
Examiners' Report

UNIT NGC1: MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

SEPTEMBER 2019



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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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 learners annually and are offered by over 600 Learning Partners, 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 learners and Learning Partners 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 learners 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 learners, 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 the standard date NGC1 examination sat in September 2019.

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

Learners and Learning Partners 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.

Unit NGC1

Management of health and safety

- Question 1** A contractor working on a construction site has died as a result of a fall from an unguarded scaffold. A senior manager authorised the use of scaffolding in an unsafe condition.
- (a) **Outline** the powers that a health and safety enforcement inspector could use to investigate this accident. (6)
 - (b) **Explain** why the offence of corporate manslaughter (corporate homicide in Scotland) is relevant in this case. (4)
 - (c) **Identify** the official bodies who would be involved in any investigation and prosecution for corporate manslaughter (corporate homicide in Scotland). (2)
 - (d) **Identify** possible costs to an organisation of a work-related fatality. (8)

This question assessed learners' 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 1.7: Outline the principles of assessing and managing contractors.

Part (a) was generally well answered with many learners able to outline a range of relevant powers available including the right of entry, taking people with them to give assistance (police or expert), taking photos and/or samples.

For part (b) answers were limited, offering little other than the recognition of management failure. Many learners did not recognise that the fatality is part of the qualifying criteria for such a case to be brought, although most could explain that the senior manager authorised the use of unsafe scaffold.

Part (c) was not well answered with many learners omitting the role of police with technical support, Procurator Fiscal (Scotland) and Director of Public Prosecutions, as being the official bodies involved in the investigation and prosecution. Instead answers referred to government regulatory organisations such as the local authorities and the HSE, for which no marks were available. Marks were awarded to a few learners for identifying the Crown Prosecution Service.

Part (d) was very well answered with many learners able to gain high marks. Some learners split their answer into direct and indirect costs, which, while not affecting their ability to gain marks, may have been an unnecessary use of time.

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- Question 2** **Identify** types of health and safety information that might be displayed on a noticeboard in a workplace. (8)

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

Most learners found this question challenging. Many of the answers correctly identified examples such as the health and safety policy and emergency and/or first-aid procedures, agendas from meetings. However, many of the answers did not cover a wide enough range of types of information, with learners choosing instead to give a detailed break-down on the themes of emergencies and first aid, and so limiting their ability to gain good marks. Some answers deviated from the main point of the question and explained the benefits of such things as visual displays in the workplace which was outside the scope asked for.

Question 3 **Outline** reasons why accidents in a workplace should be reported and recorded. **(8)**

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

Many of the answers to this question were limited. Common answers included trend analysis and legal requirements. Better answers included reference to organisational standards, eg ISO 45001 and to enable an investigation.

The question was answered well by those learners who were also able to clearly outline reasons related with identifying root causes. However, most were not able to clearly outline how this aided the safety culture of the organisation, or the use of reporting to compile statistics to identify trends and patterns of unsafe conditions etc in the workplace.

Some learners appeared to misread the question and detailed the process that could be used to report and investigate. Others appeared to miss the main point of the question and instead went into unnecessary detail about corrective actions such as identifying training requirements.

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

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

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

This question was well answered with many learners recognising that benefits include cost, workforce co-operation and auditor familiarity. Common disadvantages for which marks could be awarded included that the auditor may be bias and lack a fresh perspective. A few learners mistakenly believed the external auditor to be a regulator and cited the threat of punishment, for which no marks could be awarded.

Most learners were able to demonstrate an understanding of the advantages of an internal auditor carrying out the work. However, in part (b) some were unable to follow this through to show understanding of the disadvantages of having an internal auditor and instead either reiterated previous responses or provided responses as to the benefits of an external auditor.

Although many of the learners appeared to have a good understanding of the characteristics and duties of an external auditor, they did not outline a wide enough range of points for either part (a) or part (b) to gain much more than half marks for the whole question.

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- Question 5**
- (a) **Give** the meaning of the term *'risk'*. (1)
 - (b) **Give** a workplace example of a risk. (1)
 - (c) **Outline** the general principles of prevention that should be considered when managing health and safety risk. (6)
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This question assessed learners' 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.

Most learners gave correct answers to part (a) and (b). However, learners found part (c), where most of the marks were available, to be more challenging. Only a few learners were able to correctly outline the general principles of prevention from the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, such as avoiding risks, evaluating risks that cannot be avoided, etc. A large number of learners outlined the hierarchy of control instead.

Some answers to part (c) were too brief for the 'outline' command word; instead listing examples of aspects brought from personal experience or diagrams of hierarchy of controls with no explanation. Learners need to take note of the command word and identify any key phrases in questions, and respond accordingly to gain available marks.

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- Question 6**
- (a) **Give** the meaning of the following terms:
 - (i) health; (2)
 - (ii) safety. (2)
 - (b) **Explain** moral reasons for promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace. (4)
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This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcomes 1.1: Outline the scope and nature of occupational health and safety; and 1.2: Explain the moral and financial reasons for promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace.

Answers to this question were not well answered and indicated a lack of understanding of the principle concepts of health and safety, together with the moral reasons for promoting good standards.

Learners appeared to have difficulty with the definitions for the terms 'health' and 'safety' and did not gain good marks in part (a).

In part (b) most learners could only provide one or two moral reasons and many wasted time giving financial and/or legal reasons, which were not relevant to the topic of the question.

Question 7	(a) Give the meaning of the term ‘ <i>safe system of work</i> ’.	(2)
	(b) Explain why safe systems of work should be in writing.	(6)

This question assessed learners’ knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.8: Explain what factors should be considered when developing and implementing a safe system of work for general activities.

In part (a) many learners did not give sufficient detail in their definition of ‘safe system of work’ to gain the available marks. Those who did, included that it is a step-by-step (or systematic) procedure that takes into account hazards and controls. Some learners digressed into describing aspects of a permit-to-work which was not what the question was referring to, while others gave *examples* of safe systems of work rather than the definition.

In part (b) learners also had difficulty explaining why safe systems of work should be in writing, with a number of them describing the situations where they might be used, instead of why they should be in writing. Mark worthy answers given included legal requirement and a reference for workers. Better answers included that it is a requirement of a health and safety policy, and to give clear communication. A number of learners described the situations where they might be used instead of why they should be in writing.

Question 8	(a) Outline why an organisation would carry out a health and safety inspection.	(3)
	(b) Outline benefits of using a checklist to carry out a health and safety inspection.	(5)

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

Part (a) was not well answered with answers often limited to identifying improvements but with no further detail. Some of the fundamental reasons for carrying out inspections were missed by the majority of learners, with nearly all omitting that the inspection can be used to spot unsafe acts and unsafe conditions. Most focused on the legal requirements and the monitoring of workplace standards and so missed out on a number of possible marks. A few learners appeared to misunderstand the question, giving answers that described the various types of inspection that can be carried out. Only a few learners gave sufficient breadth or range to their answers and so most limited their marks.

In part (b) answers on the benefits in the use of a checklist centred on the consistency they produce and the use of the lists for audit purposes. Answers that gained good marks included reference to structure, reducing the chance of something significant being missed. Some learners incorrectly stated that a checklist enables anyone to carry out the inspection.

Question 9 **Outline** how managers can improve the health and safety behaviour of employees. **(8)**

This question assessed learners' 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.

Many learners did not focus on the topic central to this question and very few demonstrated the full range of responses needed, with some answers very focused on details of training and meetings only. Many learners answered the question from the perspective of improving behaviour at the employee level, and not what the managers could do to help improve things. As a result, items such as managers leading by example, showing commitment and putting in place good communication systems were missed by many learners.

Some answers outlined what the organisation could do (resources, health and safety policy, etc) but this is not what the question asked. Other answers tended to focus on the positive and negative impacts of reward and punishment, and while this can influence behaviour, learners did not look at the more management-focused elements limiting their marks.

Question 10 **Outline** what an organisation could do in order to have effective first-aid provision. **(8)**

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 3.11: Outline the requirements for, and effective provision of, first aid in the workplace.

This question was well answered by the majority of the learners, with most being able to note the need for some form of assessment, provision of first-aid boxes and equipment, along with informing issues as to how to contact the first-aiders when required.

This was a fairly wide ranging topic but many of the answers did not cover the full range, focusing instead on unnecessary details of particular aspects such as first-aid training, first-aid facilities, or management and provision of first-aid kits. This meant that learners only gained low marks as they covered only a limited part of the overall topic.

Question 11 **Outline** circumstances that may require a health and safety policy to be reviewed. **(8)**

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of learning outcome 2.3: Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective health and safety policy.

This question was generally well answered with many learners achieving full marks. Good answers included a wide range of circumstances, covering such issues as changes to legislation and various organisational changes. However, many learners duplicated answers by listing changes to equipment, process, personnel, structure, etc.

Better answers outlined which parts of the health and safety policy related to the items they outlined such as a technological change, which may prompt a change to the arrangements section, as different methods of maintenance and production may now be needed.

A few learners appeared to overlook the 'outline' command word and so missed marks for brevity, where a fuller description of these areas was required, instead of a simple list.

Examination technique

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

Learners misread/misinterpreted the question

Learners misreading or misinterpreting the question is by far the most common cause of learners 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 learners to be sufficiently prepared to provide the relevant depth of answer across a broad range of subject areas. For example, a learner 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 learner should focus not only on the general topic area (eg stress, fire) but also the specific aspect of that subject to which the question relates.

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

Learners 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.

Learners 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 learner 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 learner would be expected to provide in an answer to an examination question.

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

Learning Partners 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 learners on suitable examination technique during a course of study.

Learners 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 learners 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 learners 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.

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

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

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

There are instances where learners 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.

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

Learners did not answer all of the questions

It has been noted that a number of learners do not attempt all of the questions and of course where a learner 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. Learning Partners 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. Learners 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 learner 'going blank' in an examination situation, in which case learners 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, learners 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.

Learners 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 learners 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 Learning Partners and learners 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.

Learners 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.

Learners' handwriting was illegible

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

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

NEBOSH recommends to Learning Partners that learners 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>

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

Learning Partners 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 learners. 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 learners 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 learner 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 learner 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 learners 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 learners do answer such questions sufficiently and satisfactorily, other learners 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 learners 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 Learning Partners should use the NEBOSH guidance on command words within their examination preparation sessions in order to prepare learners 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. Learners 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: <https://www.nebosh.org.uk/i-am/a-learner/> - from this page the document can be found by clicking on the relevant Qualification link, then on the 'Resources' tab.