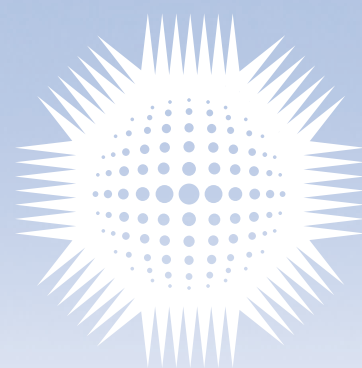


July 2014

Examiners' Report

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



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NEBOSH INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY


UNIT IA: INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

JULY 2014



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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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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 2014.

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 July 2014 which produced an overall pass rate of 32%.

Examination technique

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

Misread or misinterpreted the question

Many candidates failed to demonstrate a basic understanding of key health and safety principles such as 'consultation' or 'human failure'. This lack of knowledge meant that candidates were unable to be awarded even a small number of marks.

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.

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.

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.

Repeated the same point but in different ways

Many responses repeated the same point in the same answer and too many candidates used excessive prose to make the relevant point, again in some instances repeating themselves.

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.

Command words

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

Outline

Most candidates provided the correct level of detail for this command word though there were some who provided identify level answers one after the other separated by commas'.

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

Explain

Candidates were generally unable to provide clear answers where this command word was used but that may have been due to lack of knowledge rather than not understanding what was required, since an explanation requires the candidate to provide reasoning for their answer.

Candidates should ensure thorough preparation for the examination which should include a thorough understanding of examination technique.

Describe

Most candidates seemed to understand what was required for this command word although a small number provided insufficient detail.

In responding to this command word, candidates should be able to provide a word picture in the context of the question so that the Examiner is able to clearly understand the response and therefore the candidates' knowledge.

Give

Several candidates failed to illustrate their answers with the examples required by the question with this command word.

Candidates should thoroughly read and respond to the requirement of the question.

Identify

Where this command word was used most candidates failed to take the opportunity to provide shorter answers.

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

Learning outcomes

Question 1 assessed learning outcome:

2.4 Explain loss and near miss investigations; the requirements, benefits, the procedures, the documentation, and the involvement of and communication with relevant staff and representatives

Candidates should be able to apply the knowledge identified in the learning outcome to a range of scenarios. Additionally it is expected that candidates will be able to identify the various component elements of the learning outcome and demonstrate an understanding of the technical make-up of the subject area.

The question relating to this learning outcome was generally answered well with a broad range of answers given which covered most of the requirements. A good degree of understanding of what was required was evident. A common mistake, however, was to confuse this question with another question of actions to be taken after an accident which gave a whole different set of answers. In some cases, candidates tended to discuss matters other than those asked for which led to fewer marks being awarded than would have been expected.

Question 2 assessed learning outcome:

3.3 Describe the variety of monitoring and measurement techniques

Monitoring is a key tool for any health and safety practitioner, so it is expected that candidates will be able to describe in detail the various tools and their associated benefits and limitations. Additionally, the candidate should be able to give a coherent discussion on the appropriateness of the use of the various tools and subsequent analysis.

The question that assessed this learning outcome produced a fairly limited range of answers which suggested a limited understanding of the subject. The question requested answers relating to culture and performance improvement but many answers could only include for example identifying compliance/noncompliance going on to repeat the same issues in a slightly differing way that could not attract further marks.

Many candidates appeared to confuse a safety tour with inspections or hazard spotting exercises.

Question 3 assessed learning outcome:

6.4 Explain the role, influences on and procedures for formal and informal consultation with workers in the workplace

The concept of worker consultation in the workplace is a fundamental element of a robust safety management system and should therefore give well prepared candidates a good opportunity to gain good marks.

Candidates should be able to discuss the impacts of good and bad consultation arrangements as well as methods for consultation.

A good number of candidates named means of arrangements for communication within the first section which was actually asking for benefits of effective consultation, consequently the potential for earning good marks was lost. There was evidence that candidates failed to demonstrate an understanding of the term 'consultation' and often got it confused with 'communication'. Also some struggled with the difference between formal and informal. This may indicate an underprepared candidate or a candidate who doesn't understand the meaning of the words in this context. Course providers should follow the NEBOSH guidelines and ensure that all candidates have the appropriate demonstrable command of the language in order to provide a reasonable chance of success in the qualification.

Question 4 assessed learning outcome:

7.3 Explain the classification of human failure

Candidates should be able to explain and apply to a given scenario the categorisation of human failure as described in HSG 48 Reducing Error and Influencing Behaviour.

Most candidates were able to distinguish between skill-based errors, mistakes and violations. Some candidates produced family tree type diagrams, indicating a good knowledge. The application to the given scenario was generally good and candidates were able to sub-divide the three types of error and apply them to the given scenario. Some candidates did however mix up slips and lapses, along with rule-based and knowledge-based mistakes. The weakness in this area was violations and the three sub-divisions; routine, situational and exceptional.

It is worth noting that a number of candidates referred to other possible causes of the accident such as management failures etc, which were not mark worthy in this question.

Question 5 assessed learning outcomes:

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 should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the workings of cost benefit analysis (CBA) and the main areas of consideration set against a context. Additionally thorough understanding of the purpose, development and operation of Permit-to-work systems should be shown by candidates.

There were many examples where permit systems appeared to be well understood and answers given were often concise and accurate. Answers related back to the question, which shows critical thinking and equally the level of detail was often excellent. Additionally, reasons for the breakdown in a permit system were fairly well understood by most candidates who provided a good breadth of answers. However limited understanding of cost benefit analysis (CBA) was evident and most answers seemed confused as to what was required in a cost benefit analysis (CBA). In some cases where candidates did not understand the principles of cost benefit analysis (CBA) they simply listed examples of costs and benefits without relating it to the question.

In all answers candidates should ensure that they demonstrate their knowledge by relating the answer to the question and providing context and application where appropriate.

Question 6 assessed learning outcome:

1.4 Outline the role and responsibilities of the health and safety practitioner

Candidates should be able to demonstrate knowledge of, understanding of and application of the role of the health and safety practitioner. It is expected that the candidate will have an understanding of roles and responsibilities as well as how the practitioner can influence an organisation.

Candidates should be able to discuss a wide range of functions and most candidates gave a good number for the mark allocation provided. There was good consideration of policy, Safe system of work matters and cultural issues.

In some instances there was too much emphasis on one or two categories, namely training and policy development. In other cases candidates often detoured and described what makes a suitable policy, or alternatively gave subjective background comment on how a health and safety practitioner should act in the workplace without stating their actual functions. It appears that there is a view of the health and safety practitioner as a regulator without a view on more strategic elements to the role.

A few candidates could only offer a description of what went on in their own organisation, which did not reflect the wider strategic value of the safety role.

Question 7 assessed learning outcome:

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

Influencing the health and safety culture in an organisation is an important part of the role of health and safety practitioner and candidates should be able to demonstrate an understanding of both positive and negative influences.

This question was answered reasonably well, however, there were examples of candidates repeating how the organisation could communicate change in part (b), not really demonstrating an understanding of the key elements of a positive health and safety culture. Good answers used examples to support their discussions and appreciated the importance of good change management.

There were numerous examples where candidates often mixed part (a) with part (b) by detailing management systems rather than practical measures and vice versa. Often weaker responses relied upon simple single or listed points with no explanation – for example, stating 'Notice Boards' without any further information. There was also too much reliance on training and incentives, or simple meetings again without detail.

Question 8 assessed learning outcome:

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

Candidates should be able to demonstrate an understanding of principles of legal systems and enforcement and their role in developing and maintaining standards in health and safety.

There were many answers that provided some good argument with thought provoking comment illustrating that many candidates were able to both outline and then quantify their argument in a practical and legal context. Answers given were linked to examples of legislation including the role and influence of the ILO and there was thought of wider societal issues. Equally there were some responses that outlined both practical and theoretical limitations of law and legal standards and again provided coherent argument when making their response.

Far too many responses gave generalised or illogical reasons often with no evidence to substantiate the point of view. In some cases answers consisted of stating a subjective point such as *safety is important* without actually giving practical reasons why and many answers were simply a rerun or modified version of a previous point made. Other limitations was reliance upon simply stating a lack of knowledge of the employer rather than wider practical and social issues – listed or insufficiently detailed answers again demonstrated key a weakness in response to this question.

Accredited course providers should ensure that adequate time is made to discuss and explore a good range of the legal principles that can be applied in a variety of ways to improve health and safety standards around the world.

Question 9 assessed learning outcomes:

4.1 Describe how to use internal and external sources of information in the identification of hazards and the assessment of risk

4.3 Explain how to assess and evaluate risk and to implement a risk assessment programme

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

This area of the syllabus represents core knowledge for the health and safety practitioner. It is expected that candidates of the International Diploma will be able to communicate in detail the full range of issues around risk assessment theory and methodology.

There were many candidates who demonstrated they clearly had aptitude for both risk assessment and HAZOP by demonstrating differentiation between the two. Qualitative and quantitative responses were clear and unambiguous and equally under sources of information there was evidence of thought put in by applying the scenario.

In contrast to those articulate responses there was some evidence of responses that listed multiple sources of information and gave a 'shotgun' approach to trying to answer the question. There were some answers that mixed up the two categories of qualitative and quantitative or simply stated that one used word based risk ratings and the other was numerical only. This illustrated a lack of knowledge on the principles. HAZOP was often guessed at and lacked detail or was presented in an illogical manner.

Accredited course providers should ensure that candidates are given exposure to the broader range of risk assessment techniques and understand the reasoning behind and the principles of the techniques. A superficial approach to risk assessment is not adequate at this level of study of health and safety.

Question 10 assessed learning outcome:

7.6 Explain how job factors could contribute to improving human reliability

This area of the syllabus deals with an area of knowledge that affects all workplaces and therefore all health and safety practitioners. It is expected that candidates of the International Diploma will be able to demonstrate an in depth understanding of the factors and how they affect people at work.

There were many answers that demonstrated a good understanding and responses included a clear split between controls and displays with a good breadth of points covered in the answers given. Detail was proportional to the mark scheme and there were no overly concentrated response to any particular point. Some candidates also referenced outcomes, eg of the Kegworth air disaster and applied a working knowledge.

In contrast to the answers that demonstrated a good understanding there were answers that tended to mix up controls and displays and repeated the same point over again leading to a reduction in mark worthy text.

Practical examples of the application of job factors should be included in teaching this subject. For candidates with little experience of control panels and ergonomics the challenge for the course provider is to bring to life, with relevant examples, this area of the syllabus.

Question 11 assessed learning outcome:

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

The arguments for managing health and safety for organisations should be at the forefront of the health and safety practitioners' tools. The profession should be able to argue positively the reasons for health and safety management and therefore must understand the depth and meaning of the terms moral, legal and economic.

Many candidates structured their answers well and neatly broke their response into the key headings under legal, social and economic factors. Points made were often substantiated and there was a broad enough range to be able to find necessary marks. Very strong responses often referenced a notable case study or built in a solid argument from a known author but clearly built the answer into a management report that was required.

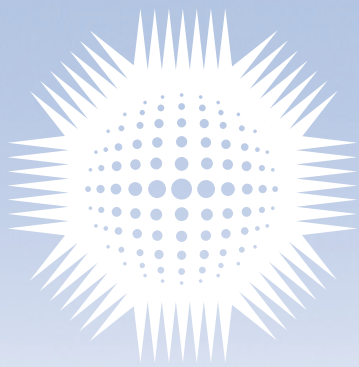
In contrast to the well-structured answer there were a number of answers in which responses given were often too brief with little justification for the arguments and importantly not in a report format. In some instances there was evidence that points made were listed or not quantified. Additionally many answers focused on the economic argument only providing insufficient consideration of legal and moral issues thus limiting the scope of the answer. Repetition of points made was also noted and many costs given were not quantified beyond production or reputational.

Whilst the arguments for good health and safety management fall neatly into the heading of moral, legal and financial, the true meaning of these points and how they manifest in the workplace with consequences is important knowledge. In all too many instances candidates struggled to get beyond the heading and showed only a superficial reflection of the terms.

Conclusion

The feedback from Examiners highlighted that candidates taking the Unit IA examination in July 2014 needed to improve the technical content and context of the answers provided in the examination. Whilst many candidates have clearly prepared for the examination many appear to offer limited of information rather than relating their answer to the question that was asked. In order to gain good marks in this examination, as well as thorough preparation candidates should take the opportunity to relate their learning in a practical way in the answers that they provide. Additionally it is important to provide the Examiner with a good range of opportunities to award marks without duplicating a particular point more than once in the answer.

With regards to examination technique, candidates sitting this examination should thoroughly read the question in order to understand what is being asked before attempting an answer. In many cases (especially in Section B) it would be appropriate for candidates to prepare a short answer plan prior to answering the question to ensure that they have understood the question and are answering each part of it in appropriate detail to ensure that the answer is coherent and comprehensive and does not repeat points once the point has been made in the answer. It is for well structured, comprehensive answers that offer adequate detail and a good breadth of information that good marks can be awarded.



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