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# NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide

Guidance for preparing for an  
open book examination

# NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide

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# NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide

## Introduction

Open book examinations are commonly used and are a valid and reliable form of assessment that enables you to sit your NEBOSH assessment from your own home or other safe and suitable location. Open book examinations continue to uphold the rigour and recognition that people have come to expect from NEBOSH. This includes scrutiny for plagiarism and collusion.

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.

We recommend that you read this guide in conjunction with the:

- NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Technical Learner Guide

### What is a Learning Partner?

A Learning Partner is the organisation that provides your training course and registers you for your examination.

### Examinations in languages other than English

**Please note:** if you are taking an open book examination in a language other than English then the guidance documents, examination paper and answer sheet template will be in your chosen language. It is also possible to access the online examination platform in your chosen language - please refer to the Technical Learner Guide for further information.

All other documentation is in English only.

## 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.

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

### 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 examination venue where many learners take the same assessment at once.

For a NEBOSH 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 examination

### 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 expected 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 examination?

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 and apply it to the scenario in the examination paper. Open book examinations measure depth of understanding so it is very important that you prepare and revise.

### How will I access and submit my open book examination?

You will use our online examination platform. Please refer to the NEBOSH Open book examinations: Technical Learner Guide for full guidance.

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## What will the format of the open book examination be?

The open book examination 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 task/question to help you manage your time.

These tasks will partially or entirely draw on the signposts 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 your answers.

This is a challenge that really tests your ability to interpret the scenario before answering the questions using the knowledge gained through your 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:** You should support your answer, where applicable, using relevant information from the scenario.

Or

*Based on the scenario only, assess the effectiveness of consultation within this organisation.*

**Tip:** Download a sample question paper from the NEBOSH website: <http://www.nebosh.org.uk/obe-resources>

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## Preparing for your examination

### Will I still need to revise?

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.

During the open book examination you will have the opportunity to refer to books and search the Internet, 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?

Work with your tutor and Learning Partner and take advantage of all teaching and support available. 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 on the relevant qualification page of our website)
- conducting wider research to understand how your studies relate to the real world.

As part of your preparations we recommend that you complete wider reading so you don't have to do this during the examination. You want to 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.

### How long do I have to complete my examination?

Open book examinations vary in length. Please refer to the specific qualification page or your Exam Entry Confirmation for details of your unit.

### Am I meant to take the full assessment time?

We give a specified time frame to complete and submit your open book examination. You are not expected to work for all that time. NEBOSH learners are based in multiple time zones and everyone will have work and family commitments. The exam time 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 examination time?

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, allowing 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 can complete your open book examination at home or other suitable location. 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 and meet the submission deadline (remember the deadline will be UK local 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.

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, the work you submit must be entirely your own and, for the duration of the examination, you must **not**:

- communicate with Learning Partner employees on the topic of the assessment
- communicate with other learners on the topic of the 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. Be careful not to copy directly from the reference books. Use your own words applying the knowledge gained during your training course.

Please do not copy and paste information from materials as this will not gain you the marks you need to pass. You must link your answers to the scenario given in the question paper.

## 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 (please see the section on Malpractice later in this guide for further information).

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. For example:

- Textbook: title, author(s), year published)
- Website: the url and area/documents used
- your course materials (tell us who you studied with).

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.

Your reference list needs to be at the end of your answer document. If you are using the NEBOSH answer sheet, there is a place to put your references. If you are not using the answer sheet, please include them at the end of your work.

## Is there a word count for my examination?

Your examination will specify a word count.

Your overall word count must be no more than +10% of the recommended word count, remember you are being assessed on relevance and quality rather than quantity of words. The recommended word count is there to aid learners in focusing on the subject and context requirements of the open book examination and to avoid digression into areas that are not mark worthy.

If your overall word count is significantly below the recommendation it will be more difficult to achieve a pass.

## Do I need to practice an open book examination?

You do not need to complete a 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. We recommend that you practice using the sample paper on our website: <http://www.nebosh.org.uk/obe-resources>

## 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:

- include a list of the sources of information you have used or quoted during your examination in a reference list.

Required to confirm:

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

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## Malpractice

### What do I need to know about malpractice?

We expect you to maintain the integrity of the assessment and qualification by following 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. Please see the [Policy and procedures for suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments](#) for further information.

Suspected plagiarism and/or collusion will be thoroughly investigated, and the outcome of the investigation will determine the level of any 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 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.

The answers you submit will be accepted on the understanding that it is your own work and without wrongful appropriation of any kind. You are expected to offer your own analysis and presentation of information gained from your 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 any third-party sources that you use in your open book examination answers. This means acknowledging where you have used sources, ideas, or work that is from someone else. You can do this simply by adding references to the end of your answer document.

### 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. You will be asked about your answers in the closing interview process.

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## How will NEBOSH deter cheating?

In an open book examination, you must submit your own work, without any help from others. When you submit your answer paper you will be asked to agree to the following declaration to confirm that you have understood and abided by our rules on plagiarism and collusion:

*Declaration: by submitting this examination for marking I declare that it is entirely my own work. I understand that falsely claiming that the work is my own is malpractice and can lead to NEBOSH imposing severe penalties (see NEBOSH Policy and procedures for suspected malpractice in examinations and assessments for further information).*

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

After your open book examination you must attend a closing interview with your Learning Partner. The purpose of the interview is to confirm that the work you have submitted is your own. You must attend a closing interview for your mark to be awarded. Full guidance on your closing interview can be found on the next page.

## How will the open book examinations 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.

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## Closing interviews

### 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 be arranged directly with your Learning Partner. It will take place via a video link and will be conducted by an Interviewer nominated by your Learning Partner (your Learning Partner is the organisation you have studied with).

You **must** attend a closing interview – if you do not attend then your mark will not be awarded.

### How should I prepare for my closing interview?

You need one of the following forms of identification to 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 you speak with your Learning Partner as soon as possible.

Please contact your Learning Partner to arrange your closing interview.

### What format will the interview take?

The Interviewer will introduce themselves.

**Show 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 examination. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate what you have learned during your studies. Please also refer to 'Advice for a successful closing interview' section on the next page.

**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.

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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 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.

## Advice for a successful closing interview

### Before the interview

- Download any software, such as Zoom or Skype, that you may need for the video interview.
- Practice with a friend or family member - 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.

### On the day of the interview

- Make sure that you have your identification ready.
- 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.

# NEBOSH Open Book Examinations: Learner Guide

## Other FAQs

### Should I continue to work with my Learning Partner?

Yes. Your Learning Partner is the organisation you have trained with and who you will have paid for your studies.

Your tutors provide an essential and valuable part of your learning experience. Continue to work with your tutor and Learning Partner and take advantage of all teaching and support available. Follow their revision and preparation advice.

### My Learning Partner is closed how can I book assessments?

Please contact our Customer Experience Team for assistance at [info@nebosh.org.uk](mailto:info@nebosh.org.uk).

### 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.

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

NEBOSH open book examinations can be completed in your home. You will need to access our online examination platform (from a computer, tablet or smartphone) to download the question paper and submit your answers. Further information about this process can be found in the Technical Learner Guide.

### 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.

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 as soon as possible 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.

### What happens if I hand my examination in late?

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

### 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. Please register for an examination via your Learning Partner.

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

NEBOSH have an [Enquiries About Results policy \(EAR\)](#). This allows you to request for your assessment to be remarked if you are unhappy with the mark achieved. Please note, there are fees for the Enquiries About Results process.

## I may not be able to complete all of my qualification before my units expire. Can I apply for an extension?

NEBOSH has approval from our Regulator to consider unit validity extension requests from learners studying Certificate level qualifications.

We recognise that, in some cases, extenuating circumstances – such as COVID-19 – may prevent learners from completing all their qualification Units in the specified timeframe. Our [Certificate Unit Validity Extension Policy](#) outlines the criteria for accepting requests for extensions and the associated supporting documentation we require. Please note that all requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## 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 [info@nebosh.org.uk](mailto:info@nebosh.org.uk) or using the 'live chat' feature on our website.

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