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NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Feedback

Advice and an indication of the types of answers that would attract credit and those that would not for the open book examination for NG1, IG1, NGC1 and IGC1 units.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Management of Health and Safety

Unit NG1:

For: NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

Unit NGC1:

For: NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

NEBOSH National Certificate in Construction Health and Safety

NEBOSH National Certificate in Fire Safety and Risk Management

Management of Health and Safety

Unit IG1:

For: NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

Management of International Health and Safety

Unit IGC1:

For: NEBOSH International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

NEBOSH International Certificate in Construction Health and Safety

NEBOSH International Certificate in Fire Safety and Risk Management

Contents

About NEBOSH	02
Open book examinations	02
Examples of responses	03
Scenario	03
Task 1: Justifying health and safety improvements	04
Task 2: Checking management system effectiveness	05
Task 3: Managing contractors	06
Task 4: Working within a health and safety management system	07
Task 5: Influencing health and safety culture	08
Task 6: Developing safe systems of work (SSOW)	09
Task 7: Investigating incidents	10
Task 8: Reviewing performance	12
Conclusion	12

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

About NEBOSH

NEBOSH is a leading global organisation, which provides health, safety and environmental qualifications. Our internationally recognised qualifications help to raise the competence of safety and environmental professionals as well as individuals at all levels in the workplace.

As a registered charity, NEBOSH has a clear vision and mission:

- Our Vision is to preserve and improve health, safety, well-being and the environment in workplaces worldwide.
- Our Mission is to be recognised as the global leading provider of high-quality qualifications; training opportunities and learner engagement in occupational health, safety, environmental, well-being, risk and related subjects.

Since our inception in 1979 over 400,000 people from around the world have gained a NEBOSH qualification. Tens of thousands join their number every year, studying with our network of 600 Learning Partners offering exams in over 130 countries.

Our qualifications are highly respected by governments, employers and our learners. They build the knowledge and skills which underpin competent performance as a health, safety and environmental professional.

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

Open book examinations

Open book examinations (OBE) have been designed to provide accessibility to all learners from all over the world, enabling them to complete assessments and achieve NEBOSH qualifications from a safe and suitable location.

This guide will support learners and Learning Partners in preparation for the OBE alongside the syllabuses, course notes and other reference materials for units NG1, IG1, NGC1 and IGC1. These units are part of the National and International General Certificate, the National and International Certificate in Fire Risk Management, and the National and International Certificate in Construction Health and Safety.

Further information about NEBOSH OBEs, including resources, sample questions and guidance videos, can be found at www.nebosh.org.uk/obe

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Any enquiries about this report publication should be addressed to:

NEBOSH
Dominus Way
Meridian Business Park
Leicester
LE19 1QW

email: obe@nebosh.org.uk

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Examples of responses

The following information gives advice and an indication of the types of answers that would attract credit and those that would not. It also guides learners in their approach to similar tasks and questions that they could expect to see in their examination.

These questions are from the August 2020 OBE on a specified scenario and learners must not take these as the actual questions that they will be required to answer in their own examination.

Marks available will always be shown at the end of each question, with 1 mark for each correct answer given by a learner. This gives the learner an indication of the minimum number of answers they must give for each question, to ensure a good chance of attaining a 'Pass' in this assessment.

Scenario

You have recently moved to a new job. You are now responsible for health and safety at a large, busy retail store that is located on the outskirts of a large town served by good roads. The store sells do-it-yourself (DIY) and hardware goods, such as tools, equipment, and hazardous chemicals, to the local businesses and the general public. The organisation that owns the store has 100 stores nationally and 10 in your area.

The main part of the store is open to customers to view and buy goods. At the back of the store, through an automatic-opening door, is a large warehouse, where stocks of goods are arranged on racks of shelving. Only store workers are allowed in the warehouse. Warehouse workers use forklift trucks (FLT) to move goods from delivery trucks into the warehouse. When the store is closed to customers the goods are moved into the main part of the store to restock shelves.

You report to the overall Store and Warehouse Manager. The warehouse workforce consists of:

- 20 workers (including 2 shift supervisors) split equally between two 12-hour shifts (08:00 – 20:00 and 20:00 – 08:00) on a rota basis of 4 days on, 4 days off.

Since you started your new job, you have seen a lot of examples of rule-breaking in the warehouse. For example, you have seen goods stacked in aisles and blocking designated walkways. Workers have to avoid many obstacles as they walk through the warehouse, causing

them to step into vehicle routes. Workers have told you that there are frequent near misses between FLT and workers, and collisions with products causing damage and spillages. There are no written records of any of these.

There have been many injuries recorded over the years. Most recently, a repeat of a more serious collision occurred involving a young FLT driver. The brakes were applied too late, as the driver was distracted by their mobile phone, the FLT skidded on an oil spillage and knocked goods over onto a passing worker.

On this occasion the worker's leg was broken, which required urgent hospital treatment. The hospital is 5 miles (approximately 8km) away from the store. The worker is expected to be off work for six weeks to recover from the injury. The injured worker is seeking legal advice in order to make a claim for compensation.

Worker absence and turnover is high in the warehouse. There are no health and safety worker representatives. Warehouse workers have told you that they have complained to management about working conditions many times. They rarely see management in the warehouse. You cannot find any written records of complaints.

You have tried to convince the overall Store and Warehouse Manager that something needs to be done to improve health and safety in the warehouse. You are told that there is no money for 'that kind of thing', and even if it were available, it would cause too much disruption to business.

As a result of the recent FLT collision, you were visited by an enforcement Inspector who has issued an improvement notice. The Inspector thinks it is only a matter of time before workers are more seriously injured or even killed in the warehouse. The Inspector also observed that the written risk assessments are too general and do not reflect the actual risks in the warehouse. The Inspector wants to see a more effective health and safety management system at their next visit.

You have discussed with the Inspector possible improvements to health and safety in the warehouse. The proposed solution involves segregating FLT and workers with barriers, pedestrian walkways, designated crossing places and separate entrances for workers and FLT. In addition, you tell the Inspector that you will review health and safety performance, internally and externally, in order to make comparisons.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 1: Justifying health and safety improvements

What financial arguments could you use to justify your proposed recommendations to segregate FLTs and the workers? (10)

Note: You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario.

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criteria 1.1: Discuss the moral, financial, and legal reasons for managing health and safety in the workplace; and 1.2: Explain how the law works and the consequences of non-compliance.

For this question, answers must reflect sound financial arguments to justify proposed recommendations. Good responses would include:

'There could be an impact on the reputation of the organisation, leading to breakdowns in business relationships. As a result, the DIY store may have to tender for new business, which costs money and time.'

This answer states the negative financial argument for not acting.

A positive argument would be:

'A safer workplace is good for worker retention.'

Information to help learners formulate appropriate responses to this question can be found in the scenario, as signposted in the instruction (Note).

Limited responses would be general, vague answers regarding costs to the organisation, rather than specific costs.

Ten marks were available for this question and fewer answers given would automatically mean less marks could be awarded.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 2: Checking management system effectiveness

You email a report to the overall Store and Warehouse Manager, in a further attempt to convince them that safety needs improving. The report contains unsafe behaviour that you have observed, unsafe behaviour associated with historic incidents and unsafe behaviour relayed to you from other workers. Also, the report contains voluntary feedback on safety given to you by workers and managers.

Based on the scenario only:

(a) what unsafe behaviour would be included in the report? (6)

(b) what voluntary feedback would be included in the report? (4)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 4.1: Discuss common methods and indicators used to monitor the effectiveness of management systems.

This question has been divided into two separate parts, (a) and (b), to help the learner to approach the task in smaller sections rather than one large one.

The stem of the task gives the learner an idea of the structure the answer(s) can take (i.e. the learner is emailing a report).

The instruction given after the stem states the answers should be based on the scenario only, so information within the scenario should trigger the answers required.

The two parts of the question signpost what the learner is looking for in the scenario.

A good response for part (a) would be:

'Unsafe behaviour observed:

- stacking goods in aisles, thereby blocking designated walkways;*
- workers stepping into vehicle routes.'*

Although bullet points are given, the answers are clear, concise and to the point, and within the context of the scenario.

Inadequate responses would be to state that there were 'high risks in the factory' and 'lack of documentation in respect of accident reports' as these are not behaviours.

There are six marks available for this part and therefore it is expected that a minimum of six answers should be given.

For part (b), 'voluntary feedback' could be extra information that is not immediately obvious, ie more cultural or managerial issues such as:

- 'The warehouse workers rarely see management in the warehouse;*
- the Store and Warehouse Manager does not offer support to prioritise health and safety. They are concerned that implementing measures would cause too much disruption to the business and there is no allocated budget;*
- risk assessments are too general and do not reflect the actual risks in the warehouse.'*

Again, the number of marks available equates to the number of answers expected as a minimum.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 3: Managing contractors

Site management have accepted your proposed health and safety improvement solution to segregate FLT's and the workers. They have made the budget available. The organisation intends to use external contractors for the work.

When selecting the external contractors, what would you consider when assessing their competence? (10)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 1.4: Explain how contractors should be selected, monitored, and managed.

Each of the tasks and questions in the OBE assessment naturally flow on from the previous one to help the learner to progress through the assessment.

This question signposts the learner to the selection of external contractors and in particular, the information they would need to have confidence in the competency of the contractors. This means considering a wide range of issues from previous experience, insurance, qualifications, etc.

Good responses would include:

Insurance: To check the contractor is adequately insured for their work, asking for evidence of valid insurance and details of cover. For example, their employer's liability insurance.

Accident records: Any details of previous accidents, incidents or near misses (including any RIDDOR-reportable accidents). This allows me to see how robust their reporting measures are, alongside the frequency and nature of accidents and incidents that occur.

Civil claims: Any evidence of previous prosecutions and civil claims for injury/ill-health.

HSE notices: Any previous issuing of improvement or prohibition notices, written warnings, formal cautions, or a material breach notice.

While these headings alone would be correct answers, the learner has demonstrated that they understand why each of these things should be considered and therefore provided very good, mark-worthy responses.

Marks would not be gained for answers in respect of the duties of clients, principal contractors, etc or statements around provisions of a health and safety file, or construction phase plans.

Ten marks are available, so a broad range of issues should be considered when answering this question.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 4: Working within a health and safety management system

To satisfy the expectations of the Inspector, you have developed a formal safety management system in line with ISO 45001.

Based on the scenario only, what are the likely benefits to the organisation of having this formal safety management system? (10)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criteria 2.1: Give an overview of the elements of a health and safety management system and the benefits of having a formal/certified system; 4.1: Discuss common methods and indicators used to monitor the effectiveness of management systems; 4.3: Explain what an audit is and why and how it is used to evaluate a management system; and 4.4: Explain why and how regular reviews of health and safety performance are needed.

To respond to this question, learners should have a basic understanding of ISO 45001, and know what a good health and safety management system looks like. They can then apply the information they have from the scenario to the ISO model and determine what is beneficial to the organisation.

Good responses would include:

External recognition: If ISO 45001 accreditation were pursued, it would give an externally recognised health and safety standard that increases credibility for the company.

Staff morale: A HSMS ensures health and safety is a business focus. This should, in turn, reduce the frequency and severity of accidents, incidents, and near misses. Therefore, if the warehouse is safer and health and safety culture improves, then the general morale of staff will improve.

General statements regarding 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' would not be worthy of marks for this ten mark question.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 5: Influencing health and safety culture

To improve performance in the organisation, you know that you need to positively influence health and safety culture. You feel the culture at the warehouse is currently negative.

What are the negative indicators of safety culture at the warehouse? (10)

Note: You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario.

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 3.2: Summarise how health and safety culture at work can be improved.

One of the key words in this question is 'negative', therefore learners must be careful to relate this to their answers. Once again, learners are instructed to use the information in the scenario and there were many points that could be highlighted here.

Good responses expanded on elements of the negative culture of the organisation, for example:

Accidents/incidents: There are frequent near misses, accidents, and incidents. The near misses and incidents are not being reported which means that their root causes cannot be identified, and the risks cannot be controlled.

Management are rarely seen in the warehouse, which shows a lack of visible leadership.

Complaints: There have been many complaints from workers about the health and safety conditions. The frequency of complaints, coupled with the fact that there are no written records of them, show that the organisation is not listening to workers.

In this instance the learner has given headings and then demonstrated an understanding of each of the indicators, showing the breadth and depth of their knowledge and good use of the information provided. However, a broader range of issues need to be highlighted to gain more of the available ten marks.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 6: Developing safe systems of work (SSOW)

Because of the recent incidents, you have decided to review the first-aid arrangements in the warehouse.

What do you need to consider so that first-aid needs are realistic and proportionate for the warehouse workers? (10)

Note: You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario. You do not need to include specific first-aid equipment.

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 3.8: Discuss typical emergency procedures (including training and testing) and how to decide what level of first aid is needed in the workplace.

For this question, learners must consider what the first-aid needs are, but more importantly, what makes them realistic and proportionate for these specific workers. Therefore, the answers cannot be generic but need to refer to the scenario given.

Good responses would include:

Working patterns: Consideration of the working patterns (4 days on, 4 off) to ensure that there is adequate first-aider cover despite rest days, annual leave, and any leave of absence.

Nature of the work and hazards present: There is greater need for first-aiders in the warehouse due to the higher risk nature of the work. For example, it is assumed that some work at height, work with machinery, and manual handling would be involved due to the presence of shelving racks and FLT's. There are also hazardous chemicals present which increases the likelihood for first aid being required.

Again, there are headings, but expansion has been given on each issue showing understanding, breadth and depth of knowledge.

Limited responses would only mention what the requirements are, such as the type of facilities and equipment that should be available.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 7: Investigating incidents

a - You have decided that the recent accident, when a worker's leg was broken, needs to be investigated.

Decide what level of investigation (minimal, low, medium, high) is appropriate in this case, clearly justifying each step you take that leads to your decision. (10)

Note: You should reference the likelihood and consequence criteria described in HSG245. You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario.

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 4.2: Explain why and how incidents should be investigated, recorded, and reported.

When approaching this question, learners were told to reference a specific document (HSG245) which was provided for them, in addition to using information from the scenario to support their answers. It was expected that learners would show how they used the criteria within HSG245 when deciding on the likelihood and consequences of the described accident and the level of investigation needed.

By following these instructions, examples of mark-worthy responses would be:

'Considering the definition on page 4 of HSG245, this accident would be placed at 'likely' as it may not happen soon, but will occur if measures are not put in place.'

'As detailed in HSG245, there should be consideration of the worst possible consequence of this situation, not the actual consequence. The worst potential consequence of this adverse event could be in the 'fatal' category. If a product fell from a high shelf, or dangerous product fell (such as a saw) it could cause severe enough injuries to be fatal.'

Limited responses would only describe each step in an investigation, and as this is not required, would not gain marks.

b - You try to determine some of the human factor causes of the recent accident, when a worker's leg was broken, by looking at the available investigation evidence.

What individual human factors could have negatively influenced the behaviour of the young FLT driver? (10)

Note: You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario.

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 3.3: Summarise the human factors which positively or negatively influence behaviour at work in a way that can affect health and safety.

Signposts in this question include 'by looking at the available investigation evidence', 'individual human factors', 'negatively influenced the behaviour' and '...young...'. This should have guided learners to the range of factors to be considered in their responses.

Good examples would include:

Age: The driver was young, which may mean they have a decreased perception and tolerance of risk. Their age means that they are more likely to 'go along with' the wider negative health and safety culture.

Inexperience: As the driver is young, it can be assumed that they lack significant experience in FLT driving, warehouse operations, health and safety risks, and the role in general.

Once again, a note was included instructing learners to support their answers with relevant information from the scenario.

Limited responses would include 'organisational' or 'job' factors instead of, or as well as, the individual factors. The question does specify 'individual' only and learners must take care to read and re-read the question carefully.

Learners should also resist the temptation to give improvements that are required rather than the issues that have influences that lead to the limited behaviour, as these will not attract marks.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

c - The investigation into the recent accident, when a worker's leg was broken, is now focusing on management failures.

Based on the scenario only, what management failures could have contributed to this accident? (10)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 4.2: Explain why and how incidents should be investigated, recorded, and reported.

Learners should only consider the types of management failures that would be applicable to the scenario and not just a generic list. They should expand on the failures, perhaps giving types of actions that would address these to show an understanding of the impact of the failures on the scenario.

For example:

'Management were also not visible in the warehouse to observe unsafe practices. Despite the presence of a shift supervisor, unsafe actions were still leading to hazardous situations. Management should have led by example and been present in the warehouse, meaning they could challenge unsafe behaviour and put adequate and appropriate disciplinary procedures in place.'

Limited responses would include, for example, 'lack of control', 'failure to carry out their duty', 'lack of commitment' and 'lack of co-operation', as these are all far too vague and just generalised comments.

NEBOSH Open Book Examinations:

Learner Feedback

Task 8: Reviewing performance

You invite the overall Store and Warehouse Manager to a health and safety management review.

- (a) Based on evidence from the scenario only, comment on how the organisation is performing in the following areas

Answer with two related points for each area.

- (i) active and reactive monitoring. (2)
 - (ii) the adequacy of current risk assessments. (2)
 - (iii) operational procedures and rules. (2)
 - (iv) compliance with legal requirements. (2)
- (b) Based on evidence from the scenario only, what sources of benchmarking information could be used? (2)

This question assessed learners' knowledge and understanding of assessment criterion 4.4: Explain why and how regular reviews of health and safety performance are needed.

This question was structured into two parts and four sub-sections, to help learners formulate their responses and had two marks available for each. Each section draws on different knowledge gained on the OBE course and the application of that knowledge to this particular scenario.

Good comments require supporting information from the scenario and include:

Part (a) (i)

Active monitoring: The organisation has several risk assessments in place, and they have recorded injuries over the years, which are positives. There does not appear to be evidence of how many risk assessments have been reviewed, or how many control measures have been actioned because of the risk assessment.

Reactive monitoring: There is no way to carry out reactive monitoring because there is no detailed incident, or near miss records. Although injuries have been recorded, it is difficult to analyse trends, complete incident investigations or implement actions to prevent future occurrences.

Part (a) (ii)

The current risk assessments are not suitable or sufficient, because they are too general and do not reflect the actual risks in the warehouse. Adequate control measures are not in place, which is resulting in continued near misses, incidents and accidents.

Part (a) (iii)

If there are any site rules, these are being broken regularly and there is inadequate supervision or disciplinary procedures to ensure rules are not broken.

Part (a) (iv)

The employer also has legal responsibilities under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. By not providing adequate training, for example, the organisation is breaking the law and can be prosecuted.

Part (b)

Comparing health and safety processes and performance to the 9 other local stores, and 100 national stores.

Comparing best practice initiatives across all the local and national stores.

Each correct answer would be worth one mark. For all parts of Question 10, learners should ensure that they understand the differences between 'active' and 'reactive' monitoring as this is a typical area of the syllabus that learners frequently have difficulty with.

Learners need to be careful not to repeat the same answers but in different words as marks cannot be awarded twice for the same point.

Conclusion

Overall, learners have a responsibility to ensure that they have revised the whole syllabus thoroughly and prepare themselves for the examination. They need to practice researching information and using their course notes and other reference sources to attain the best result possible.

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NEBOSH

5 Dominus Way
Meridian Business Park
Leicester LE19 1QW
United Kingdom

obe@nebosh.org.uk
www.nebosh.org.uk

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