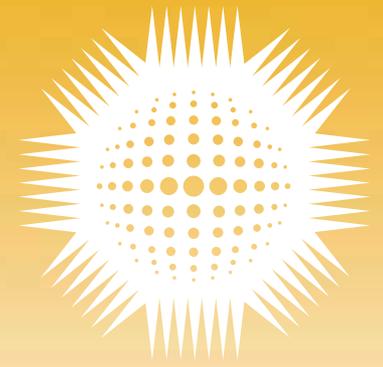


July- September 2015

# Examiners Report NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety (NGC1)



nebosh



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# Examiners' Report

## UNIT NGC1: MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2015

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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

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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 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

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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.

This report has been prepared to provide feedback on standard date and on-demand NGC1 examinations sat between July and September 2015.

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

Candidates and course providers will also 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 NGC1 and tutor reference documents for each Element. Please note that this examination period covers both the January 2013 and the November 2014 specifications, in this report the January 2013 specification learning outcomes are in brackets where relevant. There were no significant differences in the content of the learning outcomes outlined below, ie feedback below is appropriate to all candidates and providers, regardless of the date of the NGC1 syllabus studied.

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 NGC1 'Example question paper and Examiners' feedback on expected answers' which provides example questions and details Examiners' expectations and typical areas of underperformance.

#### Candidate performance

This report covers all examinations, both standard and on-demand examination sittings during July to September 2015.

#### Learning outcomes

The following six learning outcomes have been identified as being the most challenging areas of the syllabus for candidates in this period:

##### **1.3 Explain the legal framework for the regulation of health and safety including sources and types of law**

This is a very broad area of study incorporating a wide range of content. This area covers the influence and role of the European Union in harmonising standards and goes on to require the meaning of criminal, statute, common, civil law and the role of Employment Tribunals. Criminal and civil law liabilities follow, along with the structure and role of their respective courts and the penalties/remedies that they can impose. This area of the syllabus concludes with civil law liabilities including common law duties of care.

Examiners reported that, by far, candidates found this learning outcome to be the most challenging. Common law was not well understood, with candidates unable to identify the civil common law duties of care owed by the employer to the employee. Some candidates were unable to distinguish between the common law duties and examples of how the duties might be fulfilled. This suggests that some candidates lack understanding of how common law is applied.

There appears to be a deep misunderstanding of the role of Employment Tribunals with a number of candidates believing that they are a form of civil court. This resulted in some candidates including everything that they knew about civil law in the hope of gaining some marks. Unfortunately for some, even their knowledge of civil law was either limited or incorrect, compounding their error. Common errors were that Employment Tribunals can award compensation for injury, while some suggested that it was a court where employers could take action against employees.

Another area where knowledge lacked depth was in the role of the courts. In particular the Magistrates Court were some candidates were unable to move beyond its role to punish by fine or imprisonment.

Finally, Examiners found that there was much confusion between the meanings of criminal and civil law with some candidates including everything that they knew without actually answering the question as it was set.

The content of this learning outcome is generating much concern from the Examiners. Many candidates are unable to adequately distinguish between the origins and branches of law, producing answers that are confused and lack the required depth at this level of study. Candidates should be warned that previous rote-learned answers rarely answer the question that is set. Course providers could assist candidates to a greater extent by assessing this knowledge repeatedly throughout the course.

##### **4.2 (5.3) Explain the purpose of, and procedures for, investigating incidents (accidents, cases of work-related ill-health and other occurrences)**

This learning outcome first considers the function of incident investigation as a reactive monitoring measure and goes on to distinguish between different types of incident. The content adds depth by looking at typical ratios of incident outcomes and their relevance in terms of the proportion of non-injury events. This is followed by the utility and limitations of accident ratios in accident prevention. Basic incident investigation procedures are followed by immediate and root causes and finally, remedial actions.

Examiners found that questions that focused on near miss incidents produced a limited response from many candidates, demonstrating only a superficial knowledge. While many candidates could define a near miss, few understood the importance of near miss reporting and analysis.

A key outcome of incident investigation is to determine the root causes. Examiners found a lack of knowledge of root causes with candidates not appreciating that such causes relate to failures of aspects of the safety management system.

### **2.3 Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective health and safety policy**

This part of the syllabus concentrates on the three key elements of a health and safety policy. Initially the overall aims of the organisation are covered in terms of health and safety performance. This includes the general statement of intent and the setting of overall objectives and quantifiable targets. The organisation section is then dealt with, defining health and safety roles and responsibilities, etc. Next follows the arrangements for achieving the general and specific aims in order to implement the health and safety policy. Finally, the syllabus includes the circumstances that may lead to a need for a policy review, to maintain its currency and effectiveness.

Examiners commented that few candidates were able to distinguish between the three key elements of a health and safety policy and many were unable to describe the content of those elements. With regard to the organisation section, there was little appreciation of the roles and responsibilities at the key management levels, particularly the strategic role of senior management.

Answers revealed scant knowledge of the content of the arrangements section, despite being clearly in the syllabus. Some candidates confused the arrangements section with a construction phase of a Health and Safety Plan and many candidates did not understand what would make a health and safety policy an effective document.

### **3.3 Outline the human factors which influence behaviour at work in a way that can affect health and safety**

This area of the syllabus deals with organisational, job and individual factors and requires candidates to recognise the link between them.

Candidates were able to give examples of human factors but most were unable to categorise them. Job factors were particularly misunderstood for this assessment period. While there are links between the categories, course providers should concentrate on assisting candidates to distinguish between them.

### **3.4 Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved**

This learning outcome covers a wide range of topics and starts by dealing with management issues such as securing management commitment, promoting good standards by leadership and example and the use of discipline. Competence of personnel is followed by identifying and keeping up to date with legal requirements. Effective communication is included, covering methods of communication, the use and effectiveness of various health and safety media, co-operation and consultation with the workforce and the duties to consult. The effect of training on human reliability and the opportunities and need for training complete the learning content of this part of the syllabus.

The key topic of concern for this period is training. Most candidates seem to appreciate that certain types of health and safety training are required and the content of such training, but do not understand the reasons for the delivery of additional training.

### **5.1 (5.2) Explain the purpose of, and procedures, for health and safety auditing**

This area of the syllabus deals with health and safety auditing and candidates are required to know the meaning of the term. The scope and purpose of auditing health and safety management systems are covered along with pre-audit preparations, information gathering, notifications, interviews, competence of auditors, etc. Candidates are also required to know the distinction between inspections and audits. The advantages and disadvantages of external and internal audits are required and the actions that might be taken following an audit.

Examiners commented that candidates lacked the depth of knowledge to adequately give the meaning of the term 'health and safety audit'. Among other points, an audit is a systematic critical examination of a safety management system that is a structured process of collecting independent information.

Many candidates did grasp the basic concept that an audit is a process of gathering information by observation and interview, but found great difficulty with other aspects, eg planning an audit.

Some candidates presented answers based on an inspection rather than audit, suggesting that knowledge of this area was lacking and demonstrating that they were unable to distinguish between the two.

## Examination technique

The following issues are consistently identified as the main areas in need of improvement for candidates undertaking Certificate level qualifications:

### Candidates misread/misinterpreted the question

Candidates misreading or misinterpreting the question is by far the most common cause of candidates not gaining the maximum marks available.

NEBOSH questions are systematically and carefully prepared and are subject to a number of checks and balances prior to being authorised for use in question papers. These checks include ensuring that questions set for the Certificate level qualifications relate directly to the learning outcomes contained within the associated syllabus guides. The learning outcomes require candidates to be sufficiently prepared to provide the relevant depth of answer across a broad range of topic areas. For example, a candidate could be asked about the causes of stress, or could be asked about the effects of stress. A question could require a response relating to the principles of fire initiation, or a question could require a response relating to the spread of fire. Therefore, a candidate should focus not only on the general topic area (eg stress, fire) but also the specific aspect of that topic to which the question relates.

Candidates must also pay attention to the command word. For example, a question could ask candidates to '**identify** the hazards associated with demolition work', or a question from the same element could ask candidates to '**outline** the control measures required during demolition work'. Candidates appear to focus solely on the object of the question (demolition) and do not pay sufficient attention to the subject (hazards or control measures in the examples given) or the command word ('identify' or 'outline' in the examples given). There is often some confusion between hazard and risk. If a question requires an outline of hazards for a given situation, candidates must be careful not to provide risks, or even in some circumstances precautions, as they will not be able to attract marks.

Examiners suggest that while many candidates do begin their answer satisfactorily and perhaps gain one or two marks, they then lose sight of the question and include irrelevant information. Although further points included in an answer can relate to the general topic area, these points are not focused on the specific learning outcome and marks cannot be awarded. However, some candidates appear to misread or misinterpret several questions. This situation is more likely due to candidates preparing for the examination with a number of stock answers obtained through rote-learning, that again can provide answers that are loosely associated with the topic matter but do not provide answers specific to the question. Such an approach is clearly evident to an Examiner and demonstrates little understanding of the topic matter and marks are not awarded.

Candidates are advised to allow sufficient time to read and re-read the question in order to determine the key requirements prior to committing their answer to paper. Preparing a time plan before the examination will indicate how many minutes are available for each question and then part of this time allocation can be given to reading the question. Underlining or highlighting key words can assist in keeping focused on the salient points and simple mind maps or answer plans can also be useful. Maps and plans should be kept simple so as not to use up too much examination time.

### 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 that relates to the amount of detail that should be included in each point of the answer.

The learning outcomes in each element of all syllabus guides include the relevant command word that dictates the level of detail that should be covered in a course of study and the depth of answer that a candidate would be expected to provide in an answer to an examination question.

Examiners report that candidates continue to incorrectly observe the command words and therefore compromise their ability to gain the marks available. The majority of cases where command words are not observed relate to insufficient detail being given by a candidate in their examination answer. A significant number of candidates, irrespective of the command word given in the question, provide all answers in the form of a brief list of one or two words. This would normally not be sufficient to gain marks where the command word given was 'outline', 'explain' or 'describe', all of which require answers of more than one or two words.

Some candidates do provide too much information, which would not be required where a command word limits the expected answer to 'give' or 'identify'. Candidates would not be penalised for providing excessive detail but this would not be an efficient use of the time allocated.

Course providers should ensure that learning materials complement the command words in the syllabus guide and the NEBOSH guidance on command words and that sufficient time is given to advising candidates on suitable examination technique during a course of study.

### **Candidates unnecessarily wrote the question down**

Developing a time plan is a key element in preparing for an examination. Advice included on Certificate question papers suggests that 30 minutes should be allocated for the answer to the long 20-mark question, and 90 minutes should be allocated to the answers for the remaining ten, 8-mark short questions. Therefore there are around 9 minutes available to answer an 8-mark question. This time will be required for reading the question properly at least twice, developing an answer plan, and then committing the answer to paper while regularly referring back to the question in order to maintain focus. Therefore any inefficient use of this time should be avoided.

The efficient use of this time is essential in order to ensure that all questions can be answered within the 2 hours available. Many candidates feel it necessary to write out the question, in full, prior to providing their answer and although this practice will not lose marks it will lose valuable time. A significant number of candidates do not answer all of the questions in the time permitted and do not complete the question paper, some of whom obviously ran out of time.

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

It is clear that there are a significant number of candidates who seem to recite answers in the examination that have been rote-learned in advance and do not answer the question.

While knowledge of material forms a part of the study for a Certificate-level qualification, a key aspect being assessed is a candidate's **understanding** of the topic and reciting a pre-prepared and memorised answer will not show a candidate's understanding. In fact, if a candidate gives a memorised answer to a question that may look similar, but actually is asking for a different aspect of a topic in the syllabus, it shows a lack of understanding of the topic and will inevitably result in low marks being awarded for that answer.

### **Candidates repeated the same points but in different ways / Candidates provided the same answer to different questions**

There are instances where candidates repeat very similar points in their answers, sometimes a number of times. This is easily done in the stressful environment of the examination. However, once a point has been successfully made and a mark awarded for it, that mark cannot be awarded again for similar points made later in the answer.

Candidates are advised to practise examination technique in their preparations to avoid this kind of pitfall. Writing an answer plan where points can be ticked off when made, or structuring an answer so that each point made is clearly shown, for example by underlining key points, can be of great use. This technique aids candidates and makes it much clearer in the stress of the examination for candidates to see which points have been made and reduce the chances of the same point being made several times.

### **Candidates did not answer all of the questions**

It has been noted that a number of candidates do not attempt all of the questions on the examination and of course where a candidate does not provide an answer to a question, no marks can be awarded. This seriously affects the potential marks available and the possibility of achieving a pass. Course providers must emphasise the importance of attempting all questions in order to maximise the opportunity to attract marks. Some candidates do not answer up to four questions which is a potential thirty-two marks that the candidates could not gain. Obviously, this will affect pass rates.

There can be several reasons for this issue: running out of the allocated time for the examination, not knowing the answer to the question, or forgetting to answer a question.

Questions can be answered in any order and answers can be written in any order in the answer book provided. Candidates are advised to clearly keep track of questions they have attempted, such as marking them on the question paper that would minimise the risk of inadvertently missing a question to answer.

If the topic of the question is unfamiliar or the answer is not known, then it will be challenging to provide an answer. This can result from rote-learning and preparing for an examination with a number of stock answers, or simply not being adequately prepared for the examination across the breadth of the syllabus. There is always the risk of a candidate 'going blank' in an examination situation, in which case candidates should be prepared with some techniques to help. Rather than trying to remember what was taught or what has been read, ask yourself 'what would I do, in this situation?'. Reference to personal application or experience is sometimes enough to stimulate an answer that otherwise may have been missed. Alternatively, candidates can go back to first principles and break a question down into elements such as 'people', 'equipment', 'materials' and the 'working environment'. Approaching a question in small sections can minimise the risk of being overwhelmed by it as a whole.

Running out of time can be avoided by having an examination time plan and working to it. The question paper advises that you should spend 30 minutes on the long answer (question 1) and 90 minutes on the remaining ten short answer questions. This will provide around 9 minutes per short answer, follow the clock and when the time per question has expired, move on. Answering a question partly is better than not answering at all.

### **Candidates did not allocate enough time to the question / Time management**

In a number of cases question 1 is left until last or later in the question paper and does not appear to be answered completely. Other candidates appear to rush the last one or two questions by providing very brief or bullet point answers, even when these questions require an outline. This indicates a lack of time management. It is advised that course providers and candidates spend time developing the skill of writing answers to questions bearing in mind the number of marks and time available. A 20-mark question requires significantly more detail than an 8-mark question.

Candidates might benefit from writing abbreviations to save time and to recognise that there is no need to write out the question at the beginning of their answer. Standard abbreviations such as HSE, RIDDOR, COSHH, PPE and DSE are acceptable.

### **Candidates' handwriting was illegible**

Sometimes Examiners have difficulty in reading the handwriting of some candidates. Although allowances are made for candidates under the pressure of an examination, course providers must remind candidates that their writing needs to be legible or valuable marks may not be picked up during marking.

There is a minimum literacy requirement for candidates on NEBOSH qualifications. As stated in the syllabus guides the standard of English required by candidates studying for Certificate level must be such that they can both understand and articulate the concepts contained in the syllabus.

NEBOSH recommends to accredited course providers that candidates undertaking this qualification should reach a minimum standard of English equivalent to an International English Language Testing System score of 6.0 or higher in IELTS tests in order to be accepted onto a Certificate level programme.

For further information please see the latest version of the IELTS Handbook or consult the IELTS website: [http://www.ielts.org/institutions/test\\_format\\_and\\_results.aspx](http://www.ielts.org/institutions/test_format_and_results.aspx)

Candidates wishing to assess their own language expertise may consult the IELTS website for information on taking the test: <http://www.ielts.org/institutions/faqs.aspx>

Course providers are reminded that they must ensure that these standards are satisfied or additional tuition provided to ensure accessible and inclusive lifelong learning.

## Command words

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

### Outline

The command word 'outline' is by far the most challenging for candidates. Referring to the NEBOSH guidance on command words available on the NEBOSH website, 'outline' means *"To indicate the principal features or different parts of"*.

Many candidates do not give sufficient detail in order to warrant an 'outline' answer. The NEBOSH guidance on command word states that *"an exhaustive description is not required. What is sought is a brief summary of the major aspects of whatever is stated in the question"*.

If the use of the command word in everyday language or conversation is considered it may help the candidate understand what is required. If asked to '**outline** the risks to an operator when manually closing a valve' an answer such as 'cuts, bruises, burns and strains' would be insufficient as this represents a listed answer. However, 'cuts from contact with sharp edges of the hand wheel, bruises from impact with adjacent plant items, burns from contact with adjacent uninsulated pipe work and strains from using excessive force' would be sufficient.

### Explain

The command word 'explain' requires the candidate to provide an understanding of the subject of the question and will usually be used in conjunction with 'why' or 'how'. Such as '**explain** how an interlocked guard operates' or '**explain** why a forklift truck may overturn'.

Some candidates approach an 'explain' question the same as an 'outline' and provide a number of individual points rather than providing an explanation as to how something operates or why something occurs. While some candidates do answer such questions sufficiently and satisfactorily, other candidates have difficulty in explaining in a logical sequence and many repeat the same point.

### Identify

'Identify' questions require the name or title of an item, such as, '**identify** the effects of electricity on the human body', or '**identify** the features of a vehicle route'. In most cases one or two words will be sufficient and further detail will not be required to gain the marks.

For example, if asked to '**identify** types of equipment found in an office' appropriate answers could be personal computer, printer, telephone, photocopier, etc. There would be no need to embellish those points with a description of the equipment or its function.

However, in contrast to 'outline' answers being too brief, many candidates feel obliged to expand 'identify' answers into too much detail, with the possible perception that more words equals more marks. This is not the case and course providers should use the NEBOSH guidance on command words within their examination preparation sessions in order to prepare candidates for the command words that may arise.

### Describe

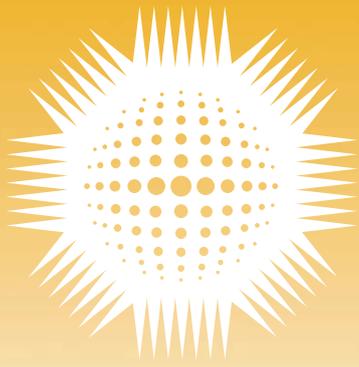
The command word 'describe' clearly requires a description of something. The NEBOSH guidance on command words says that 'describe' requires a detailed written account of the distinctive features of a topic such that another person would be able to visualise what was being described.

If a person was asked to describe the clock in the examination room, they would have little difficulty in doing so and would most probably refer to its shape, its size, the colour of the clock and the style of numerals. Answers to such a question would almost certainly not result in general unconnected information about clocks, the history of clocks, or an explanation of why the clock is present in the room. Candidates should consider the general use of the command word when providing examination answers.

## **Give**

'Give' questions require a statement that is relevant to the subject asked for in the question but additional explanation is not required. Often, 'give' questions ask for the meaning of a particular term. While detailed explanation of the application of the term would not be required, a correct knowledge of the term itself is needed in order for the Examiner to award marks.

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](http://www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=1345&ct=2).



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