NEBOSH
International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

Revision and exam guide
Preparing yourself for the NEBOSH International General Certificate exams is an important part of the whole learning experience, and is something you should think about as you go through the course.

You can choose when you start to prepare but we would suggest there are 3 main stages to the revision and exam process.

Finding out about the exams

Preparing for the exams

Sitting the exams
Finding out about the exams

Let’s start with why you are being examined

NEBOSH say it is to:

- **Check how much you know** about the management of international health and safety (Unit 1 exam) and controlling international workplace hazards (Unit 2 exam)
- **Find out if you can apply what you know** to different workplace situations (Unit 3 practical application)
- Assess how well you can think and work under pressure.

What does a NEBOSH IGC exam look like?

- It is a **2 hour written exam**, which means you have to be prepared to write legibly for 2 hours … if the examiner can’t read what you have written they can’t award you marks.
- There are **11 questions** … 1 question worth 20 marks and 10 questions worth 8 marks each (100 marks in total)
- The **11 questions will cover all areas of the syllabus** and you have to answer all 11 questions … so you need to know everything, as specified by the learning outcomes, which **we have included in the additional section at the end of this guide**.
Action verbs (sometimes known as command or key words) in each question give you a clue as to how to answer the question … familiarise yourself with these words and what they are asking you to do. A list of action verbs is available in the section at the end of this guide.

Questions from past exams are re-used BUT the wording and focus may change … so don’t presume that a question you think you recognise is the same as one you have practised answering … read each question carefully.

The pass mark for the Unit 1 and 2 exams is typically 45%.

Past exam questions

Throughout the Astutis courses you will be given examples of questions, taken from past NEBOSH International General Certificate exam papers, to give you an idea of the way that the questions are asked as well as the type of things that are covered. The more familiar you are with the type of question asked in the IGC exams, the better prepared you will be for the actual exams.

There is more on using the past NEBOSH IGC exam questions as part of your preparation for the exams in the next part of this guide.
Preparing for the exams

Now that you know why you are being examined and what to expect from the exam paper, you need to start thinking about preparing yourself for the exam. This is where revision comes in … but before that, let’s go back to the reasons you are being examined and ask yourself …

What do I know, or can I remember, from everything I have learnt from the course?

Can I apply what I know to workplace situations?

What should I know once I’ve finished the course?

The learning outcomes for each element within the units give a clear overview of the things you should know and understand once you have finished the course. These are a very good place to start your revision, as the learning outcomes are the areas that the exam questions will be checking your knowledge and understanding of.

We have made the learning outcomes for the course available in the additional section at the end of this guide.
So when you are starting your revision and are looking back at the learning outcomes, ask yourself …

What do I already know?  
What do I need to revise?

But what is revision and how do I revise?

Revision is basically about making sure you know what you know and going over what you don’t know, until you do know it! The Open University say that revision isn’t just about looking again at the learning materials. It is an ‘active task’, which involves ‘organising material and finding ways of remembering it, that suit your own particular learning style’.

The way you approach your revision and the techniques you use to revise are important. There is no right or wrong way of revising … you need to find the way that suits you best.

Lots of advice on revision techniques is available from the Open University’s Open Learn website at:  
www.open.edu/openlearn/education/revision-and-examinations/content-section-0

The Astutis blog also has some specific advice for NEBOSH IGC exam preparation here: https://safetyblog.astutis.com/2015/09/23/preparing-for-your-nebosh-nationalinternational-certificate-exams/
Revising for the NEBOSH IGC exams

There’s lots of advice out there for revision techniques (the Open University resource we have already mentioned, being just one) but we aren’t going to go through them here. We will, however, give you some guidance on a key part of your IGC revision … using past NEBOSH IGC exam questions and examiner’s feedback.

Using past exam questions

Being familiar with the NEBOSH exam questions and how they want you to answer them is one of the keys to passing the exam, so part of your revision should include the NEBOSH exam questions.

The exam questions with examiners feedback will give you an idea of the types of questions asked about the topics covered in each Unit of the IGC, as well as giving you an idea of the kinds of answers and level of detail the NEBOSH IGC examiners are expecting.

As often as possible through your revision have a go at answering exam questions because this will really help you work out what you know and what you need to revise, as well as giving you the opportunity to practise for the exam.

The next section of this guide gives you tips on how to go about answering the NEBOSH IGC exam questions during the exam, which you can practise during your revision.

Please note: We have only included the publically available exam questions/examiners feedback in this course. More resources for existing students, including past exam questions and examiners’ reports, are available from NEBOSH: www.nebosh.org.uk/students/default.asp?cref=180&ct=2.
Sitting the exams

Exam day has arrived. You know where to go, for what time and what to take with you.

When the exam invigilator tells you that you have 2 hours and that you can turn the exam paper over, what do you do next?

Tips for answering exam questions

**Read** through all of the questions at the beginning – you need to answer them all but it might be an idea to **start with the question you feel most confident about first**. You have to start a new question on a new page (entering the question number in the box at the top of the page), so it doesn’t matter what order you answer them in.

**Read** through each question again before you start to answer it, to check you have understood what you are being asked to write about.
Look out for the **action verbs/key/command words (the ones in bold)** that give you a clue as to how NEBOSH expect you to answer the question.

**Read** the question again, once you have started writing, to check you are providing the right information.

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**Marks per question** | **Number of questions** | **Time per question** | **Total time**
--- | --- | --- | ---
20 marks | X 1 | 20-25 minutes | 20-25 minutes
8 marks | X 10 | 8-10 minutes | 80-100 minutes
100 marks | 11 questions | 120 minutes/2 hours

*Time per question* … this includes a few seconds planning time before writing and time to read your answer through afterwards.

Think about **how much you are writing**. The suggestion is:

- no more than 2 sides of the answer book for the 20 mark question
- less than one side for the 8 mark questions

… depending on the size of your handwriting of course!

2 hours is a long time to be writing by hand (unless you do this on a regular basis) but remember that your writing needs to be clear/legible for all of your answers … if the examiner can’t read what you have written they can’t award you marks.

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The Astutis blog also has some specific advice for NEBOSH exam guidance:

- [https://safetyblog.astutis.com/2016/03/09/nebosh-certificate-exam-day-guidance-part-1/](https://safetyblog.astutis.com/2016/03/09/nebosh-certificate-exam-day-guidance-part-1/)
- [https://safetyblog.astutis.com/2016/03/16/nebosh-certificate-exam-day-guidance-part-2/](https://safetyblog.astutis.com/2016/03/16/nebosh-certificate-exam-day-guidance-part-2/)
And remember the GC3 practical

The NEBOSH GC3 practical application is the final assessment for the IGC. The most important information to read about this is the guidance from NEBOSH, which can be found on their website: https://www.nebosh.org.uk/students/currently_studying/default.asp?cref=1262

But there are also a few other support resources available to you from Astutis …

The Astutis NEBOSH tutors have written several blog posts to help:

- Getting practical – completing GC3: The NEBOSH Certificate practical application
- Avoid common pitfalls in the NEBOSH Certificate practical

And the Astutis e-learning team have created this video to explain what the GC3 practical is all about …
The following pages include the additional resources we have mentioned in the guide.

1. Learning outcomes for the IGC

2. Action verbs (command words) list

3. A few exam questions with feedback
NEBOSH
International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety

Learning outcomes
Unit 1: Management of international health and safety

On completion of all 5 elements of Unit 1 of the NEBOSH International General Certificate, candidates should be able to demonstrate understanding of the content through the application of knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar situations. In particular they should be able to:

1.1 Outline the scope and nature of occupational health and safety.
1.2 Explain the moral, social and financial reasons for promoting good standards of health and safety in the workplace.
1.3 Explain the role of national governments and international bodies in formulating a framework for the regulation of health and safety.

2.1 Outline the key elements of a health and safety management system.
2.2 Explain the purpose and importance of setting policy for health and safety.
2.3 Describe the key features and appropriate content of an effective health and safety policy.

3.1 Outline the organisational health and safety roles and responsibilities of employers, directors and managers.
3.2 Explain the concept of health and safety culture and its significance in the management of health and safety in an organisation.
3.3 Outline the human factors which influence behaviour at work in a way that can affect health and safety.
3.4 Explain how health and safety behaviour at work can be improved.
3.5 Explain the principles and practice of risk assessment.
3.6 Explain the general principles of control and a basic hierarchy of risk reduction measures.
3.7 Identify the key sources of health and safety information.
3.8 Explain what factors should be considered when developing and implementing a safe system of work for general activities.
3.9 Explain the role and function of a permit-to-work system.
3.10 Outline the role of PPE as a risk reduction measure.
3.11 Identify standard safety signs.
3.12 Outline the need for emergency procedures and the arrangements for contacting emergency services.
3.13 Outline the requirements for, and effective provision of, first aid in the workplace.
4.1 **Outline** the principles, purpose and role of active and reactive monitoring.

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

4.3 **Describe** the legal and organisational requirements for recording and reporting incidents.

5.1 **Explain** the purpose of, and procedures, for health and safety auditing.

5.2 **Explain** the purpose of, and procedures for, regular reviews of health and safety performance.
On completion of all 8 elements of Unit 2 of the NEBOSH International General Certificate, candidates should be able to demonstrate understanding of the content through the application of knowledge to familiar and unfamiliar situations. In particular they should be able to:

### Element 1: Workplace hazards and risk control

1.1 **Outline** common health, welfare and work environment requirements in the workplace.

1.2 **Explain** the risk factors and appropriate controls for violence at work.

1.3 **Explain** the effects of substance misuse on health and safety at work and control measures to reduce such risks.

1.4 **Explain** the hazards and control measures for the safe movement of people in the workplace.

1.5 **Explain** the hazards and control measures for safe working at height.

1.6 **Explain** the hazards of, and control measures for, excavations.

1.7 **Explain** the hazards of, and control measures for, temporary works.

### Element 2: Transport hazards and risk control

2.1 **Explain** the hazards and control measures for the safe movement of vehicles in the workplace.

2.2 **Outline** the factors associated with driving at work that increase the risk of an incident and the control measures to reduce work related driving risks.
3.1 **Explain** work processes and practices that may give rise to work-related upper limb disorders and appropriate control measures.

3.2 **Outline** the potential hazards and relevant precautions to reduce the risk in the use of display screen equipment (DSE).

3.3 **Explain** the hazards and control measures which should be considered when assessing risks from manual handling activities.

3.4 **Explain** the hazards and controls to reduce the risk in the use of lifting and moving equipment with specific reference to manually operated load moving equipment.

3.5 **Explain** the hazards and the precautions and procedures to reduce the risk in the use of lifting and moving equipment with specific reference to powered load handling equipment.

4.1 **Outline** general requirements for work equipment.

4.2 **Explain** the hazards and controls for hand-held tools.

4.3 **Describe** the main mechanical and non-mechanical hazards of machinery.

4.4 **Explain** the main control measures for reducing risk from machinery hazards.

4.5 **Describe** the main mechanical and non-mechanical hazards of (specified) machinery. **Explain** the main control measures for reducing risk from (specified) machinery hazards.

5.1 **Outline** the principles, hazards and risks associated with the use of electricity in the workplace.

5.2 **Outline** the control measures that should be taken when working with electrical systems or using electrical equipment in all normal workplace conditions.
6.1 Describe the principles of fire initiation, classification and spread.
6.2 Outline the principles of fire risk assessment.
6.3 Describe the basic principles of fire prevention and the prevention of fire spread in buildings.
6.4 Outline the appropriate fire alarm system and fire-fighting arrangements for a simple workplace.
6.5 Outline the factors which should be considered when implementing a successful evacuation of a workplace in the event of a fire.

7.1 Outline the forms of, the classification of, and the health risks from exposure to, hazardous substances.
7.2 Explain the factors to be considered when undertaking an assessment of the health risks from substances commonly encountered in the workplace.
7.3 Explain the use and limitations of Occupational Exposure Limits including the purpose of long term and short term exposure limits.
7.4 Outline control measures that should be used to reduce the risk of ill-health from exposure to hazardous substances.
7.5 Outline the hazards, risks and controls associated with specific agents.
7.6 Outline the basic requirements related to the safe handling and storage of waste.

8.1 Outline the health effects associated with exposure to noise and appropriate control measures.
8.2 Outline the health effects associated with exposure to vibration and appropriate control measures.
8.3 Outline the health effects associated with ionising and non-ionising radiation and outline appropriate control measures.
8.4 Outline the meaning, causes and effects of stress at work and appropriate control measures.
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Action verbs
### Action verbs … telling you what to do

‘Command’ words provide the key to how to answer the exam question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action verb</th>
<th>What it is asking for?</th>
<th>An example of use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identify …</strong></td>
<td>Select and name. Normally a word or phrase will be sufficient, provided the reference is clear.</td>
<td><strong>Identify</strong> issues that should be discussed at a health and safety committee meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Give …</strong></td>
<td>Provide without explanation. It is used normally with the instruction to ‘give an example, or examples, of…’</td>
<td><strong>Give</strong> examples of how employees may misunderstand a verbal instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outline …</strong></td>
<td>Give the most important features of ‘something’. It requires less depth than either ‘explain’ or ‘describe’.</td>
<td><strong>Outline</strong> the key elements of a permit-to-work system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Describe …</strong></td>
<td>Give a detailed, factual account of the distinctive features of the subject. A test for whether you have given enough details is if another person would be able to visualise what you are describing.</td>
<td><strong>Describe</strong> four elements of a health and safety management system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explain …</strong></td>
<td>Give a clear account or reasons for ‘something’. This will show your understanding of why or how ‘something’ happens.</td>
<td><strong>Explain</strong> the significance of reporting and recording near misses as an aid to accident prevention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action verb</td>
<td>Example question</td>
<td>Example answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Identify …** | Identify FOUR kitchen appliances. (4) | Toaster  
Microwave cooker  
Electric kettle  
Dishwasher  

*Note: Giving only one or two word answers provides a clear reference and therefore is sufficient to satisfy an identify question.* |
| **Give …** | Identify FOUR European cities AND give an example of a tourist attraction in EACH. (4) | London – e.g. Buckingham Palace  
Paris – e.g. Eiffel Tower  
Pisa – e.g. Leaning Tower  
Rome – e.g. Coliseum  

*Note: To gain the marks for the outline example questions, the same breadth of answer is required as for an identify answer, but now, additional information will be required to satisfy the depth of an outline.* |
| **Outline …** | Outline FOUR kitchen appliances. (4) | Toaster - Accommodates slices of bread, ejects as toast when ready.  
Electric kettle - 1 to 2 litre capacity, boils water. Can be cordless.  
Microwave cooker - Heats food rapidly using short wavelength radio waves.  
Dishwasher - Dirty table ware placed in baskets. Mixture of high pressure water and detergent automatically cleans. |
| **Describe …** | Describe a microwave cooker. (4) | An oblong box shaped object, approximately 30cm tall, 30cm deep and 60cm long. There is a single hinged door at the front, typically see through. The door opens outwards and inside there is a space to place a plate or dish and a microwave transmitter is located above. Outside, on the front there will be normally two controls to set the power and cooking time. |
| **Explain …** | Explain how a microwave cooker heats up food. (8) | The frequency of microwaves used in a microwave cooker is sufficient to cause water molecules in food to vibrate. Vibrating molecules hit other water molecules and put them into the same vibration and therefore this vibration of molecules is converted into heat. |

*Additional advice on command words is available from the NEBOSH website*
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International General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety
Unit 1 and Unit 2

Examiners’ feedback (*a few examples*)
QUESTION

Identify possible costs to an organisation following an accident in the workplace. (8 marks)

WHAT THE EXAMINERS WERE EXPECTING THE ANSWER TO INCLUDE:

Possible costs, including:

- lost production
- staff absence
- sick pay
- temporary replacement of staff with the need for additional training
- repair of damaged plant and equipment
- damage to products
- investigation and remedial action
- additional administration incurred
- increased insurance premiums
- fines and compensation awarded
- court and other legal representation.

Intangible costs:

- effect on business image
- effect on worker morale, which can lead to reduced productivity.
QUESTION

(a) Outline the main health and safety responsibilities of employers. (6 marks)

(b) Identify actions an enforcement authority might take if it finds that an employer is not meeting its responsibilities. (2 marks)

WHAT THE EXAMINERS WERE EXPECTING THE ANSWER TO INCLUDE FOR:

PART (a):
The main health and safety responsibilities of an employer are to:

- provide and maintain safe plant and equipment
- carry out risk assessments and introduce safe systems of work
- ensure safe use, storage, handling and transport of articles and substances
- provide a safe working environment with adequate welfare facilities and first aid
- provide information, instruction, training and supervision for workers.

Additional responsibilities include:

- preparation of a health and safety policy
- co-operation and consultation with workers
- securing competent health and safety advice
- co-operating with other employers at the workplace.

PART (b)

- Give advice or warning, verbally or in writing.
- Require that an improvement is made within a given time period.
- Require work stops until improvements in health and safety are made.
- Take formal legal proceedings such as prosecution.
Element 1.1 Health, welfare and work environment requirements

QUESTION

(a) Identify FOUR health effects of working outside in extreme heat created by the sun. (4 marks)

(b) Outline control measures that could be used to reduce the effects of the sun on construction workers. (4 marks)

WHAT THE EXAMINERS WERE EXPECTING THE ANSWER TO INCLUDE FOR:

PART (a)

- burns
- damage to the eyes
- skin cancer
- dehydration and heat exhaustion
- heat stroke
- sweat rash
- prickly heat
- headaches and fainting
- fatigue and stress.

PART (b)

- limiting the duration of exposure by job rotation ensuring periods of work are alternated with periods of rest
- avoiding work when temperatures are at their highest
- ensuring an adequate supply of drinking water
- the use of appropriate clothing for working in high temperatures and persuading workers to adopt a policy of keeping their bodies covered
- encouraging workers to maintain their salt levels
- working under canopies where this is possible
- wearing hats and eye protection
- applying sun protection cream.
QUESTION

(a) Identify THREE control measures to segregate pedestrians and vehicles in the workplace. (3 marks)
(b) Identify measures to reduce the risk to pedestrians when segregation is not practicable. (5 marks)

WHAT THE EXAMINERS WERE EXPECTING THE ANSWER TO INCLUDE FOR:

PART (a)
- provision of separate walkways which are clearly marked
- provision of barriers and fencing
- site rules which are strictly enforced
- instructions issued to drivers
- provision of instruction and training to pedestrians on the precautions that must be observed.

PART (b)
- the provision of designated safe crossing points and refuges
- fitting vehicles with audible or visual alarms for example to give warning of a reversing operation
- the use of a banksman to ensure safe vehicle movement in areas where pedestrians are likely to be present
- ensuring a good standard of visibility by the provision of mirrors, transparent doors and CCTV
- the introduction of a speed restriction on vehicles
- the use of trained and authorised drivers particularly for forklift trucks
- the provision and use of high visibility personal protective equipment
- the provision of a good standard of lighting which avoids the possibility of glare.
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