

Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers (NGC1)



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UNIT NGC1: MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY



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 candidates annually and are offered by over 600 course providers, with exams 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) regulatory requirements.

This report provides guidance for candidates which it is hoped will be useful to candidates and tutors in preparation for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the syllabus content and the application of assessment criteria.

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General comments

Many candidates are well prepared for this unit assessment and provide comprehensive and relevant answers in response to the demands of the question paper. This includes the ability to demonstrate understanding of knowledge by applying it to workplace situations.

There are always some 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.

Course providers and candidates will 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 Unit NGC1 and tutor reference documents for each Element.

Some candidates may over rely on knowledge of health and safety gained through their own work experience. While practical experiences can sometimes be helpful they are not a substitute for tuition and study of the syllabus content, to the breadth and depth indicated in the Guide referred to above.

In order to meet the pass standard for this assessment, acquisition of knowledge and understanding across the syllabus are prerequisites. However, candidates need to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in answering the questions set. Referral of candidates in this unit is invariably because they are unable to write a full, well-informed answer to one or more of the questions asked.

Some candidates find it difficult to relate their learning to the questions and as a result offer responses reliant on recalled knowledge and conjecture and fail to demonstrate a sufficient degree of understanding. Candidates should prepare themselves for this vocational examination by ensuring their understanding, not rote-learning pre-prepared answers.

Candidates should therefore note this Report has not been written to provide ‘sample answers’ but to give examples of what Examiners are expecting and more specifically to highlight areas of underperformance.

Common weaknesses and suggestions to assist providers and candidates

It is recognised that many candidates are well prepared for their assessments. However, recurrent issues, as outlined below, continue to prevent some candidates reaching their full potential in the assessment.

Weakness in examination technique

- Many candidates fail to apply the basic principles of examination technique and for some candidates this means the difference between a pass and a referral.
- Candidates need to plan their time effectively. Some candidates fail to make good use of their time and give excessive detail in some answers leaving insufficient time to address all of the questions.
- In some instances, candidates do not attempt all the required questions or are failing to provide complete answers. Candidates are advised to always attempt an answer to a question even when the question is on an unfamiliar topic. At the risk of stating the obvious, an unattempted question will gain no marks. Questions or parts of questions missed can also indicate a weakness in time management.
- Some candidates fail to answer the question set and instead provide information that may be relevant to the topic but is irrelevant to the question and cannot therefore be awarded marks.

- Some candidates fail to separate their answers into the different sub-sections of the questions. These candidates could gain marks for the different sections if they clearly indicated which part of the question they were answering (by using the numbering from the question in their answer, for example). Structuring their answers to address the different parts of the question can also help in logically drawing out the points to be made in response.

Candidates benefit from the chance to practice answering questions in examination like conditions. This should assist them to become familiar with the need to read questions carefully, consider, plan their answer and then begin to write. By examination like conditions, practicing their answers within appropriate time limits should help candidates with time management within the examination.

Feedback to candidates on their answers to questions is a key part of these practice activities.

Lack of attention to command word

- Many candidates fail to apply the command words (eg describe, outline, etc). Command words are the instructions that guide the candidate on the depth of answer required. If, for instance, a question asks the candidate to 'describe' something, then few marks will be awarded to an answer that is an outline. Similarly, the command word 'outline' requires more information than a list.
- The most common weakness is the provision of too little content in an answer to meet the requirement of the command word. This is an unfortunate error as it can mean that a candidate, who knows the topic, and correct points to include in their answer, misses out on marks.

There is good guidance available to candidates and providers "Guidance on command words and question papers" which can be accessed on the NEBOSH website. This guidance will assist candidates to see and understand what is required in an answer when the different command words are used in questions. Some candidates miss out on marks by spending too long writing about one or two points when the answer requires more points to be covered. The chance to practice questions with a range of command words and to receive feedback on the quality of their answers will benefit candidates.

Failing to read the question/memorising answers

- Some candidates appear to have answered a question they hoped to see in the question paper rather than the question actually asked. This error can lead to all the available marks for a question being missed which can significantly impact on the likelihood of achieving the pass standard.

Other weaknesses observed

- Candidates should be aware of the need to make their handwriting as legible as possible.
- Candidates should note that it is not necessary to start a new page in their answer booklet for each section of a question.
- Candidates do not need to write the question out before answering it, they just need to indicate in the top right hand corner of the page which question is being answered. In some cases valuable time is lost doing this rather than focusing on the answer needed.

Unit NGC1

Management of health and safety

- Question 1** *An enforcement officer has visited an organisation and has found that a number of work activities have not had risk assessments completed.*
- (a) **Describe** actions that the enforcement officer could take. (4)
- (b) **Outline** key stages of a risk assessment **AND identify** issues that would need to be considered at **EACH** stage. (10)
- (c) **Explain** criteria that could be used to prioritise any action required as a result of the completed risk assessment. (6)

Part (a) of the question requires an answer focusing on the actions that the enforcement officer could take as opposed to the general powers that they might have when visiting workplaces. They may give advice or more informal support but more likely they will use their more formal powers, including that of issuing an improvement notice. Candidates needed to note the command word, this question is a 'describe' and as such a reasonable amount of text in the form of a description is needed to elaborate on the points made.

The general risk assessment process is one fundamental to health and safety and as such a good knowledge of this process will assist anyone involved in health and safety in the workplace. The risk assessment process forms a lengthy part of the syllabus. There are 10 marks available in part (b) with an 'outline' and 'identify' and both need to be addressed in the answer. The identification of hazards, rather than the identification of risks is the correct starting point for the risk assessment process, with marks awarded for also outlining who might be at risk and the evaluation of the risks involved. The question's answer could be focused on the Health and Safety Executive's 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' publication but attention needs to be paid to the 'identify the issues that would need to be considered at **EACH** stage' rather than just outlining the key stages. It is important to read the question fully to ensure all parts are answered or valuable marks could be missed.

Part (c) proved challenging and answers were limited, with a variety of answers given including the hierarchy of control, principles of prevention and a duplicate of the answer to part (b), the steps of the risk assessment. However, this part of the question was designed to be a more practical and realistic one. As many risk assessments get completed with numbers of remedial actions identified but there needs to be a way of deciding which actions need to be given priority. It is this issue that is under consideration for part (c).

As well as the risk evaluation, likelihood and severity, other criteria such as cost of remedial action might be considered. There might be a number of actions that could be taken that would not actually cost the organisation any money directly. Equally, if there was a risk that would affect a large number of people or a vulnerable group of workers this one might be given priority over other issues.

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- Question 2**
- (a) **Identify** work-related illnesses that are reportable under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013. (4)
- (b) **Outline** reasons why employers should keep records of occupational ill-health among employees. (4)
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The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) were updated in 2013 and as such candidates were assessed on their knowledge of one part of the Regulations, namely work-related illnesses. There is a much shorter list of work-related conditions that need to be reported including any occupational cancer, occupational dermatitis, occupational asthma, tenosynovitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and conditions related to work exposure of biological agents. Candidates needed to note that the question was on ill-health and as such marks could not be awarded for structuring an answer around any reportable injuries or dangerous occurrences.

Part (b) required an outline of the possible reasons why occupational ill-health should be recorded. Details of ill-health may be recorded due to Department of Social Security requirements, certain conditions as covered in part (a) may need to be reported due to legal requirements under RIDDOR. Equally, insurance and civil claims may need ill-health to be recorded, it may also form part of any health surveillance programme.

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- Question 3** **Outline** job factors that could lead to poor health and safety behaviour in the workplace. (8)
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There are a range of factors that may lead to poor health and safety behaviour. These are divided within the syllabus into organisational, job and personal factors. This specific question narrowed this and focused purely on the job factors issue. Job factors focus on the task itself and the workplace, rather than the people involved or the organisation as a whole. Having unsuitable equipment, equipment that is damaged or unavailable, would be examples of relevant job factors. The overall design of the job could also be an issue if a safe system of work was out of date or did not enable the work to be completed effectively.

Answers need to focus on the job or task and not stray off into individual or organisational factors in order for full marks to be awarded. This is an 'outline' question which means outlining each issue, to show how they could lead to poor health and safety performance.

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- Question 4**
- (a) **Outline** functions of a permit-to-work form. (2)
- (b) **Outline** key elements of a permit-to-work system. (6)
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The functions of a permit-to-work form is to enable a record to be kept of high risk activities and for the control measures to be established so they can be followed by all involved. This part of the question was well answered, with candidates aware of the main functions of the permit-to-work form.

A permit-to-work covers actions taken prior to the task being undertaken, such as isolating power sources and pipelines, actions to ensure the task is carried out safely and the actions once the task has been completed to ensure that the equipment or area is put back into safe operation.

The permit should describe the task and its locations along with the foreseeable hazards that may be encountered. Control measures, and more specifically emergency procedures, will also need to be specified. A permit-to-work controls one activity; there was some confusion with some answers giving the stages of a risk assessment. There are some similarities but the permit-to-work system is a procedure for controlling one activity to be followed while the task is actually being undertaken. It will normally stem from a risk assessment but is not part of the risk assessment process.

Question 5 *Identify information that could be used to review an organisation's health and safety performance.* **(8)**

This question with an 'identify' command word limited the amount of detail on each issue required. There are a range of information sources that could be examined; most of these would normally be internal rather than external. However, were the organisation to have any enforcement notices these would be reviewed. Information such as accident trends, hazard reports, risk assessments and the result of active monitoring from inspections, tours and surveys would be examined. The question was still looking for a broad range of information with marks for accident trends, but giving a narrow, focused answer giving several different types of accidents was not sufficient to gain a full quota of marks.

Question 6 (a) *Outline legal requirements placed on employers to have a written health and safety policy.* **(2)**

 (b) *Outline circumstances that may require a health and safety policy to be revised.* **(6)**

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 section 2 places a legal obligation on employers to have a written health and safety policy if they have five or more employees. This is the relevant legislation rather than the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 which some candidates chose to give in their answers.

There are a number of circumstances that may require a health and safety policy to be revised, with an outline rather than a list of these being needed. A policy may be revised if there is a change in premises or a new task introduced. It will not be changed when every new employee joins the organisation but may need to be revised if there is a change at the top of the organisation or if the overall structure of the organisation changes. One word answers or very brief answers did not provide sufficient detail where an outline was required.

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- Question 7**
- (a) **Identify** work activities that may present a particular risk to pregnant women at work **AND give** an example of **EACH** type of activity. (6)
- (b) **Outline** actions that an employer may take when a risk to a new or expectant mother cannot be avoided. (2)
-

There are a variety of work activities that in certain circumstances present a higher risk if completed by a pregnant woman. This question focused not just on the risks but on the typical work activities that might be undertaken. There were two parts to the question even though they appeared together, namely to identify a risk and then give an example of an activity where this risk might be present. Many answers gave a good range of risks including exposure to biological agent, manual handling and exposure to vibration, but a common weakness was to miss the activity where this risk would be present. For instance, risk associated with poor manual handling technique could be experienced by a worker in a warehouse unloading goods. This was the scope the answer required and many candidates knew the range of risks but did not give the example work activity which meant they were unable to achieve full marks for this part of the question.

Part (b) was assessing candidates' knowledge of the action to be taken once the pregnant worker risk assessment has been completed and a risk has been identified that cannot be avoided. There were no marks available for the risk assessment itself as the completion of a risk assessment alone will not control or prevent the risk of injuries in this case. There are a number of actions prescribed within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and these include modifying working conditions or activities, changing shifts or hours, with suspension on full pay until maternity leave commences as the final solution. This was an 'outline' question and candidates need to ensure they can give detail on these issues rather than comments such as 'suspend from work' or 'send home' more detail is required.

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- Question 8** **Outline** the purpose and legal status of:
- (a) health and safety regulations; (4)
- (b) Health and Safety Executive (HSE) approved codes of practice (ACOPs) (4)

AND give an example in **EACH** case.

This question was from the foundations to health and safety element that sets the scene on the legal framework that supports health and safety enforcement within the UK. It may be a more theoretical element but is just as important as the more practical ones on issues such as risk assessment. Examiners expect candidates to have a broad understanding of the syllabus and find this to be an area of weakness.

The question and its two parts needs to be read and re-read carefully to ensure candidates are aware of the full extent of the answers needed. For each of the two documents its purpose and legal status are needed, along with an up to date correct example of each to show candidates have knowledge of these documents that may be useful for references when in the workplace.

Health and safety regulations are statutory instruments that have their power established within the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and breaches can lead to prosecutions. The NGC1 syllabus itself includes a number of health and safety regulations and as such this part of the answer should not have been a problem.

However, in a number of occasions it was either omitted completely or the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 was quoted. This is an Act of Parliament and as such was not a valid answer for this part of the question.

There are a number of approved codes of practice that provide an interpretation or explanation of how a specific piece of legislation could be implemented. In the last few years, as a result of a number of reviews, a majority of HSE approved codes of practice have been updated. Approved codes of practice are not legally enforceable but they can be used by the courts to determine if the relevant legal standards have been met, with organisations needing to show if they have not followed the ACOP that they have met an equal or higher standard. Candidates again lost out on gaining marks by not giving an example ACOP that could have included the one supporting the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health, Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations or the Electricity at Work Regulations. The ACOP supporting the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 has been withdrawn by the HSE, but marks were still awarded for this at this time as it still appears on the syllabus. However, it is worth noting that the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 and Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 do not have an approved code practice.

Question 9 *When carrying out a health and safety inspection of a workplace:*

- (a) **outline** the benefits of using a checklist; (4)
- (b) **outline** the limitations of using a checklist. (4)
-

Examiners are looking for an answer separated clearly into the benefits and limitations of a workplace inspection. Despite this being within the question there were a few answers that covered audits or risk assessments and not workplace inspections. Showing the distinction between each is not often clearly understood by candidates. This is an issue that would be useful for course providers to note when presenting this Element.

There are a number of benefits of using a checklist which includes the planning of the inspection in a systematic way, providing a record immediately that can be passed on the relevant people. The question was on the benefits of using a checklist whereas some answers explained the benefits of carrying out inspections rather than issues associated with the checklist itself.

The limitations were, in the main well covered, giving detail on why they may be over relied on or used as a tick box exercise.

Question 10 ***Explain** why it is important to use a variety of methods to communicate health and safety information in the workplace.* (8)

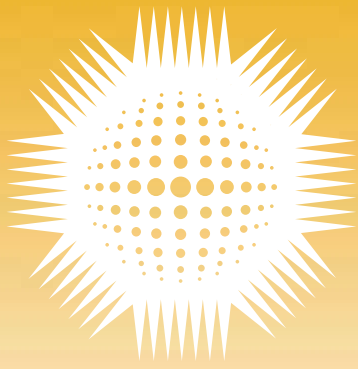
This question was an 'explain' which means candidates need to be prepared to give some depth and detail in the answers they provide. The standard of response to this part of the question was often limited. There were a large number of answers given that gave lists of the many different ways in which health and safety information can be communicated. This was not what was required by the question and as such candidates may have written about a large number of issues but not been rewarded with the marks they expected, which may have contributed to the limitation of the answers provided.

Employers may need to use a variety of different mediums and communication methods to ensure the message is understood, as some employees may not have the ability to read or write English. There are a number of UK statutory requirements that require information to be communicated to employees and these need to be taken into account, some may actually prescribe how the employer should communicate for instance in the provision of the Health and Safety Law Poster covered by the Health and Safety Information for Employees Regulations 1989.

Question 11	(a)	Outline employee duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.	(2)
	(b)	Outline employee responsibilities that should be included in the 'organisation' section of a health and safety policy	(6)

Overall, answers to part (a) were lacking in the specifics from Regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Employees have duties within the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 that are more widely understood as on a number of occasions these were stated here instead to the additional duties that employees have within these Regulations. Employees have duties to use equipment in line with any training received, but the duty not to use or misuse anything provided in the interests in health and safety. Overall, this area of the syllabus was not well understood and course providers could assist in ensuring this requirement within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 is as well understood as its Health and Safety at Work etc Act counterpart.

Part (b) of the question was well answered, with a broad range of answers detailing the various responsibilities that employees may have within the health and safety policy. Employees will normally have a duty to report accidents and hazards, wear PPE and ensure the safety of themselves and others who may be affected.



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