



**BRITISH OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE SOCIETY  
FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**

**CERTIFICATE OF OPERATIONAL COMPETENCE  
in  
OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**

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**GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES**

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## 1 Introduction

The Certificate of Operational Competence in Occupational Hygiene is the entry level qualification required to join the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene as a Licentiate, and demonstrates knowledge and competence in the broad principles and practice of occupational hygiene.

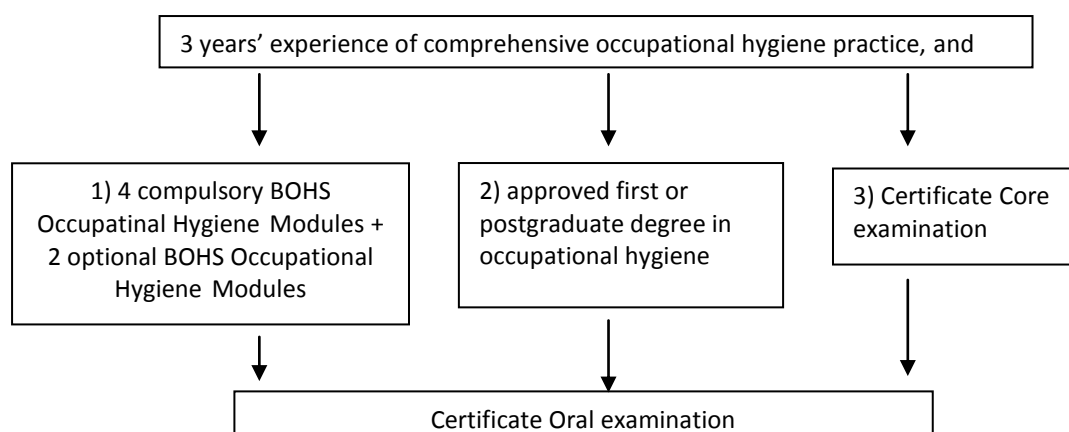
This is a two-part, written and oral, examination held at the BOHS Office. Some exemptions apply for the Certificate Core (written) examination (see Table 1 below), but all candidates must take the Certificate Oral examination. The Core exams are usually held twice a year, in March and September, and the Oral exams four times a year, in March, June, September and December.

### 1.1 Pre-requisites

All candidates must be of graduate calibre, with a strong science, mathematics or engineering educational background, and have at least three years' experience of comprehensive occupational hygiene practice.

### 1.2 Routes to the Certificate

There are three routes to this qualification as set out below in Table 1:



**Table 1: Routes to the Certificate of Operational Competence in Occupational Hygiene**

#### 1.2.1 Route 1 : Occupational Hygiene Modules

Compulsory Occupational Hygiene Modules are:

- M101 Health Effects of Hazardous Substances
- M102 Measurement of Hazardous Substances (including Risk Assessment)
- M103 Control of Hazardous Substances
- M104 Noise and an Introduction to Vibration

Optional Occupational Hygiene Modules are:

- M201 Thermal Environment and Non-Ionising Radiation (including Lighting)
- M202 External Environment
- M203 Ergonomics Essentials (including Manual Handling and DSE)
- S301 Asbestos and other fibres

### 1.2.2 **Route 2 : An Approved Degree**

A list of approved degrees is available from the BOHS Head Office; contact Thelma Thompson ([thelma.thompson@bohs.org](mailto:thelma.thompson@bohs.org); tel: 01332 250708).

### 1.2.3 **Route 3 : The Certificate Core examination**

See Section 2.

## 2 **Core Examination**

### 2.1 **Format**

The Certificate Core examination is a written examination and is usually held twice a year (March and September) at the BOHS Head Office in Derby. It consists of two, three-hour examination papers, with lunch provided in between. Table 2 below sets out in more detail the format of each paper and the marking scheme.

<i>Paper 1</i>		<i>Paper 2</i>	
Part 1A – 65 short answer questions to be answered in approximately 2 hours 15 mins. Part 1B – 5 micro essay questions (from a choice of 8) to be answered in approximately 45 mins.	Paper 1 is 3 hours in total	Part 2A – 65 short answer questions to be answered in approximately 2 hours 15 mins. Part 2B – 5 micro essay questions (from a choice of 8) to be answered in approximately 45 mins.	Paper 2 is 3 hours in total
The short answer questions in these two papers are based on the syllabi for Modules M101-104, M201 and S301; the essay questions will be based on Modules M101-104, M201-M203 and S301			
<i>Short-answer questions can gain up to 4 points for a correct answer and 0 for an incorrect answer or no answer. Micro essay questions can score up to 20 points each.</i>			
To achieve a pass it is necessary to obtain an average of at least 50% in each paper (70% or above in each paper for a credit)			

**Table 2: Format & Marking Scheme for the Certificate Core Examination**

### 2.2 **Results**

Our target maximum turnaround time from date of examination to issue of results is six weeks; we always issue all results as quickly as possible and frequently manage to do so well within this timescale.

We issue all of our results by post. We NEVER issue results over the phone or by email. There are no exceptions to this rule.

### **3 General Requirements for Oral Examinations**

#### ***3.1 Purpose***

The overall purpose of the oral examination is not to retest technical knowledge, but to assess whether the candidate has the necessary practical skills to apply that knowledge in real-life practical situations and by doing so can provide competent occupational hygiene advice. The oral examination does not aim to assess how the candidate is performing in his/her current job. The qualification signifies that this person is competent to go out into any industry to evaluate exposures across the comprehensive field of occupational hygiene.

#### ***3.2 The Examiners***

Wherever possible the oral examination panel will be made up of three members, but exceptional circumstances may dictate that only two panel members are present. In all cases there will be a nominated Chair of the panel.

Oral examiners will be told in advance the names of the candidates they are scheduled to examine so that any conflict of interest can be avoided in advance.

The examiners are all qualified Occupational Hygienists with a wide range of experience, hold the Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene, will have received training as examiners and will also be subject to quality assurance evaluation.

#### ***3.2 Conduct of Examinations***

The Oral examination should take approximately 60 minutes.

All members of the examination panel are instructed to make sure that the candidate is put at ease as far as possible, so that there is the best possible chance of assessing the candidate objectively. The examination will be perceived by the panel not as a way of putting the candidate under pressure but as a means of determining the individual's ability in a neutral atmosphere. The examiners have been instructed that confrontational behaviour must not be used. Open questions will be asked and candidates will be given full opportunity to provide the information on which the decision of the panel will be based, and therefore the overall timing is flexible.

Examiners have been instructed that all candidates must be treated fairly and equally, and oral examinations must be conducted in a consistent manner so that as far as possible, there is no inherent bias, conscious or unconscious, in the decisions reached by panels. Examiners are also instructed that any decisions must be taken without regard to gender, age, ethnic background or any disability.

Examiners have been instructed to avoid any "trick" questions. Therefore, candidates should be confident in answering any basic questions, and should also feel free to ask for clarification of questions, if necessary.

In order to confirm the maintenance of standards there will be audit and quality controls of the oral examination process. This may involve a member of the quality assurance team sitting in on a sample of examinations with the candidate's consent. Examiners are also required to peer-assess each other's performance.

### **3.3 Subject Coverage in the Oral Examination**

The questioning for the oral examination will test the practical ability of the candidate in the comprehensive field of occupational hygiene – although clearly the oral can only cover a sample of this.

The subject areas covered will be the four compulsory topics (see Section 1.2.1 above) and at least two of the optional topics (see also Section 1.2.1 above).

For the optional modules the examiners will normally select one that the candidate has studied via the modules or university, or on which they have taken the written examination, and at least one other from the remaining optional topics.

In each of the subject areas, the questioning may, where relevant, test the candidate's ability to:

- Analyse the problem and recognise hazards that may exist;
- Carry out practical assessments of risks, including appropriate equipment selection;
- Where appropriate carry out necessary hygiene measurements and select and operate any sampling or measurement equipment correctly;
- Calculate and interpret measurement results as appropriate;
- Understand the basics of control (hierarchy) and be able to assess existing controls (LEV systems/RPE/PPE).

The examiners have been advised that they should each ask questions on two subject areas.

The examiners will have been provided with a limited amount of information on the candidate's occupational hygiene related education (ie. which route they have taken to the Oral) and their employment background.

The questions will be generally based around real-life workplace situations. The scenarios will cover a broad spectrum of hazards and are designed to test underpinning knowledge and practical ability of the candidate.

If the candidate is being employed as a hygienist in a particular industry, the scenarios the examiners may pose are likely to be ones from a different industry. This is because the examiners need to understand how the candidate would apply their skills in different environments to the one in which they currently work.

Candidates are advised never to guess if they do not know an answer; rather, they should say they don't know, but if possible add information on where they would go/what resources they might use to get the answer if the need arose in the workplace.

### **3.4 The Decision and Result**

The examiners are not able to give the candidate a result at the end of the oral, because their considerations and recommendations are forwarded to the Chief Examiner for authorisation. Results are usually issued during the course of the following week. All results are issued by post, NEVER by phone or email. There are no exceptions to this rule.

The criteria for a candidate to pass the oral examination include the ability to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and practical experience and ability in the four compulsory topics, together with the demonstration of basic knowledge, awareness and understanding of the

questioned optional topics. Where practical experience has not been gained in these areas the 'know how' to carry out work in these areas will need to be demonstrated to gain a pass.

The examiners are mindful that a pass recommendation could allow the person concerned to put LFOH after their name, if they choose to join the Faculty, which confirms that the Faculty is endorsing the competence of that individual to a specified standard. The examiners must be satisfied that the candidate is competent on the basis of what they have heard during the oral examination to allow the Faculty to endorse that candidate.

If the panel cannot reach a unanimous decision, the differing views will be recorded. The Chair may consider that a majority decision may be recommended. If however, the minority view was strongly held and the minority panel member felt that the majority decision would be harmful, then the Chair may decide that a firm decision was not possible. This will be recorded and the papers returned to the Chief Examiner for a final decision.

A demonstration of lack of ability and/or knowledge in one of the four compulsory modules will almost certainly lead to a failure result. Little or no knowledge or awareness of the optional topics, and especially where the candidate was clearly guessing, will also lead to failure. Anyone who fails the oral examination can ask the BOHS office to provide feedback from the examiners on the reasons why they failed. Candidates must not make direct contact with members of the examining panel.

#### **4 Post-Nominal Letters and Faculty Membership**

Holders of the Certificate of Operational Competence in Occupational Hygiene are eligible to:

- Use CertOH as post-nominal letters;
- Apply for Licentiate Grade in the Faculty; the letter from BOHS notifying candidates of a pass at the Certificate Oral examination contains details of how to apply for this grade of Faculty membership;
- Use LFOH as post-nominal letters once accepted into the Faculty.

#### **5 How to Apply**

Candidates for both the Certificate Core and the Certificate Oral examination should apply directly to the BOHS Head Office.

Please contact Thelma Thompson, ([thelma.thomson@bohs.org](mailto:thelma.thomson@bohs.org); 01332 250708), in the first instance to register your interest and for any further information.

Payment should be made on application and the fees are:

Certificate Core (written) examination	£130
Certificate Oral examination	£130