Explain how organisational factors could contribute to improving human reliability (8.5 in the 2015 specification).

The subject matter of human factors presents a broad area for scenarios, analysis and application of knowledge to assess candidates' depth of understanding in this important area. The scenario in this question should have been well understood by those candidates who had prepared for the examination.

Part (a) required candidates to apply their understanding of perception and behaviour and give *practical reasons* and those candidates who did, gain good marks in this part. Answers that reflected practical reasons such as failure to distinguish colour, affected by sunlight, distraction were on the right lines to gain good marks. However, there were those candidates who missed the *practical reasons* signpost and went on to discuss underlying causes such as training and supervision, which were not mark-worthy in the context of this question.

Part (b) gave candidates the opportunity to outline what could be a myriad of steps to prevent a recurrence including selection and recruitment of drivers to ensure capability, training and competence development, health surveillance, etc. However, candidates need to be specific when answering questions such as this. Simply saying *'provide information training and supervision'* is too general at this level of qualification. Similarly, saying *'undertake a risk assessment'* is also too general to be awarded marks. For candidates seeking a career in the health and safety profession, it must be appreciated that health and safety advice to managers (and others) must be very clear and very practical. There is no room for vagueness and ambiguity.

Question 10   *(a)*   **Outline** the role of health and safety legislation in the workplace.   **(10)**

  (b)   **Outline** the limitations of health and safety legislation in the workplace.   **(10)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 8.1: Describe comparative governmental and socio-legal, regulatory and corporate models (equivalent to 2.1: Describe comparative governmental socio-legal and regulatory models, in the 2015 specification).

This part of the syllabus does not relate to an individual country's laws so a more general understanding of the principles of legal standards, how they work and their limitations, is required. Therefore this type of question should be within the expectation of candidates and course providers alike.

In part (a) several candidates spoke in specific terms about what a piece of legislation may cover, eg requirements for training, maintenance, emergency procedures, PPE, etc instead of the role of health and safety legislation in the workplace. Candidates could have also outlined that it provided for government enforcement and for a civil route to compensation as well as setting out minimum standards for health and safety.

In part (b) candidates were expected to outline limitations such as legislation quickly becoming outdated, inadequate enforcement and variable interpretation of goal setting legislation among other things. While there were candidates who recognised the limitations of prescriptive and goal setting legislation few were able to outline any more depth in their answers. Again many candidates seemed to refer back individual laws in countries rather than a more overall view of legislation generally.

Based on the answers given in this sitting it would appear that candidates would benefit from a broader reading and study of the subject to expand their understanding beyond local laws and decrees.

Question 11   *An office is protected with an automatic fire detection and alarm system. A number of false alarms have been activated. A false alarm can be triggered by sunlight striking a UV flame detector, dust obscuring a smoke detector or by a failure of the primary power supply. The primary power is normally supplied by connection to the mains electricity. If this should fail, a back-up generator activates to supply the electricity.*

The expected probabilities of the causes of the false alarms are shown below:

Cause of false alarm	Probability
Sunlight striking a UV flame detector	0.25
Dust obscuring a smoke detector	0.1
Power failure	0.15
Back-up generator does not start	0.04

(a)   **Outline** *the principle of fault tree analysis.*   **(2)**

(b)   **Outline** *the technique of fault tree analysis.*   **(8)**

(c)   **Demonstrate** *the probability of a false alarm using a simple fault tree* **AND***, using the data above,* **calculate** *the probability of a false alarm.*   **(6)**

   Show calculations to support your answers.

(d)   *(i)*   **Identify** *the main cause of false alarms.*   **(1)**

   (ii)   **Outline** *remedial actions that could minimise false alarms.*   **(3)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 4.4: Explain the principles and techniques of failure tracing methodologies with the use of calculations (5.5 in the 2015 specification).

Despite the marks on offer in this question it was not the most popular on the paper although many of those candidates who attempted it gained reasonably marks. It is clear that there is a split between candidates, in that many were able to complete the tree and calculations and there were those who seemed to get confused.

Most candidates were able to provide information that gained marks in part (a) such as FTA uses logic symbols to demonstrate a causal relationship between events.

In part (b), candidates were expected to develop the principles into a technique and go through the process by outlining an identification of the top event, followed by subsequent causes and construction of a tree using logic gates (and/or) to link events, quantitative/qualitative analysis and application of control measures. It was evident that there was a limited understanding of the application although in part (c) many candidates went on to develop and quantify the tree correctly. It is important that candidates are able to convey the theory of the tools at their disposal as well as apply them in simple situations.

In part (d) candidates were expected to use the tree to identify that UV light was the most common cause of false alarms and that there were several options that they could take to reduce the false alarms such as relocation or protection of the detector.

Risk assessment and risk assessment techniques are key to the management of health and safety and candidates should be well prepared to describe the principles and application of a range of techniques to both familiar and unfamiliar situations in this examination.

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 if '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 topic. 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 topic 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 topics 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 overelaborate 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 overelaborate 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.
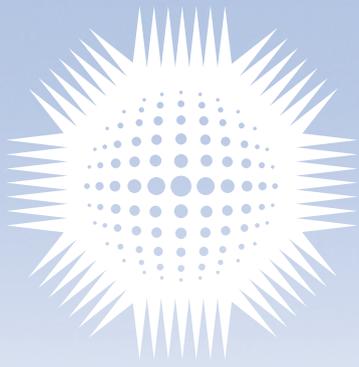
nebosh

The National Examination
Board in Occupational
Safety and Health

Dominus Way
Meridian Business Park
Leicester LE19 1QW

telephone +44 (0)116 2634700
fax +44 (0)116 2824000
email info@nebosh.org.uk
www.nebosh.org.uk