



NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Frequently Asked Questions

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Throughout this FAQ document you will see that we refer to the following guidance documents:

- NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide
- NEBOSH Open Book Examination: Technical Learner Guide

These can be downloaded from
www.nebosh.org.uk/obe-resources

The Open Book Examination

What is an open book examination?

A NEBOSH open book examination will assess the same learning outcomes and assessment criteria as an invigilated paper-based examination. Unlike an invigilated paper-based examination, learners can have access to textbooks and the internet. However, the questions asked, and answers we expect will differ; we will test the learner's ability to analyse, evaluate and apply their learning.

What is the structure of the new open book examination?

This open book examination is designed to not only test what learners know but what they can do with this knowledge. We are looking to see application of learning.

We will describe a workplace scenario including its normal operational activities and worker behaviour. Learners will then be asked a series of questions and we want answers to reflect the workplace given. It is therefore vital that learners take the time to read and understand the scenario.

An example question might be:

How could you improve consultation with the workforce in the organisation described?

If learners answer by simply reproducing text from course notes, this will not be enough to pass. We need learners to demonstrate they can apply knowledge by providing answers to the scenario given and, in some cases, specific evidence will be required to support answers.

Further information about the structure of the open book examination is provided in the NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide.

Is an open book examination easier than a invigilated paper-based examination?

There is a misconception that open book examinations are easier than invigilated paper-based examinations. The questions asked in open book examinations will be different and will require learners to show greater levels of understanding, application, analysis, and critical thinking to produce a good answer. These questions will all be linked to the syllabus and learning outcomes. The qualification will also continue to be accredited by the SQA Accreditation at the same level and recognised in the same way by membership bodies such as IOSH.

Is this a temporary or a permanent change for units NG1 / IG1 / NGC1 / IGC1?

This will be a permanent change and is the first phase of a transformation project to offer safe alternative assessments through COVID-19 and beyond for all NEBOSH qualifications and courses.

I had registered for the invigilated paper-based examination but due to COVID-19 it was postponed indefinitely. Am I eligible for the new mode of assessment?

This open book examination is going to be the only method of assessment for units NG1, IG1, NGC1 and IGC1 from July onwards. Your Learning Partner will be able to support your preparations and arrange your registration for this examination.

I studied the 2014 specification of the General Certificate. Is the new assessment option open to learners on the old syllabus like me who have not passed NGC1/IGC1 yet?

The open book examination replaces the invigilated paper-based examinations for units NGC1 and IGC1.

If learners have passed units, these remain valid; subject to the five-year time frame that applies. This starts from the results declaration date of the first successful unit. Units older than 5 years will no longer be valid and will need to be retaken before the qualification can be awarded. Please speak to your Learning Partner for further details of your personal situation.

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I studied the 2014 specification and my GC2 is still outstanding. What are you planning for this unit?

We are aware that we still have some learners who need to complete the assessment for GC2.

As an interim measure – and only where safe to do so - we have scheduled an invigilated paper-based examination, which will take place on 9 September 2020.

Your Learning Partner will be able to support your preparations and arrange your registration for this examination.

What is the pass mark going to be for this open book examination?

As this is a new form of assessment, we will not set the pass mark in advance of the first sitting. This is to ensure that the pass mark is set at the same level as the previous assessment and is in line with best practice.

Following the first open book examination sitting we will do all the necessary quality checks and analysis to ensure that it provides learners with the same challenges and demands as the previous invigilated paper-based examination. Once the pass standard has been established, this will be shared on the NEBOSH website.

Will this devalue the qualification I already hold?

We have worked closely with our regulator, SQA Accreditation, to ensure our open book examinations are underpinned by best practice.

As members of the health and safety community we know how important it is that our qualification holders have the skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on the workplace. One of our priorities is to uphold the rigour and recognition people have come to expect from NEBOSH over its 40-year history. The changes we are making do this and will enable people to gain the qualification they have worked hard for, safely.

Maintaining NEBOSH Standards

Is the qualification going to be the same level when the open book examination is introduced?

The level is the same – the syllabus and learning outcomes are the same and we have worked with our regulator, the SQA Accreditation, to ensure the assessment demands are equivalent.

These changes will make it easier for people to cheat. How are you going to stop this?

The steps we have introduced to address malpractice are covered in detail in our NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide. However, we have summarised the key measures below:

- **The design of the assessment** – passing requires application of learning to an unfamiliar scenario. Copy pasting information from books or online will not answer the questions posed in this open book examination.
- **Limited Window** - Learners only have 24 hours to complete and submit their examination, limiting the opportunity for collusion.
- **Own Work Statement** – Learners will be asked to agree to an ‘own work statement’ when submitting their examination.
- **Trained Examiners** - NEBOSH Examiners receive bespoke training and scrutinise every submission for plagiarism and collusion.
- **Closing Interview** - We have introduced a closing interview, which is conducted by our Learning Partners. Once the learner’s photographic identification has been checked they will be asked questions about their paper to confirm the work submitted is their own.

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What security measures have you in place to stop someone taking the examination that isn't the named learner?

We have introduced closing interviews to ensure that the work a learner submits is their own. The interviewer will have a discussion with the learner about their answers to check familiarity and understanding. The learner's photographic identification will also be checked during the interview.

When learners submit their open book examination, they will also have to provide a Own Work Statement to confirm that the work submitted is their own. This will confirm that they have understood and abided by our rules on plagiarism and collusion.

Further detail is available in the NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide.

How will you stop plagiarism, collusion and malpractice?

NEBOSH has a strict and rigorous approach to plagiarism and collusion – it ensures fairness for all our learners and reassurance for the organisations who employ our qualification holders.

Because our examinations are scenario based and ask questions such as What? Could? How? Why? and Where? learners won't be able to Google the answer or cut and paste from a text book. Learners will need to show they really understand the topic.

We also expect that learners do not collude or share answers with other learners. We have a numerous steps in place to deter and detect malpractice and further information on this can be found at: www.nebosh.org.uk/obe-policy.

I took the invigilated paper-based examination – this open book examination seems to be an easier option to me.

We have worked closely with our regulator, the SQA Accreditation, to maintain the rigour and recognition people have come to expect from NEBOSH over its 40-year history. The new assessment assesses the same learning outcomes to the same level as the invigilated paper-based examination.

Open book examinations are not an easy option. Answering the questions well requires much more than just copying information. We will be testing our learners' ability to problem solve and apply learning to a scenario that is unfamiliar to them.

Many universities use open-book examinations to assess learning including Cambridge University, University of Oxford, University of Warwick and Imperial College London.

What are your plans for other qualifications?

Will all assessments for NEBOSH qualifications become open book assessments?

The COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged us to bring forward our plans to offer remote and online assessments for our full range of qualifications and courses.

The introduction of this open book examination for units NG1, IG1, NGC1 and IGC1 is the first step of the transformation.

Whilst we review all other assessments, we will give learners the opportunity to sit the existing invigilated paper-based examinations where it is safe to do so.

We have announced rescheduled dates for examinations that were postponed due to COVID-19 and have supplied the links to these below in case you missed them:

[NEBOSH Diploma Level Qualifications](#)

[NEBOSH Award and Certificate Level Qualifications](#)

Still got a question? Our Customer Experience team is here to help:

- Email us: obe@nebosh.org.uk
- Live chat: use the chat box on the bottom right hand corner of our website.

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