



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

**DIPLOMA OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE
in
OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**

GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

1 Introduction

The Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene is the highest professional occupational hygiene qualification awarded in the UK. Award of the Diploma qualifies the holder to become a Member of the Faculty, and demonstrates knowledge of, and competence in, assessment of health hazards and the extent of risk in various workplace circumstances, and an ability to advise on suitable control procedures.

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

1.1 Pre-requisites

All candidates must already hold the Certificate of Operational Competence, and be able to demonstrate five years' experience in the field of occupational hygiene.

1.2 Routes to the Diploma

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

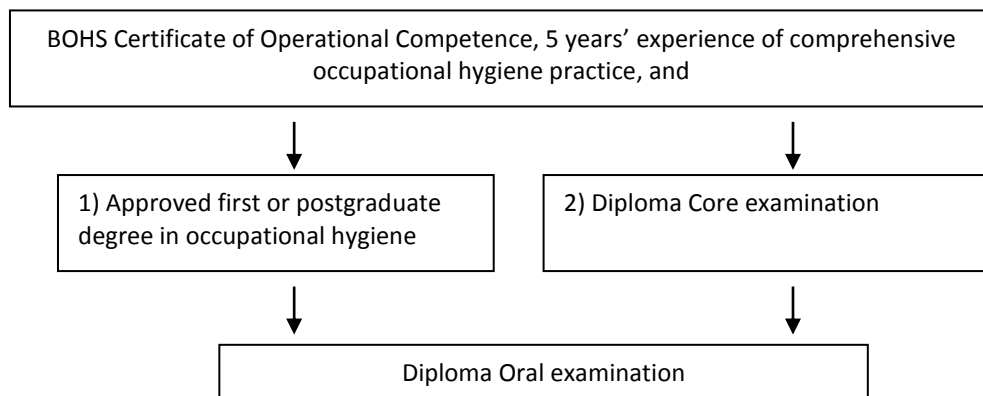


Table 1: Routes to the Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene

1.2.1 Route 1: An Approved Degree

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

1.2.2 Route 2 : The Diploma Core examination

See Section 2 below.

2 Core Examination

2.1 Format

The Diploma 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 essay papers, with lunch provided in between. Each paper has a Section A, comprising three long essays, and a Section B comprising five micro essays. Table 2 below sets out in more detail the format of each paper.

Paper 1 [3 hours]	Section A: Essay Questions One compulsory question and two optional questions to be answered	
	<i>Compulsory subjects</i>	<i>Optional subjects</i>
	<i>either</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>control of airborne hazards</i> <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>statistics</i> 	<i>Two questions from a choice of three; may include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>harmful/fibrogenic dusts</i> • <i>toxic metals</i> • <i>gases</i> • <i>solvents/organic vapours</i> • <i>carcinogens/microbiological hazards</i>
	Section B: Micro Essay Questions Five questions from a choice of eight to be answered	
Paper 2 [3 hours]	Section A: Essay Questions One compulsory question and two optional questions to be answered	
	<i>Compulsory subjects</i>	<i>Optional subjects</i>
	<i>either</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>legislation</i> <i>or</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>general principles of occupational hygiene</i> 	<i>Two questions from a choice of three; may include:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>thermal environment</i> • <i>noise/vibration</i> • <i>lighting/NIR</i> • <i>ventilation</i> • <i>ionising radiation</i>
	Section B: Micro Essay Questions Five questions from a choice of eight to be answered	
Essays are marked out of 25 and micro essays are marked out of 5, so there are a total of 100 marks available (from three essays and five micro essays) for each paper. To achieve a pass at this examination, it is necessary to obtain an average mark from the two papers of at least 50% (and at least 70% for a credit).		

Table 2: Format & Marking Scheme for the Diploma Core Examination

The standard of answers, in order to pass this examination, should demonstrate extensive knowledge of the subject and indicate practical experience in the assessment and control of the hazard described in the question.

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 manager 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 Oral Examination

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 and management skills to apply that knowledge in real-life practical situations and by doing so can provide competent occupational hygiene advice at a consultant level. The aim of the Oral examination is not to assess how the candidate is performing in his/her current job; the qualification signifies that this person is competent to assess health hazards and the extent of risk in any workplace, and to advise on suitable control procedures 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.

3.3 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.

3.4 Joint Certificate/Diploma Oral Examination

Eligibility

The vast majority of candidates for the Diploma of Professional Competence who present for oral examination already hold the Certificate of Operational Competence. However, there are some candidates who, due to logistical or personal circumstances, have been unable to sit the Certificate oral examination, yet otherwise meet the criteria to allow them to present for the Diploma oral examination.

Such circumstances include, but are not necessarily confined to the following:

- a) candidates who have obtained six occupational hygiene modules and subsequently have had the necessary 5 years' experience of comprehensive hygiene practice to meet the eligibility criteria for the Diploma, but have not been able to sit the Certificate oral examination due to, for example, their work location or personal circumstances;
- b) candidates who have passed the Certificate Core examination, who have had subsequent experience as described in a) above but have not been able to sit the Certificate oral examination for the reasons set out in a) above;
- c) candidates who have an approved degree in occupational hygiene, and have had subsequent experience as defined in a) above but have not been able to sit the Certificate oral examination for the reasons set out in a) above.

Under the above circumstances, the candidate may be permitted to sit a hybrid oral examination which combines the elements of the Certificate and Diploma oral examinations. A final decision on the eligibility of a candidate to sit a joint Certificate/Diploma examination is taken by the Chief Examiner.

Format

The oral examination lasts one hour and this time is normally split equally between Certificate- and Diploma-level questions. The Certificate element is covered in the first thirty minutes, after which the chair of the examination panel advises the candidate that the remainder of the examination will be conducted at Diploma level.

Candidates for the joint Certificate/Diploma oral examination should be aware that they must satisfy the examiners of their competence in occupational hygiene at Certificate level, as well as Diploma level, to enable them to obtain an overall pass. Candidates should therefore be prepared to answer questions at an 'operational' level and should consult the Guidance for Candidates for the Certificate of Operational Competence in Occupational Hygiene, and in particular section 3.3 which deals with subject coverage in the oral examination.

3.5 Subject Coverage and Demonstration of Competency

The questioning for the Diploma oral will seek to elicit a mature approach to the understanding and solving of occupational hygiene problems along with the practical ability of the candidate in the comprehensive field of occupational hygiene – although clearly the oral can only cover a sample of this.

Questions are built around scenarios, and the candidate's answers will need to demonstrate deep and broad experience. Questions will be more complex than those asked at the Certificate Oral, and will include strategy and data interpretation, practical control measures, derivation and application of legislation/good practice and management controls.

In situations with no one right answer, intelligent, informed opinions will be looked for.

The questioning is designed to test a candidate's ability in each of the subject areas, to:

- Analyse the problems as presented and where appropriate recognise hazards that may exist and then define the approach to assessing the risks followed by approaches to managing the problems;
- Define the appropriate strategy for hygiene measurements and demonstrate practical knowledge of selection and operation of any sampling or measurement equipment;
- Demonstrate the ability to understand and interpret measurement data as appropriate;
- Demonstrate a sound knowledge of control (hierarchy) and be able to assess existing controls system for effectiveness and advise on improvements as appropriate;
- Demonstrate a sound knowledge of Occupational Hygiene management controls and programmes;
- Demonstrate a sound knowledge of current and proposed future legislative requirements that impinge on the practice of occupational hygiene.

Candidates' competence may be evaluated where relevant by the examiners against the criteria set out in Table 3 below.

Competency	The Candidate should be able to:
1 Problem Solving Skills	
1.1 Identification of hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the hazards • describe the relevant routes of exposure • point out any potential interactions that may occur (eg. synergy, additive effects etc.)
1.2 Identification of key risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the key risks arising from the chemical, physical and biological hazards associated with the scenario • demonstrate an awareness of any other safety, ergonomics or environmental factors
1.3 Viable solutions proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • propose a number of solutions to the identified problems which are viable, practical and reasonably cost effective • explain the rationale behind each proposed solution
1.4 Awareness of complicating factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate awareness of any potential human factors or management/industrial relations issues • demonstrate awareness of whether implementation of the proposed solutions could lead to 'knock on' problems • demonstrate awareness of what those problems may be

2	Practical Skills	
2.1	Prioritisation of solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prioritise the proposed solutions based on the desired outcome, cost, and complicating factors
2.2	Ability to adapt to changing circumstances/information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate awareness of the implications of change modify the solutions in light of any changes or complicating factors suggested by the examiners
2.3	Drawing out relevant information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> decide, from the information given in the scenario, what information is required to identify the hazards, risks and solutions ask the examiners relevant questions to obtain the additional information required to answer the question identify and explain what further actions they would take to obtain further information
3	Current Issues	
3.1	Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate their knowledge of the issue questioned
3.2	Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand any limitations of application
3.3	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand what likely impacts this could have on industry etc
3.4	Rationale of views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be able to explain rationale of any opinions
4	Communication	
4.1	Logical, persuasive arguments developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain the rationale behind their answer present the answer in an appropriately ordered sequence
4.2	Clear presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> answer the questions clearly, fluently, and with limited prompting from the Examiners
4.3	Confident in solutions proposed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> defend their position if challenged rephrase their argument if necessary
5	Ethics	
5.1	Approach/solutions consistent with the profession's norms and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrate that the health of the worker is the primary consideration when formulating and advocating solutions maintain an ethical position where there is a conflict between an appropriate solution and self/employers interests

Table 3: Competency Evaluation Criteria

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 are in the main based around real-life workplace situations. The scenarios will cover a broad spectrum of hazards and are designed to test underpinning knowledge and professional 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.

3.6 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, incorporating strategy and data interpretation, practical control measures, derivation and application of legislation/good practice and management controls. For candidates at this level, the examiners will expect a professional approach to problems as befits a consultant in Occupational Hygiene.

The examiners are mindful that a pass recommendation could allow the person concerned to put MFOH after their name 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 Chairman 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 Chairman 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 will almost certainly lead to a failure result. Where the approach is not sufficiently mature, reasoned and professional, especially where the candidate has demonstrated that he/she is guessing, this will also lead to failure. Anyone who fails the oral examination can ask the BOHS Head 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 Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene are eligible to:

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

5 How to Apply

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

Please contact Thelma Thompson, (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:

Diploma Core (written) examination	£160
Diploma Oral examination	£145