

July 2016

Examiners' Report

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



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NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

UNIT IC: INTERNATIONAL WORKPLACE AND WORK EQUIPMENT SAFETY

JULY 2016



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

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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 July 2016.

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

Candidates and course providers will also benefit from use of the 'Guide to the NEBOSH International Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety' which is available via the NEBOSH website. In particular, the guide sets out in detail the syllabus content for Unit IC 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 IC 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

Unit IC

International workplace and work equipment safety

Question 1 *An airline has noticed a significant increase in the number of slips and trips experienced by airline workers while boarding and leaving aircraft. These incidents have occurred both inside the aircraft and on the metal steps leading to the aircraft.*

- (a) **Outline** possible reasons for an increase in the number of slip and trip incidents. (5)
- (b) **Outline** practical ways in which the airline could reduce the risk of slips and trips to the airline workers. (5)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 1.1: Explain the need for, and factors involved in, the provision and maintenance of a safe working environment, with specific reference to access and egress, pedestrians, and slips, trips and falls.

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates with the majority providing a good outline. Most read the question and understood that it related to airline workers and not passengers.

In part (a) the expectation was that candidates would outline such matters as contamination of footwear by water, leaves, oils and fuel. Likewise, contamination of the aircraft's steps was an acceptable answer. Other reasons for slips and trips might have included not holding onto handrails, poor lighting and uneven or poorly maintained carpets.

Very few candidates were methodical and related the items they identified in part (a) with their answer in part (b). For example, where poor lighting was mentioned in part (a), few candidates included 'ensuring adequate lighting' in part (b). Other answers included having good housekeeping in the cabin, checking the gaps between the steps and the aircraft, and providing a canopy for the steps.

Design issues such as providing an air-bridge, while a good idea, did not answer the question.

Question 2 (a) *Analysis of system failure methods can be reductionist or holistic.*

Give the meaning of the following terms:

- (i) *reductionist;* (2)
- (ii) *holistic.* (2)
- (b) *Reliability calculations depend on having robust reliability data.*

Outline typical sources of reliability data. (6)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 6.7: Explain the analysis, assessment and improvement of system failures and system reliability with the use of calculations.

This question was not well answered or not attempted at all.

Part (a) required candidates to give definitions and many of the answers appeared to give dictionary definitions of the terms 'reductionist' and 'holistic'.

In part (b) sources of reliability data could have included user or organisational failure data, published papers, industry publications, standards and technical bulletins.

It appeared in this sitting that this was not a particularly well-taught part of the syllabus.

Question 3 *A large food processing factory has a range of new and older production machines of varying conditions.*

Identify AND explain the three main maintenance strategies available to the employer. **(10)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 5.3: Explain safe working procedures for the maintenance, inspection and testing of work equipment according to the risks posed.

This question was not well answered. Most candidates understood that there were three types of maintenance strategy being looked for: planned preventative, condition-based and breakdown. However, few candidates could go beyond naming the strategies (asked for) and gave limited explanations.

For instance, in 'planned preventative maintenance' Examiners were looking for some understanding that this strategy prolongs the life of the machine. It prevents failures by replacing parts early. Although this may appear costly it is carried out on high value machines that are critical to the process if they fail.

Similar insights were expected for condition-based and breakdown maintenance strategies. However, candidates did not follow the second command word 'explain'.

Question 4 *An existing electrical installation on a dairy farm is to be replaced.*

(a) **Outline** factors likely to have caused the deterioration of the existing electrical installation. **(4)**

(b) **Outline** factors that should be considered when designing the replacement electrical installation. **(6)**

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcomes 4.3: Outline the main principles of the design and use of electrical systems and equipment in adverse or hazardous environments; and 8.3: Outline the issues relevant to the installation, use, inspection and maintenance of electrical systems.

This question appeared to challenge many candidates. In part (a) candidates were expected to outline factors such as mechanical and physical damage to components and cables from farm animals; damage from vermin; corrosion to component parts and housing and water ingress. Also wear, sub-standard repairs and replacement parts were acceptable answers.

The question required application of general electrical knowledge to the specific context of a dairy farm and most candidates were able to do that.

Answers to part (b) were limited where an understanding of electrical design features was required, but appeared lacking.

The expectation was that candidates would provide answers outlining the need for suitable supply and distribution units; suitable pumps, agitators, heaters, coolers and milking equipment; a suitable system capable of withstanding animal contact and the corrosive environment; protection of the system from overload; electrical shock protection and so on.

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- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Question 5 | (a) Outline the principles of a vapour cloud explosion AND give an example of a major incident associated with a vapour cloud explosion. (8) |
| | (b) Outline the effects of a vapour cloud explosion. (2) |
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 2.1: Outline the properties of flammable and explosive materials and the mechanisms by which they ignite, and was generally a well-answered question.

Most candidates were able to outline a confined and an unconfined vapour cloud explosion and gave a suitable example.

A number of candidates had difficulty with gaining both marks for part (b). Answers should have included overpressure, blast wave, rate of pressure change, ejection/scattering of flying debris from the explosion, property damage, injury and so on.

-
- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Question 6 | (a) Outline factors that might cause an agricultural tractor to overturn. (6) |
| | (b) Outline control measures that should be considered in order to help reduce the risk of an agricultural tractor overturning. (4) |
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 10.1: Explain the hazards, risks and control measures for safe workplace transport operations.

This question was generally well answered and candidates gained good marks.

Some candidates did not read the question correctly, with some candidates writing about excavations and construction site hazards. While other candidates answered the question as if it were a forklift truck, in a warehouse or on a construction site.

Factors that could cause a tractor to overturn include gradient; direction of travel on gradient, turning on a slope; uneven or soft ground, potholes, edges, pits; instability caused by attachments and trailed implements and so on.

In part (b), more technical answers included fitting counterbalance weights, widening the wheel track, speed limiting devices, security/stability of loads and using shear pins and couplings for trailers.

An overall impression was that some candidates appeared to recite previous Examiners reports by mentioning several similar points on the mark scheme that could only earn them one mark. This is not a foolproof study strategy and should not be used.

Question 7 *For a large supermarket with restaurant facilities:*

- (a) **outline** automatic fire protection systems that should be in place; (6)
- (b) **outline** factors that should be considered when developing a
safe means of escape for the supermarket. (14)
-

This question was a very popular choice on Section B and assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcomes 3.2: Describe common fire detection and alarm systems and procedures; and 3.4: Outline the factors to be considered in the provision and maintenance of means of escape.

In part (a) most candidates identified adequate fire detection and suppression systems. Better answers referred to smoke control systems, dampers, automatic shutdown of services (eg gas), and a distinction between the protection provided for the restaurant and supermarket zones.

Many candidates wrote carefully about how smoke detectors and sprinklers worked but this was not required and gained no marks.

Part (b) was very well answered. However, some candidates confused part (a) and (b), while others focused on control of hazardous substances and fire risk assessment.

A successful strategy is for candidates to provide a structured answer rather than a scattergun approach.

Question 8 *An organisation is planning to carry out a lift that requires the use of two cranes working together (a tandem lift).*

Outline elements of a safe system of work in order to carry out the lift safely. (20)

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 7.2: Describe the main hazards and control measures associated with commonly encountered lifting equipment.

This was another very popular question selected by the majority of candidates. Many candidates did not appear to understand the concept of a tandem lift, although it was possible to gain marks with a general approach to a lifting plan.

Very few candidates made reference to de-rating and calculations by a competent person and candidates did not appreciate the need for synchronised lifting. Answers were not presented in any logical or operational order. Answers needed to be structured and based around for example: Organising; Planning; Competent person; Visibility; Positioning/Location; Stability; Proximity hazards; Overload; Pre-use checks.

Within each of the headings, candidates could then expand further.

-
- Question 9** *Failure of pressure systems can result in accidents.*
- (a) **Identify** workplace examples of pressure systems. (5)
- (b) **Outline** a typical written scheme of examination for pressure systems. (5)
- (c) *Other than a written scheme of examination and the provision of safe equipment, **outline** control measures that could help reduce the risk of pressure system failures.* (10)
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 11.4: Outline, the likely causes of the failure of pressure systems, and the testing and prevention strategies that can be used.

Pressure systems remain a challenging subject matter for most candidates. Identifying examples of pressure systems was straightforward for those that attempted this question. Likewise, giving the contents of a written scheme of examination was straightforward.

The greatest difficulty occurred with part (c). Answers could have included: a maintenance programme for the whole system; monitoring the system for defects; monitoring for signs of wear or corrosion; ensuring operators, installers, maintainers, inspectors and testers have the appropriate skills and knowledge; and so on.

-
- Question 10** *The International Labour Organisation's Standard R175 and its associated Code of Practice sets out general principles for 'Safety and Health in Construction'.*
- Minor repairs need to be carried out to the sloping roof of a large two-storey property. A scaffold is to be erected in order to gain access to the work area.*
- Using the guidance in R175, **outline** the precautions necessary for carrying out the repairs.* (20)
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 9.3: Explain the hazards associated with working at heights from fixed work or temporary platforms and the necessary precautions and safe working practices.

This was a popular question with most candidates able to outline preventative measures on scaffold to prevent people or equipment falling. Several candidates related fall arrest to work on scaffold as a routine requirement and not in association with unprotected edges.

Although most candidates covered several pages of answer material few marks were gained in line with the mark scheme. A small percentage of candidates understood the guidance R175 but general scaffold knowledge gained some marks here. Several candidates referred to mobile tower scaffolds and MEWPS, that are outside of the marking criteria. Other candidates referred to precautions to be taken for asbestos roofs and the safe use of power tools.

Most candidates were able to recognise the requirement for inspection and erection by a competent person.

Question 11 *A new log splitting machine has been purchased for timber to be processed in a sawmill. The machine operates as a hydraulic press with a moving vertical wedge that splits wooden logs (see diagram below). The machine has been purchased from within the European Union (EU) and comes with a Declaration of Conformity Certificate and an operator's handbook. The moving vertical wedge operates by means of a two-handed control of a hold-to-run type.*

Key

- 1 First control of two-handed control
- 2 Second control of two-handed control
- 3 Trip device activates if the wedge is still attached to the wood on the return movement
- 4 Log support
- 5 Distance guards

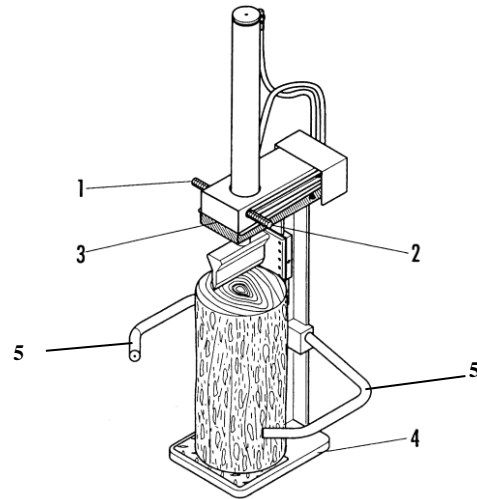


Diagram adapted from BS EN 609-1:1999

- (a) **Outline** information that should be contained in the Declaration of Conformity Certificate. (6)
 - (b) **Describe** how the operator is protected while the machine is working. (7)
 - (c) **Describe** warning signs associated with the machine. (7)
-

This question assessed candidates' knowledge of learning outcome 6.1: Describe the principles of safety integration and the considerations required in a general workplace machinery risk assessment.

This was a question that candidates appeared to find challenging. Examiners suggested that perhaps this topic is either not taught to, nor understood by, candidates.

This is an everyday example of a type of machine specified within the syllabus, namely a vertical press with an hydraulic ram and wedge.

Examination technique

The following examination techniques are consistently identified as the main areas in need of improvement for candidates:

Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question

Careful and thorough preparation for the examination is vital for candidates. Accredited course providers should assist candidates in setting out and applying sound revision and examination practice and preparation techniques to ensure that they are well prepared for the examination. This includes ensuring that candidates carefully read the question to determine exactly what is being asked and answer accordingly.

Examiners noted that there was evidence of candidates not understanding the question that was asked and therefore providing an answer that was not relevant to the question.

The range of English language skills demonstrated in the examination by candidates varies enormously. Examiners often find themselves faced with scripts where candidates do not appear to have understood the question and struggle to write a coherent answer in English. Candidates for this examination should satisfy the required IELTS Level 7 language requirements. Course providers are reminded that it is incumbent on them to provide appropriate advice and guidance to candidates to help ensure that they stand a reasonable chance of success in the study of the NEBOSH Diploma.

There were numerous examples of quite long, detailed answers that suggest practical experience but do not focus on the question being asked. This may be a result of candidates either not reading the question properly, or because of possible language issues where candidates do not understand what the question is asking.

The examination is assessing candidates on their understanding of 'managing' health and safety and a number of candidates did not seem to grasp this resulting in long, detailed answers on such issues as 'what to look for in an audit' rather than how to prepare for and manage an audit.

Examiners ask questions based on the syllabus. Points, no matter how valid, but unrelated to the question being asked, will not attract any marks. Candidates should note that where there is emphasis in a question (eg by the use of italics) it is to guide candidates towards a particular point. Reading and re-reading the question encompasses taking due note of this emphasis.

Candidates' handwriting was illegible

The examination situation is a stressful time for candidates and while the examination is not a test of the English language or handwriting scripts must be legible for Examiners to mark them fairly. As the examination progresses, candidates can become both mentally and physically tired. In an increasingly electronic age, professional people do not have the same need to write text in longhand. However, to pass this examination it is an essential and necessary part of the preparation to rehearse writing questions in full and in the time allocated.

When practicing examination technique, candidates should hand-write their answers and get feedback from their course providers on legibility (as well as how they performed).

Course providers need to identify those candidates whose handwriting is illegible and provide them with appropriate advice. Examiners cannot award marks for answers that they are unable to read.

Candidates unnecessarily wrote the question down

There are 15 minutes to answer a 10-mark question in Section A and 30 minutes available to answer a 20-mark question in Section B of the question paper. This time will be required for reading, re-reading and understanding the question, developing an answer plan on the answer booklet and finally committing the answer to the answer booklet. The efficient use of time is essential in order to answer the 9 questions within the 3 hours available. The majority of Examiners reported that candidates felt it necessary to write the question out in full, before providing the associated answer, and this limits the time available. Course providers should remind candidates that it is not necessary to include a question with their answer.

Good examination technique is followed where the candidate frames the answer in the context of the question, rather than rewriting the whole of the question. As with the other examination technique points above, good examination technique is developed through practice and good preparation.

Candidates repeated the same point but in different ways

In some cases candidates tended to make the same point more than once, eg training. Once a valid point has been made and the mark awarded Examiners will not be able to award the mark again. Unless otherwise stated, most questions require candidates to respond with a wide range of issues to gain high marks. Consequently candidates should take care when using terms that contain numerous points that should be made separately.

Accredited course providers should brief candidates on examination technique by way of understanding what points are mark worthy in an answer and those that are not.

Candidates did not respond effectively to the command word

A key indicator in an examination question will be the command word, which is always given in **bold** typeface. The command word will indicate the depth of answer that is expected by the candidate.

Generally, there has been an improvement in response to command words, but a number of candidates continue to produce answers that are little more than a list even when the command word requires a more detailed level of response, such as 'outline' or 'explain'. This is specifically addressed in the following section dealing with command words, most commonly failure to provide sufficient content to constitute an 'outline' was noted. Failure to respond to the relevant command word in context was also a frequent problem hence information inappropriate to the question was often given.

Course exercises should guide candidates to assessing the relevant points in any given scenario such that they are able to apply the relevant syllabus elements within the command word remit.

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

Examiners report a high incidence of candidates writing down answers they have memorised from previous Examiners' Reports. These answers often relate to a similar, but different question, to which the memorised answer is not wholly applicable. For example, it may require a different aspect of the topic or relate to a different scenario.

Candidates are expected to apply their knowledge and understanding to the actual question given, not the question they think they see. This is why it is extremely important that candidates understand and are able to apply their knowledge, and not just memorise. Course providers should help candidates apply their knowledge to a range of different scenarios to aid understanding of the topic.

Candidates did not allocate enough time to the question

Some candidates were unable to give answers of sufficient depth to warrant good marks and sometimes spent more time on questions carrying fewer marks than was warranted by the command word.

Candidates need to take note of the fact that answers in Section A are worth 10 marks and those in Section B are worth 20 marks. The Examiners' expectation is that more detailed answers are required in Section B. Some candidates spend a disproportionate amount of time in writing long answers to Section A questions at the expense of time spent on the more in-depth answers demanded in Section B. Proper preparation and 'mock' examinations can help to correct this.

Accredited course providers should ensure that candidates are given adequate opportunity to develop examination skills to ensure that answers are provided to the depth and breadth required.

Structured Answers

It is important for candidates to structure their answers as this helps cover all the requirements of the question without losing focus. It is good examination technique to look for the principles or the concepts that underpin the topic and to use those as a basis for delivering a structured answer.

Candidates answered by posing a question

Candidates need to resist the temptation to present their answers as merely a series of questions. 'Outline' requires candidates *'To indicate the principal features or different parts of'* and this is not done through posing questions to the Examiners.

Command words

Please note that the examples used here are for the purpose of explanation only.

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

Outline

Outline: To indicate the principal features or different parts of.

Most candidates are familiar with the requirements of 'outline'. However, a number of candidates expect that by listing or giving bullet points that will be sufficient. At this level of qualification candidates are expected to be able to construct sentences around their answers.

An 'outline' question requires candidates to give the main issue and then provide the key features in the context of the question. Where a question that requires candidates to '**outline** the issues to be addressed in the development of an audit system' the response should provide adequate context to the issues in order to gain the marks. An answer that merely includes issues such as 'scope, training, commitment, etc' will not gain good marks since while the issues are relevant there is no context to the issues in relation to the question asked.

Candidates should provide context to the point being made to demonstrate understanding of the subject.

As required by a Diploma level qualification candidates should be able to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the subject matter and therefore be able to summarise and contextualise technical points in the field of health and safety. Those candidates who did provide good outlines to questions demonstrated understanding of the topic without going into too much detail.

If asked to '**outline** the purpose of local exhaust ventilation' in a given scenario, an answer such as 'contaminant removal, exposure limits' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, removal of contaminant at source (as far as possible) and ensuring exposure limits are not exceeded would higher gain marks.

If asked to '**outline** how health risks from exposure to lead should be managed...' in a given scenario, an answer such as medical tests, PPE, RPE would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, surveillance tests for lead in blood/urine, the use of PPE such as overalls, the use of RPE such as respirator with appropriate particulate/fume filters would gain marks.

Explain

Explain: To provide an understanding. To make an idea or relationship clear.

Many candidates are still not properly prepared for this command word. A list of points (no matter how relevant) will not satisfy Examiners when the command word is 'explain'. So for example, where candidates were asked to explain the circumstances where heat and smoke detectors would be inappropriate, Examiners were looking for candidates to explain that heat detectors would be inappropriate in environments where temperatures fluctuate suddenly during normal work activities. Just saying 'workshops', for example, is not enough to provide an answer to an 'explain' question.

Commonly, candidates do not provide adequate detail in relation to this command word, eg '**explain** limitations of relying on accident numbers only as a measure of health and safety performance'. An appropriate response would provide the reader with reasons why relying solely on accident numbers would not provide a comprehensive view of the organisational performance in health and safety, eg accident numbers do not indicate incidence of ill-health and accident data may go up following initiatives following underreporting, etc.

Candidates are generally unable to provide clear answers where this command word is used but that may be due to lack of knowledge rather than not understanding what is required, since an explanation requires the candidate to provide reasoning for their answer. For example, when a question specifies 'explain' the candidate is required to provide an understanding or make clear an idea or relationship. For example '**explain** how malaria is transmitted to humans'. If a candidate responded with *mosquito bites humans* this would be insufficient to merit full marks as this does not provide a deep enough understanding or relationship from the specified command word or the context in which the question is asked. However, a candidate would get full marks if they elaborated on this stating that the disease originates with the plasmodium parasite that is then transmitted to humans via a bite from a feeding female mosquito that carries it; the parasite then transferring to the human blood stream, travelling to the liver.

Describe

'Describe. To give a detailed written account of the distinctive features of a topic. The account should be factual without any attempt to explain.'

Candidates are required to provide a word picture in response to this command word and therefore the candidate needs to have a good understanding of the topic of the question in the examination in order to gain good marks. Typically, a limited response to this command word will be an inadequate amount of detail in the answer.

For example, when asked to describe the contents of a safety policy candidates should provide the Examiner with relevant information about the contents of the policy, eg 'the policy should contain details of the organisational commitment to health and safety'. This would be supported with specific targets and commitment resource to ensuring compliance as a minimum but developing the health and wellbeing of the employees, etc'. An answer that goes no further than listing the topics of to be covered in the policy would not attract good marks in the examination.

In the examination, lists and single word answers will rarely satisfy the requirement of the Examiners in terms of answering the question at this level. It is noticeable that the well prepared candidate has less trouble deciphering command words and tends to gain good marks whereas those candidates who use single word answers will tend not to have the knowledge to write anything further in the context that is required.

Give

Give: Only a short answer is required, not an explanation or a description.

'Give' is normally used in conjunction with a further requirement, such as '**give** the meaning of' or '**give** an example in **EACH** case'.

In some circumstances candidates may spend too much time giving unrequired detail in response to this command word. It is often used in conjunction with the meaning of a phrase or statement and candidates can overelaborate the required answer. Time management is important in the examination and candidates should ensure that they respond with appropriate brevity where the command word and available marks suggest that is all that is required.

When asked to '**give** the meaning of motivation', it would appropriate to say that 'motivation is the driving force that leads an individual to behave in a certain way'. It would not be appropriate to discuss in detail different motivational theories.

On the whole most candidates respond well to this command word, often by offering a definition. There is evidence where candidates go into too much detail that left those candidates writing large amounts of text for very few marks.

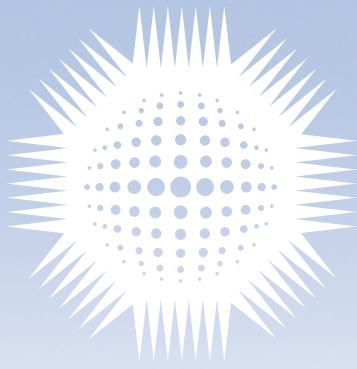
Identify

Identify: To give a reference to an item, which could be its name or title.

As with 'give' above it is not uncommon for candidates to overelaborate their answers in response to this command word. It is adequate for a candidate to provide the key point to the Examiner without further developing the point with supporting theory or examples unless they are specifically asked for.

When providing a response to 'identify' the mental selection and naming of an answer that relates to the question should be sufficient. In most cases, one or two words would be sufficient to be awarded corresponding marks. Any further detail would not be required and impacts negatively on the time limit for completing the examination. For example, if the question was '**identify** possible effects on the body when someone is exposed to lead' suitable responses would include developmental effects in unborn babies, anaemia, nausea/vomiting in order to be awarded a mark.

For additional guidance, please see NEBOSH's '*Guidance on command words used in learning outcomes and question papers*' document, which is available on our website: www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=1345&ct=2.



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