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NEBOSH Open book examination learner guide

Guidance document for preparing
for the open book examination for
NG1, IG1, NGC1 and IGC1 units.

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1 Introduction

NEBOSH are committed to supporting our learners to complete their qualifications and continue their learning journey while staying safe. We are therefore introducing an open book examination that can be taken at home as a replacement for the invigilated paper-based examinations for Unit 1 of our National and International General Certificates.

Open book examinations are commonly used and are as valid and reliable as other forms of assessment. Their introduction will ensure NEBOSH General Certificate learners can continue their learning journey without further delay but with the assurance that the quality and standards NEBOSH qualifications are known for are not compromised. This will include scrutiny for plagiarism and collusion.

If you are a General Certificate Learner, this document will:

- help you prepare for your open book examination and closing interview
- clarify what to expect
- provide guidance on how to perform at your best.

2 The assessment

What is an open book examination?

An open book examination can test the same learning outcomes and assessment criteria as invigilated paper-based examinations. However, unlike a closed book assessment, you can access textbooks and digital resources when completing an open book examination.

Open book examinations test your ability to extract and apply relevant knowledge and organise it to address the question asked.

When will the open book examination be available?

We are currently finalising the new assessment and will confirm the first assessment date shortly. We will ensure you have enough time to revise and prepare in advance.

How will I access and submit my open book examination?

Our internal processes and infrastructure are being adapted to support this alternative assessment.

Once the details have been finalised, we will explain how to register for an assessment. We will communicate these arrangements via our Learning Partners and through NEBOSH's website, newsletters and social media channels.

Once you have been registered to an open book examination, you will receive further instructions including timings and how to access and submit your assessment.

What will the format of the open book examination be?

The open book assessment will begin by giving you a scenario. This will typically describe a realistic organisation or workplace with an outline of normal operational activities and worker behaviour. The scenario may go on to outline a developing situation, such as an incident or safety intervention. You may be asked to imagine that you hold a specific role, such as a safety manager, in the workplace described.

You will be asked to carry out a series of tasks, which may be split into several sub-tasks. We will specify the maximum marks available for each to help you manage your time. These tasks will partially or entirely draw on the sign posts and evidence within the scenario. Answers therefore need to be relevant to the scenario and, in some cases, specific evidence will be required to support answers.

As there is an expectation of more detail and reflection, you will be given 24 hours to research and complete the examination. This is a challenge that really tests your ability to interpret the scenario before answering the questions set using the knowledge gained through your General Certificate studies. You will be able to complete the assessment at home wherever you are in the world.

Dependent on the specific scenario, an example question might be:

How could you improve consultation with the workforce in **this** organisation?

Note: Support your answer using examples from the scenario.

Or

Assess the effectiveness of consultation within **this** organisation.

Note: Support your answer using examples from the scenario.

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Will I still need to revise?

The simple answer is yes! Every assessment in any form is designed to ensure you have met the Unit's learning outcomes so you should be as prepared as you would be for any other assessment.

You will have the opportunity during the open book examination to look in books and search the web, but this should be supplementary to thorough and robust revision and preparation.

Although this is an open book examination, it is important that you still revise and familiarise yourself with your notes. You will have a limited time to complete and submit your answers and you will be surprised how quickly this time will pass.

How can I best prepare?

Continue to work with your tutor and Learning Partner and take advantage of all teaching and support available.

As part of your preparations complete wider reading so you don't have to do this during the examination. You want to instead be able to focus on the scenario and the questions being asked and be capable of retrieving relevant information fast. To do this you must be familiar with your notes, organising them in advance so you can find anything you need quickly during the examination.

Make sure you continue to work with your Learning Partner and follow their revision and preparation advice. This will include:

- studying your course materials
- making sure you understand all the learning outcomes (detailed in the qualification specification)
- conducting wider research to understand how your studies relate to the real world.

How long do I have to complete my examination?

You will have 24 hours to complete and submit your answers. You do not have to complete the examination all in one go, take your time to review your resources and to apply your knowledge.

Am I meant to take the full 24 hours?

We give 24 hours to ensure all our learners have time to plan and complete the examination. You are not expected to be working for all that time. The 24 hour window reflects the fact that there are NEBOSH learners in multiple time zones and everyone will have work and family commitments to work round. The 24 hour window takes these factors into account and gives you the option to pace yourself by breaking your work on the examination into smaller 'chunks'.

How do I plan my 24 hours?

You will have 24 hours to access, complete and submit your open book examination. It is important that you do not leave everything until the last minute to avoid running out of time. Make sure your plans allow you to draft, reflect and amend your answers before the deadline, building in time for breaks.

Build in some time to deal with any unexpected challenges such as slow internet connection or technical issues that may require assistance.

Where do I complete my examination?

You complete your open book examination at home. To allow you to concentrate during your examination it is important that you prepare a comfortable space to work.

We recommend you organise the following before your examination time starts:

- a desk or table that gives you space to refer to reading materials and prepare your answers
- a comfortable chair
- good lighting
- comfortable temperature
- a clock so you can monitor your time to ensure you hit the submission deadline (remember the deadline will be BST time so if you are completing the examination outside of the UK you will need to make sure you consider any time zone differences)
- a supply of refreshments and snacks to maintain your energy levels.

If you can create a space that allows you to focus intently on your paper, you should be able to finish the questions in 4-5 hours.

Please remember to look after yourself making sure you eat, rest and sleep.

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Am I allowed to refer to my course books, notes, or any other materials?

You can refer to written and online materials to help you prepare your answers. However, you must ensure that the work you submit is entirely your own, and for the whole time the examination is live you must not:

- communicate with Learning Partner staff on the topic of the assessment
- communicate with other learners on the topic of this assessment
- seek advice or contribution from any third party, including proof-readers, friends, or family members.

During the examination you can use textbooks, learning materials and other resources for reference. Please be careful not to copy directly from the reference books. Use your own words applying the knowledge gained during your training course.

Will I need to reference study material?

It is important to reference any materials used during your examination because your answers will be scrutinised for plagiarism and collusion.

The level of referencing expected will be to simply list the sources of information you have used. This can include textbooks, journals, articles, and online sources, etc.

Making your reference list while you are writing responses will help to ensure you do not miss any references. Your reference list does not count towards the overall word limit.

Is there a word count for my examination?

Your examination will specify a word count, with a 10% tolerance, and you are required to stick to this.

In a traditional examination your answers are mostly limited by the length of time you have in the exam room and how quickly you can hand-write your answers. Without that limit, there is a risk that you might 'over-answer' a question (writing a lot more than is necessary to get full marks on the question). We specify word limits to give you a sense of how 'big' the Examiner expects the longest good answer to any question to be. The maximum word count will be specified against each question and your answer should not exceed this limit.

Your overall word count must be +/- 10% of the recommended word count. Examiners will not mark text that exceeds the word count, they will stop marking at the maximum word count. Remember you are being assessed on relevance and quality rather than quantity of words. It is important to stay focused on the subject and context of the question.

Do I need to practice an open book examination?

You do not need to complete a practice or mock examination. However, completing an examination at home is very different from sitting in a room under exam conditions. It is important that you practice completing work in your prepared environment to make sure you can concentrate and are comfortable.

What standards of behaviour do NEBOSH expect during an open book examination?

You are expected to act responsibly and with integrity. In the context of an open book examination, this means you are:

Permitted to:

- refer to your own course and revision notes
- look up information in offline or online resources, for example textbooks or online journals.

Expected to:

- indicate clearly the presence of all material you have quoted from other sources by including the source material in a reference list.

Required to confirm:

- that the work that you are submitting for the open book examination is entirely your own work, except where otherwise indicated; and
- that you have not copied from the work of any other learner, nor consulted or colluded with any other learner/ other person during the examination.

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What do I need to know about malpractice?

We expect, and trust, that you will seek to maintain the integrity of the assessment, and of the qualification, by ensuring you follow the instructions for the open book examination. Failure to adhere to these requirements will be considered a breach of the Malpractice Policy, where the offences of plagiarism, collusion, impersonation/ commissioning are relevant.

NEBOSH has a clear policy on plagiarism and collusion within assessments: please see the **Policy and procedures for suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments** for further information.

Suspected plagiarism and/or collusion will be investigated thoroughly with Learning Partners and learners, and the outcome of the investigation will determine the level of the sanction applied.

NEBOSH takes all forms of assessment malpractice seriously, and repeated attempts of plagiarism or collusion may lead to a learner being banned from taking any future NEBOSH assessments.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking the work of another person or source and claiming it as your own. The following are examples of plagiarism:

- Including paragraphs, sentences, and the ideas (either published or unpublished) of others (including the work of other learners) without acknowledgement of the source through referencing
- Paraphrasing the work and ideas of others without acknowledgement through referencing including material from computer files or downloaded from the internet.

All work you submit for assessment will be accepted on the understanding that it is the result of your own effort without wrongful appropriation of any kind. You are expected to offer your own analysis and presentation of information gained from research.

Please be aware that highly plagiarised open book examination submissions will be subject to penalty and suspension.

How do I avoid plagiarism?

To avoid plagiarism, you must reference your open book examination submission. This means acknowledging where you have used sources, ideas, or work that is from someone else. You can do this simply by creating a list of sources used.

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What is collusion?

Collusion is when two or more learners collaborate to produce work which is submitted by each in an identical, or highly similar, open book examination submission with the claim that the work was completed independently.

Collusion is a form of plagiarism, involving unauthorised co-operation between at least two people, with the intent to deceive. It can take the following forms:

- two or more learners conspiring to produce a piece of work together with the intention that at least one passes it off as their own work.
- the submission by a learner of the work of another, in circumstances where the latter has willingly lent the former the work and where it should be evident to the learner lending the work that by so doing an advantage is conferred on the other learner. In this case, both learners are guilty of collusion.
- unauthorised co-operation between a learner and another person in the preparation and production of work which is presented as the learner's own.
- the commissioning and submission of work as the learner's own, where the learner has purchased work, or solicited another individual to produce work on the learner's behalf.

What is impersonation?

Impersonation is when a learner asks someone else to complete all, or part, of their open book examination submission and then claims the work as their own.

How will NEBOSH deter cheating?

In an open book examination, you must submit your own work, without any help from others. When you take an examination, you will be required to sign up to a 'Learner Statement'. This will confirm that you have understood and abided by our rules on plagiarism and collusion.

All open book examinations will be marked by NEBOSH Examiners and will be scrutinised for plagiarism and collusion. NEBOSH reserve the right to also make use of plagiarism and collusion checkers.

After your open book examination your Learning Partner will contact you to undertake a closing interview. The purpose of the interview is to confirm that the work you have submitted is your own. Full guidance on your closing interview can be found in Appendix 1.

How will the open book exams be marked?

All open book examinations will be marked by NEBOSH Examiners and will be scrutinised for plagiarism and collusion.

How will my grade be determined?

Your open book examination for this Unit will contribute to your overall grade for the qualification as a whole as normal.

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3 Other FAQs

How does this open book examination differ from traditional invigilated examinations?

NEBOSH examinations have traditionally been:

- invigilated, handwritten examinations
- sat under timed conditions
- sat in an exam venue where many learners take the same assessment at once.

For this open book examination you will:

- sit the assessment remotely on your own – usually in your own home
- be able to access your textbooks, notes and any other resources while sitting this exam.

Are there any similarities with traditional examinations?

While this is a modification from traditional paper-based examinations, there are also many similarities. The question papers will be similar in format and the content and effort required will also be similar. However, the word count and level of detail in the responses will be different as this format gives you more time to complete your answers and access reference sources.

Is a NEBOSH open book examination as robust as a NEBOSH closed book invigilated examinations?

A major misconception is that an open book examination means there is no need to study or prepare beforehand because you have access to textbooks and resources. This is untrue, because you will need to really engage with the material and understand how the concepts and theory can be applied. The Examiner doesn't want recalled facts, but is looking for you to show a deeper understanding of the content. Open book examinations measure depth of understanding so it is very important that you are prepared for the assessment.

Should I continue to work with my Learning Partner?

Yes of course. Your tutors provide an essential and valuable part of your learning experience. You are far more likely to succeed in your examinations if you participate in lectures and tutorials or take advantage of the alternative support or remote teaching that your Learning Partner is putting in place.

My Learning Partner is closed how can I book assessments?

Please contact our Customer Experience Team for assistance via email at obe@nebosh.org.uk.

What if my Learning Partner reopens or is not locked down?

Going forward the assessment for this Unit will take the form of an open book examination, even in those countries where there are no restrictions on gatherings. Your tutors will help you prepare for your open book examination.

Are NG2, IG2 and GC3 assessments still running?

The method of assessment of NG2, IG2 and GC3 Units are unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Is NEBOSH still able to offer normal service?

The NEBOSH team are currently working remotely but are providing continuity of service to all of our learners and Learning Partners.

What if I haven't done this type of assessment before?

Don't worry. We will not be looking for anything from your answers that has not been covered in the Unit syllabus. We also have a strict 'no detriment' policy which means we will make allowances for the fact the examination is in an unfamiliar format.

I am worried I won't be able to find a space to do the exam or have access to the right technology. What should I do?

NEBOSH open book examinations can be completed in your home. You also have the freedom to either type or hand write your responses to the open book examination.

NEBOSH have intentionally designed this process to be as flexible as possible to accommodate as many learners as possible, so if technology or Learning Partner buildings are not accessible this will not be a barrier.

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What if I have a requirement for a reasonable adjustment or access arrangement?

Your Learning Partner can apply for a reasonable adjustment or access arrangement before the examination on your behalf. They should be your first point of contact for this.

If your Learning Partner is not operating, Please contact our Customer Experience Team for assistance via email at obe@nebosh.org.uk.

Please refer to our **Policy and procedures for access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration** on our website.

What if I want to apply for a special consideration?

If you want to apply for special consideration, contact your Learning Partner after the examination, explaining your reasons. They will then make an application to us, on your behalf.

Please refer to our **Policy and procedures for access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration** on our website.

I have not done an open book examination before, and there is no time to try a mock exam, am I more likely to be referred?

The answer to this is you are not more likely to be referred and we would urge learners not to worry. The open book examination gives you time to read and re-read the relevant content and draft and adapt your answers to ensure the content and word count is appropriate. We recognise that you will not have had the opportunity to complete a mock open book examination before and a 'no detriment' policy will therefore be applied. This means that the typical pass/refer profile for this Unit will be considered along with data. During the marking and moderating phase, any downward deviations from the typical profile will be compensated to ensure you are not negatively impacted by the introduction of this open book examination.

What happens if I hand my work in late?

If you try to hand in your work after your deadline it will not be accepted or marked. Please ensure you leave yourself enough time to submit your work before the end of your allocated slot or you will be marked as absent for the examination. If you have trouble submitting your answers, please inform your Learning Partner at the earliest opportunity.

What is happening with other NEBOSH exams for other qualifications?

The health and safety of our learners and Learning Partners is our priority. For this reason, we took the decision to cancel all in-person examinations in line with government advice. For other qualifications, our team will plan re-arranged dates with Learning Partners when it is safe to do so.

Does this type of assessment devalue my qualification?

No. This assessment has been designed to assess the same learning outcomes to the same level. NEBOSH continues to maintain the academic standards and quality of our qualifications. We are ensuring that the alternative assessment arrangements meet the required standards and allow robust decisions on learner outcomes to be achieved. We have also sought to make sure that you are not disadvantaged.

Do regulators support this approach?

Yes, open book examinations are common practice and UK Regulators welcome this method of assessment.

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What happens if I do not pass my open book examination?

If you are referred, you will be required to resit your open book examination. We will be planning additional examination dates; working as fast as the situation allows.

What if I believe my result doesn't match my performance in the examination?

NEBOSH have an **Enquiry About Results policy (EAR)**. This allows you to request for your assessment to be remarked if you are unhappy with the mark achieved.

I am worried that I will not be able to undertake the open book examination due to the impact of COVID-19, what can I do?

You can request to sit the open book examination later by letting your Learning Partner know. They can determine if some flexibility may help you, we are keen to help.

I still need to complete NG2/IG2/GC2/GC3 but I am struggling because of the impact of COVID-19, what can I do?

We understand this is a difficult situation for everyone and we are keen to support you as much as we can. Let your Learning Partner know your position so that they can determine if some flexibility may help you, we are keen to help.

Will I be disadvantaged because this is a new type of assessment?

We will be operating a 'no detriment' approach to ensure that you are not disadvantaged and we will continue to do so in recognition of the disruption caused by COVID-19.

We will act to protect the interests of all our learners at this difficult time.

I still have questions or concerns. What should I do?

Our Customer Experience Team is here to help. If you have any further questions please get in touch via email at obe@nebosh.org.uk or using the 'live chat' feature on our website.

Appendix 1 Guidance for learners: preparing for your closing interview

1 What is the purpose of a closing interview?

The purpose of the closing interview is to confirm that the work you have submitted is your own work and that you did not have assistance in completing your assessment. The Interviewer may ask you questions based on your open book examination.

Your closing interview will take place via a video link and will be conducted by an Interviewer nominated by your Learning Partner.

2 How should I prepare for my closing interview?

You need to ensure you have one of the following forms of identification that you can show to the Interviewer at the start of the interview:

- passport
- driving licence
- national identity card.

You will be given a date and time for your closing interview. You will need access to either a smart phone, tablet or computer. Interviews must take place in a private room and you are not permitted to have another person in that room at the time of the interview. The exceptions to this are:

- if you are caring for children or a vulnerable person and you are unable to make safe arrangements for them to be looked after by someone else
- if you require another person to be present during the closing interview as part of a reasonable adjustment. You should discuss this in advance with your Learning Partner.

Please note that reasonable adjustments will need to be approved by NEBOSH, so please ensure that if you require a reasonable adjustment that you speak with your Learning Partner as soon as possible.

Your Learning Partner will contact you directly to arrange your closing interview.

3 What format will the interview take?

The Interviewer will introduce themselves.

Showing your identification: you will be asked to show your identification to the Interviewer, who will cross check this with your registration details.

Show the room you are in: the Interviewer needs to see you do not have any notes or electronic devices you can access during the interview. You will also need to sit so that the Interviewer can see the door of the room you are sat in.

Questions: the Interviewer will ask you questions based on your open book exam. You will be asked to describe your work in general terms first before more specific questions are asked based on your submission. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate what you have learned during your studies. Please also refer to 'Tips for a successful closing interview' section, below.

End of the interview: the Interviewer will close the interview but will not be able to inform you of the outcome on the video call.

What happens next?

If the Interviewer is happy that the work is your own, your mark will be declared in line with published NEBOSH timeframes. If your Interviewer is not satisfied that the work is your own work, they will notify NEBOSH who then contact you directly to advise the next steps. This may initially be a second interview with NEBOSH, or possibly an investigation in line with **NEBOSH's Policy and procedures for suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments**.

Will I receive a mark for my closing interview?

Your closing interview is not an assessment, and therefore you will not receive a mark for it.

Appendix 1 Guidance for learners: preparing for your closing interview

4 Tips for a successful closing interview

Before the interview

- Make sure that you download any software for the video link to work in advance of the interview.
- Get a friend or family member to listen to you describe what you wrote about for your open book examination. If possible do this using a video link, so that you can get used to presenting in this way.
- Make sure that you have your identification in advance of the interview.
- Make sure that you have a quiet room where you will be comfortable and will not be disturbed.
- You can take a glass of water.

During the interview

- Answer your questions honestly and if you are not sure about something do not try to guess the answer. Remember, the Interviewer is not assessing you, so you will not be marked down.
- Listen carefully to the questions being asked and try to answer them succinctly.
- Try to relax. This may seem difficult but remember this is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned during your studies.

5 What if I do not have access to either a smart phone, tablet or computer to do the closing interview?

You should discuss this with your Learning Partner. If the local legislative guidance for your country permits it, it may be possible to arrange for the interview to be done face-to-face. One of purposes of the closing interview is to confirm your identity. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do this by telephone alone. If safe alternative arrangements cannot be made, then there is the option to postpone this final stage until it is safe to complete a face-to-face interview.

You should contact your Learning Partner if you have any questions relating to your closing interview.

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