

January 2015

Examiners' Report

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



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NEBOSH NATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

UNIT IA: INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

JANUARY 2015



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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 examinations taken in over 110 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 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 2015.

Feedback is presented in these key areas; examination technique, command words and learning outcomes 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.

Unit IA

International management of health and safety

Candidate performance

This report covers the examination sitting in January 2015.

Learning outcomes

Question 1

7.2 Explain the nature of the perception of risk and its relationship to performance in the workplace

Candidates were expected to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of perception in relation to sensory inputs and how perception of risk may be affected.

Candidates were able to identify the sensory inputs affected. Common pitfalls seemed to be the provision of a list of senses and an example of damage of the sense rather than the required outline and how the sense may be affected, eg through the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Question 2

6.6 Explain health and safety culture and climate

6.7 Outline the factors which can both positively and negatively affect health and safety culture and climate

Candidates were expected to convey an understanding of the promotion and demonstration of health and safety culture and climate.

Candidates should be prepared to explain the details of culture and climate, as well as deliver to the Examiner a clear understanding of the factors that influence culture and climate and how it can be measured. A key tool for a health and safety practitioner is to be able to influence the culture of an organisation through a range of methods including, achieving buy-in at a senior level, as well as practically implementing effective health and safety management systems.

Candidates seemed more comfortable with management actions promoting a positive health and safety culture, but some confused this with demonstration of a positive health and safety culture. Course providers should ensure that candidates are equipped to deliver the depth of the learning outcomes. It would appear that candidates found it difficult to differentiate between 'actions to promote' and 'demonstration of' results.

Question 3

3.2 Explain the need for, and the objectives and limitations of, health and safety monitoring systems

Monitoring health and safety performance requires the application of several measures that reflect both active and reactive measures. Candidates should be able to explain the benefits and limitations of the different types of measures that can be used in the workplace to measure and demonstrate health and safety performance.

Candidates who remained within the scope of the question relating to this syllabus learning outcome often earned good marks.

Question 4

5.2 Outline factors to be taken into account when selecting risk controls

5.3 Explain the development, main features and operation of safe systems of work and permit-to-work systems

Candidates were expected to relay an understanding of safe systems of work and corresponding cost-benefit analysis.

Developing safe systems of work and applying them in the workplace is key to good health and safety performance. Also it is important to be able to justify the reasoning for the development and implementation of systems.

Most candidates were able to provide reasonable answers in relation to permit-to-work but found difficulty in explaining cost-benefit analysis.

Question 5

1.1 Explain the moral, legal and economic reasons for a health and safety management system

Candidates are expected to have an in-depth understanding of the reasons for managing health and safety and also to be able to articulate those reasons in their responses.

It appeared that many candidates did not have an appreciation of the moral reasons, or could not put into words those reasons or the benefits to the organisation and workers.

In many instances candidates seemed to need an ulterior motive for any moral action such as improved production or cost savings. Also the legal and financial reasons were discussed that were not asked for.

It also appeared that candidates were confused between the terms 'moral' and 'morale'.

Question 6

8.1 Describe comparative governmental and socio-legal, regulatory and corporate models

Candidates were expected to expand on specifics such as punitive damages, no fault liability and failures in duty of care.

Throughout the world there are comparative legal systems and terms that are used and this question sought to explore the understanding of some of those terms. Since this question required candidates to know the facts, there were a number of excellent answers from those candidates who had studied and learned their material. Unfortunately not all had, and there were also some highly imaginative but incorrect answers. There appeared to be no particular misconceptions about the terms, poor performance generally appeared to be due to a lack of knowledge.

Question 7

1.3 Explain the principles and content of effective health and safety, quality, environmental and integrated management systems with reference to recognised models and standards

The application of recognised safety management systems is an important area for employers. The safety practitioner has a key role to play in co-ordinating the implementation of such systems. It is therefore expected that candidates will have an in-depth understanding of not just the content of systems but of the benefits and limitations of the different systems and their interaction with other workplace systems. The question related to this learning outcome proved popular with candidates and many of those who opted to answer it performed well. It was clear that some candidates had prepared rote-learned answers. However, candidates should be conscious of the requirements of the question, eg if benefits are requested and a candidate responds with limitations only, no marks will be gained.

Question 8

4.4 Explain the principles and techniques of failure tracing methodologies with the use of calculations

Candidates were expected to construct and apply failure tracing techniques such as event and fault trees.

The event tree in this question offered up a number of marks for candidates who were able to construct and quantify the tree from the data given. Those that attempted it usually gained good marks since the maths required are relatively simple in nature. While many candidates developed a well-rehearsed event tree answer, not all had an understanding of the principles of the technique in the workplace. Candidates should note that it is important to bring the right tools to the examination, as some of the event trees could have been spaced out better and a ruler would have helped as there were several examples of hand drawn branches that were somewhat wobbly and not that easy to follow.

Question 9

8.3 Explain the role of non-governmental bodies and self-regulation has in securing common health and safety standards in a global economy

In a global setting self-regulation to help ensure that standards are both set and maintained can often be a leading element in determining health and safety performance. Candidates should be able to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the tools required to help ensure that standards are both put in place and subsequently monitored. One such tool is that of internal auditing.

Candidates' responses in the form of lists of items that would be examined during an audit, and details of how to deal with the outcome of the audit findings attracted lower marks. In other cases, development of an audit program gained higher marks. Overall, candidates should provide enough scope in their answers to warrant the marks available, while ensuring that adequate detail is provided where necessary.

Question 10

2.2 Explain the quantitative analysis of accident/incident and ill-health data, limitations of their application and their presentation in numerical and graphical form

2.3 Explain the external and the internal reporting and recording systems for loss events (injuries, ill-health, dangerous occurrences) and near misses

This area of the syllabus of loss causation and incident investigation is an important area of knowledge for health and safety professionals. Candidates should be prepared to give detailed responses to a range of scenarios that may be presented so they demonstrate their knowledge in this area.

The question was the more popular of the optional questions in Section B and was well answered by many candidates who showed a good level of knowledge in this area of the syllabus. It was noticeable that the question relating to this syllabus area was occasionally misread with candidates outlining a different part of the investigation process to that requested.

Question 11

6.3 Identify the various categories of third parties in a workplace, the relevant duties, responsibilities and controls

Candidates were expected to expand on internal rules and procedures with the selection, appointment and control of contractors.

Candidates would generally be expected to apply their knowledge of selection criteria and control methods to a range of different scenarios.

Some candidates became too focused on the intricacies of certain topics, such as what should be contained in a risk assessment for the work. Overall most candidates coped well when attempting this question.

Examination technique

The following examination techniques were identified as the main areas of improvement for candidates:

Candidates repeated the same point but in different ways

In some cases candidates tended to make the same point more than once, eg training. While a valid point, once it has been made and the mark awarded Examiners will not be able to award the mark again. Consequently candidates should take care when using terms that contain numerous points that should be made separately.

Candidates did not respond effectively to the command word

Command words within the question are specifically used to guide candidates and course providers to understand the level of depth required in answering the question. Command words are also used in the syllabus that again is used to help ensure that both course providers and students know the level of treatment required in that topic area.

To help ensure that as many of the available marks as possible are achieved by candidates compliance with the command word is essential. In too many cases candidates are not awarded marks because they have provided a list rather than an outline for example, which frustrates Examiners and candidates alike since it demonstrates a lack of examination technique, rather than a lack of knowledge.

Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question

There were numerous examples of quite long, detailed answers that often suggested practical experience of the issues at 'grassroots level'. This may be a result of candidates either not reading the question properly, or because of possible language issues where candidates do not to understand what the question is asking.

The examination is testing candidates for their expertise on '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' (shop floor level, rather than senior management level) rather than how to prepare for and manage an audit.

Candidates must be aware that this is a management examination.

Command words

The following command words are listed in the order identified as being the most challenging for candidates:

Outline

Commonly, candidates tend to respond well to this command word. An 'outline' question requires candidates to give the main issue and then provide the key features in the context of the question. A common pitfall is for candidates to list rather than outline. 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.

Explain

An explanation requires candidates to 'give the reasons for' and consequently candidates should have a detailed understanding of the topic matter in question in order to satisfy this command word. Commonly, candidates will 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.

Describe

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.

When asked to describe the contents of a safety policy candidates should provide the reader 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.

Give

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.

Identify

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.

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.

Conclusion

The feedback from Examiners highlighted that candidates taking the Unit IA examinations in January 2015 needed most improvement in the areas of examination technique and examination preparation. human factors relating to perception of risks (learning outcome 7.2), principles of health and safety management - reasons for managing health and safety, (learning outcome 1.1) and regulating health and safety, relating to self-regulation and the application of internal monitoring procedures (learning outcome 8.3)..

With regard to examination technique, candidates sitting this examination should ensure that they are adequately prepared for the examination. It is incumbent upon both course providers and candidates that they allocate adequate preparation and practice in order to have the best chance of success in the examinations. The examination statistics indicate that there are a significant number of candidates that are unable to achieve a pass standard by some margin. In contrast, there are candidates who achieve comfortable passes in the examination that indicates good preparation for the examination.

In terms of preparation this means that candidates should spend enough time revising and learning material required in the examination, but also spend time learning and practising examination technique. As identified above it is frustrating for both Examiners and candidates when marks are not able to be awarded because the candidate has not responded to the command word in an appropriate way, or has not answered the question asked. Additionally, it would appear that there are several candidates who do not have the necessary skills in terms of the command of the written English language to write comprehensive answers to questions. It is important that both candidates and course providers ensure that the necessary language skills are understood in order that there is a realistic chance of passing the examination.



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