



Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene

Part I Qualification Introduction

Introduction by the Registrar of the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene

Sarah Leeson

It's my very great pleasure to welcome you on the first stage of your journey towards being a Chartered Member of the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene. The Diploma is the gateway to this professional level, which we believe recognises those operating at a national and international standard of practice.

The Diploma is not a course of study, but a process which encourages you to reflect on your professional journey as an occupational hygienist and to share your experiences with established Chartered Members. It enables you to explore with them how you tackle difficult and challenging situations which may be either new to you, or indeed, new to the profession. It will enable you to engage with difficult and challenging questions which can be faced daily by those at the top of the profession and work through the way in which you will help the profession solve them for the future.

The Diploma process may feel like a series of challenges and gateways for which there are no obvious solutions and keys being provided. This is not because we are trying to make things difficult, but rather that we are looking to understand your ability to address these challenges and unlock solutions. The Diploma process is about providing you with the foundations to practise in areas of uncertainty and challenge, knowing that your profession has every confidence that you will meet that challenge in line with the highest professional standards.

In this way, the Diploma process is about providing you with the foundations to practise in areas of uncertainty and challenge, knowing that your profession has every confidence that you will meet that challenge in line with the highest professional standards. In completing the Diploma, you join a growing group of professionals who are committed to sharing their knowledge, wisdom and experience with others. This is not just what has been learnt from our achievements, but also from our mistakes and setbacks. It's when things go wrong that we often learn the most.

In this spirit, the Diploma has been designed and is assessed by Occupational Hygienists, for occupational hygienists. It is not designed to be an easy rite of passage, but to provide a safe space to explore your professional achievements and to face the challenges of the expert professional. The Registrar of the Faculty oversees the process on behalf of the Faculty from beginning through to the end, knowing that among the candidates starting this journey will be a future Registrar.

Please read this guide carefully and feel free to raise questions queries and concerns with Head Office team through professionalqualifications@bohs.org or, if you prefer, by contacting me FOHRegistrar@bohs.org. I look forward to welcoming you in person at one of the Diploma Days.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Leeson DipOH CFFOH

Qualification Introduction

What is the Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene?

In embarking on the Diploma of Professional Competence in Occupational Hygiene (DipOH), you are working towards the highest professional occupational hygiene qualification awarded in the UK. On award of the Diploma, you will be entitled to apply to become a Chartered Member of the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene. BOHS is the only organisation globally which can offer you Chartered status as an Occupational Hygienist.

Holders of the Diploma will typically be deemed by your peers to be fully competent and qualified to:

- Undertake workplace health risk assessments, including covering the most complex situations;
- Develop strategies and protocols for occupational hygiene surveys at all levels and interpret the results;
- Develop cost effective and reasonably practicable control methods and management strategies to prevent, control and manage health risks, including in complex organisations;
- Develop and manage all levels of occupational hygiene programmes (including deciding on how they are resourced);
- Communicate effectively on the above with management, workers and other stakeholders, including those at the highest organisational levels.

In addition, it means that you will be recognised by your peers in the Occupational Hygiene community as being a leading member of the profession, capable of supporting the development and management of others. In addition, if you choose to become a Chartered Member, you will enjoy the following benefits:

- The right to use the “CMFOH” postnominal, by virtue of Royal Charter, and to call yourself a Chartered Occupational Hygienist;
- Eligibility for entry in the Register of Occupational Hygiene Professionals as a Chartered Member;
- Eligibility for entry in the BOHS Directory of Occupational Hygiene Services;
- Eligibility for entry into the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR).

Why do we make an assessment for Chartered Membership?

Occupational hygiene is a regulated profession:

- Competence is a requirement of Regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, requiring us, as the professional body to assure our members have “sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities” necessary to undertake work at each specified level. The regulating body is the Health and Safety Executive;
- Occupational Hygiene is a profession that falls within the Professional Qualifications Act 2022, for which we are the designated regulator for the recognition of overseas qualifications to practise in the UK. The regulating body is the Department for Business and Trade;

- The profession is now subject to voluntary registration, in the form of the Register of Occupational Hygiene Professionals. The Register is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) for Health and Social Care and operates under the statutory requirements of the PSA;
- Chartered Membership is granted in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down in our Royal Charter. The regulating body is His Majesty's Privy Council.

In order to create one reference point for the standards needed to meet each of these regulators, the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene has set out a framework for the standards of professional competence. The [BOHS Statement of Occupational Hygiene Competencies - British Occupational Hygiene Society \(BOHS\)](#) sets out ten sets of competencies to be met by each level of recognised professional practice. These standards have been put together in the interests of public protection, as well as lawful and ethical practice.

We endeavour to enable professionals to demonstrate their achievement of these levels of competence in as fair and flexible a way as we can to reflect the diversity of the profession in the UK. However, this has also to be balanced by our overriding duty to ensure that the public interest in accessing consistently safe and competent practice is achieved.

As a Chartered Member, you will take a leading role in the profession and will enjoy recognition and autonomy which will often place you in a position of authority to determine occupational hygiene strategies that can impact potentially hundreds of lives in a fundamental way. This process should be one to help you assure yourself that you are equipped to practise at this level.

Am I ready to do start the Diploma process?

Since the Diploma is based upon experience, as well as training and practice, the Society feels it extremely unlikely that you will have had sufficient range, depth and challenge in professional experience in occupational hygiene to standards demonstrated by the most senior Occupational Hygiene professionals in less than five years. The five-year criterion is a minimum threshold and assumes that most of those five years have been rich, challenging and diverse, providing a range of experiences and opportunities to develop a professional to their optimum capability.

However, we all know that work is not like that for many of us. Without diminishing the value of focused experience or suggesting that excellent practice cannot be achieved at all levels of the profession, it should not be assumed that after five years you will be ready for the Diploma. Whether you are ready to embark on the process is something that you should keep in consideration. In order to help make this decision, we advise three things that can be of assistance:

- 1) [Join the Mentoring Programme](#). A mentor can help you reflect on where you are in your professional journey and help identify where you need to develop. You should also consider acting as a mentor. In supporting others new to the profession, you often realise the strengths and weaknesses you have in yourself.
- 2) [Actively manage your Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\)](#) . CPD is a Faculty requirement because, as professionals, things never stay the same, so we should always keep up with the latest developments. But there is more to CPD than keeping your points up. By looking at the competence levels set out in the CPD framework, you can plan which areas you need to build experience and knowledge in so as to progress towards Chartered level.

- 3) To help you in this, you can use the Self Evaluation tool in Appendix 1 to help you move in the right direction. Indeed, if you keep evidence of what you have been doing, this can serve both as CPD evidence, and also be the makings of a future Professional Experience Portfolio (PEP).

Chartered status will be an aspiration for very many occupational hygiene professionals, but the profession values and needs registered occupational hygienists at all levels. The Diploma is recognition of the achievement of a certain choice of career path. However, for many doing invaluable jobs within our sector, the Diploma may not be relevant or needed.

How does the Diploma build on your prior learning?

The process of gaining the Diploma will build on the skills, knowledge and experience you have developed over a period of at least five years of practice in occupational hygiene. It will also draw upon core general training or education that you have undertaken. So you can expect to be treated throughout the Diploma journey as someone who is on top of the range of materials covered at that level.

Of course, your career may have led you to specialise in particular areas, and it may be that you have not referred to some materials since undertaking earlier study. The professional discussion can include questions covering any of the subject areas required to gain Licentiate level so revision on topics you may be less familiar with would be beneficial.

The Diploma qualification is pitched at Level 7, which is Masters Level. Some Diploma candidates will already hold a Masters degree in an occupational hygiene or related subject, or have studied the principles of research as part of their undergraduate degree: in such cases this provides exemption from the research essay element of the Diploma. If you don't have this exemption, you have the exciting opportunity to engage in the research essay element.

How does your pathway relate to your prior learning

The right pathway for you to gain the Diploma will depend on your prior learning and experience.

Professional Experience Pathway

Most candidates will hold the CertOH or the ICertOH. This pathway will also apply to candidates with IOHA NAR qualifications who have not undertaken study to at least degree level.

Candidates taking this pathway need to complete three components in order to achieve the Diploma qualification:

- Professional Experience Portfolio (PEP), and
- Researched Essay; and
- Professional Discussion.

Exempting Degree Pathway

This is for you, if you hold an MSc or an equivalent degree that is accredited by BOHS. A full list can be found at [BOHS Accredited University Programmes - British Occupational Hygiene Society \(BOHS\)](#). You can also check with qualifications@bohs.org.

If you hold a professional level qualification awarded as part of an IOHA recognised scheme, this may also be the right route for you. That is, of course, provided you have undertaken study to at least degree level in a relevant topic as part of that scheme. Accredited schemes can be checked by reference to [National Accreditation Recognition \(NAR\) Committee – IOHA](#), or you can email internationalqualifications@bohs.org, if you are not sure

Candidates taking this pathway need to complete two components in order to achieve the Diploma qualification:

- Professional Experience Portfolio (PEP), and
- Professional Discussion.

What is the assessment process for the Diploma?

The Diploma is the gateway to Chartered status, international recognition through the IOHA NAR scheme and is increasingly a mark of eligibility for senior roles in the profession. The Diploma is the means by which outcomes are assessed in line with the [BOHS Statement of Occupational Hygiene Competencies - British Occupational Hygiene Society \(BOHS\)](#) to demonstrate that you meet the expectations of your peers and other stakeholders.

You may wish to look at this in some detail to help guide you through your planning of the things that you already are strong in and areas which you might want to develop or seek support for through your Diploma journey.

The different types of assessment are designed to give as fair and objective a method of assessing your overall professional skills and competences as we can. They are also designed to provide flexibility to reflect the different journeys to senior status in the profession that people follow.

Why do we use particular types of assessment?

The rationale for the different types of assessment is set out here, but you can get further detail of each later on in this guide.

The *Professional Experience Portfolio* (PEP) allows you to show evidence from your work and experience, of how you can demonstrate the competence outcomes in practice. The portfolio can show what your professional work looks like and how you work.

The *Researched Essay* allows you to show how you might draw together scientific and other evidence to help solve complex professional problems and allows you to present what you have found to an informed audience.

The *Professional Discussion* allows you to engage in dialogue with your peers, exploring the most challenging types of professional problems that you could face in current and future practice, and to talk through how you would address them.

What outcomes are the assessments looking to verify have been achieved?

Throughout your Diploma journey, you should consciously aim to practise and develop the skills and knowledge that you need to be able to successfully demonstrate. However, the portfolio, researched essay and professional discussion will specifically focus on assessing specific outcomes. These are outlined below:

A Knowledge and Understanding

Competency descriptor	Can demonstrate highly specialized or advanced knowledge and original thinking in one or more field(s) of occupational hygiene practice
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Discussion

B Research Methods

Competency descriptor	1.Can engage in specialised or advanced enquiry and original thinking in relation to a field/fields of occupational hygiene practice which is at the forefront of the discipline. 2.Can set in-house control limits based on control banding or toxicological information
How is this assessed?	1.Research Essay (for Professional Experience Pathway) 2.Professional Discussion

C Assessment (Investigation, Assessment, Analysis and Diagnostic Skills)

Competency descriptor	Can demonstrate expert critical insights into the knowledge issues in the field of occupational hygiene science and at the interface with other professional or scientific disciplines
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Discussion

D Decision-Making (Problem-Solving, Planning, Designing, Negotiation of Courses of Action)

Competency descriptor	Can demonstrate specialised problem-solving skills required in practice or research in order to develop new knowledge and procedures in the field of occupational hygiene science
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Discussion

E Implementation and Management Skills (Implementing and Taking Action)

Competency descriptor	Can manage occupational hygiene programmes in contexts that are complex, unpredictable
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Experience Portfolio

F General Evaluative Skills (Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluate)

Competency descriptor	Can demonstrate expert critical insights into effective and meaningful monitoring, reviewing, and evaluation in the field of occupational hygiene science and at the interface with other professional or scientific disciplines
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Experience Portfolio

G Communication and Reporting

Competency descriptor	Can create authoritative and definitive reports and publications which provide leadership and insight in the field of occupational hygiene.
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Experience Portfolio

H Interprofessional Working

Competency descriptor	Can effectively contribute to the management and transform workplace health programmes (including through the appropriate involvement, development, and direction of other professions) in contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Experience Portfolio

I Professional Record Keeping

Competency descriptor	Can provide guidance and governance in relation to occupational hygiene recording systems and understand the core principles of occupational hygiene records management at a strategic level
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional Experience Portfolio

J Ethics, Professionalism, and Judgement

Competency descriptor	Can provide guidance and governance in relation to occupational hygiene ethics and can address complex and novel ethical and professional challenges
How is this assessed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional discussion

What is my part in the process of assessment?

The Diploma process is not like a course that you study or undertaking training. It is a process of peer and self-evaluation, based upon your existing learning and experience. However, part

of the process will be to determine whether there are areas of practice that you want to strengthen and develop.

It is also intended that the process of putting together the story of development to the peak of the profession, it will be an opportunity to reflect on your practice. In most professions, the reflective cycle is crucial to achieving continual excellence in professional practice. In essence, this is the process of thinking about how your planned intentions worked out in practice and what you can learn from them.

The Diploma process should therefore be more than completing a checklist of evidence, getting an essay written or rehearsing for a professional discussion. It's as much of a chance for you to assess yourself as it is for your peers. No professional is perfect and nobody just stays at the top of their game because they have a certificate. Demonstrating self-knowledge is important.

Your PEP can include examples of where things did not go to plan and your critique of what you could have done better in hindsight. Your research essay can contain statements of uncertainty and about the limits of your study and knowledge. Your professional discussion does not aim to test you on what you know, but how you address and manage the unfamiliar and uncertain.

True professionals know themselves and are always learning, not just from others, but from reflection on their own experience. Those at the top of their profession often don't have people they can turn to who know the answers. The process is, to some extent a test of how you address that challenge.

How long will it take?

We hope that it will be a considered decision, supported by advice by those who know and understand your professional practice, to embark on the Diploma assessment process. As already pointed out, the Diploma process is the capstone of your career, so everything should be in preparation for this.

Provided you meet the entry criteria, you will not be prevented from embarking on the Diploma assessment process. Only you know what you are really capable of. The timeframes for the process assume that you are ready to engage with the various methods of assessment and that the time is really focused on reflection, organisation and preparation for assessment.

For this reason, we normally expect the period of time from registration to the decision to award the Diploma will be around 24 months. Factors such as the availability of examination slots and how well you progress with each assessment stage may impact this.

What happens if I fail an assessment?

Each component is assessed by professional occupational hygienists, and everyone involved wants you to succeed. However, if it appears that you are not ready to progress to the next stage, the assessors may recommend that you wait until you have gained more experience, or that you should attempt the assessment again, once you have taken into account the feedback provided to you. The assessors will provide constructive feedback to guide you. This aims to help you manage your professional development so that you can succeed. It is a "not quite ready," rather than "you've failed."

Because the Society want people to strive to achieve the highest levels of the profession, there is no “three strikes and you are out” or similar rule. However, we don’t want people to continue to struggle when it is clear that they are not ready, so the assessors can recommend a period of time which is likely to be needed to gain additional experience before it will be possible to attempt an assessment again.

You will only cease to be eligible to resubmit for assessment if there is a founded Code of Ethics complaint against you and until such time as any compliant remains active.

I have a disability or am neurodiverse. How will you support me?

BOHS is a small organisation, but that means that we can take time to work with you and the assessors to find the adjustments that can enable you to have a fair and equivalent opportunity to engage with the process. As a small organisation, we don’t have employed specialist advisers, but we do have members of staff with experience of managing assessment processes for candidates with a variety of needs.

You don’t have to tell us about your disability or neurodiversity. But if you do feel you need adjustments, we will need to depend on you to provide the clinical and diagnostic information needed to ensure that the adjustments we make will be appropriate. This is so that we can effectively meet our own legal duties, by being properly informed about what we need to put in place to give you fair assessment opportunities.

I think I’m ready. How do I apply?

We ask that those thinking about doing the Diploma book onto a Diploma Day. These are held in Head Office in Derby and are free to attend at any time during your Diploma journey. During the day, you will be reminded of the outline of the Diploma and what we are looking to assess. You will meet many of the key people from the Faculty, Society, Head Office and some of the Assessors, as well as fellow candidates.

During the day, we will discuss how to tackle the different assessments, with feedback from examiners with helpful tips and contributions from those who have been through the process with their views on what works. In the afternoon, we will work through professional discussion type questions together in groups, with oral examiners and others who have been through the process.

We think it essential that Diploma candidates find support from the Occupational Hygiene community through such events, especially given the fact that this is not a taught course.

When you attend, you can meet the Head Office contact who will help you through the process and they can assist you with what you need to do to apply and how to submit or book your assessments. It’s also an opportunity to discuss if you think you may need to have any reasonable adjustments arising from a disability or neurodiversity.

How do I apply?

You will need to complete an application form. This will require you to undertake:

- A Basic information check:
 - 1) We will ask you to check that the data we hold on you, including communication preferences, is accurate and up to date;

- 2) We will ask you to provide (in confidence) data to ensure that we meet our requirements to monitor our promotion of equality and diversity for the purposes of our regulators and in line with good qualifications governance;
 - 3) We will ask you whether you wish to disclose any disability or neurodiversity and, if so, whether you wish to have any adjustments made to the assessment process;
 - 4) We will also ask you to verify that the information that we hold about qualifications gained from BOHS is correct.
- An Eligibility criteria check:
- 5) Where it is applicable (e.g. International Occupational Hygiene qualification or Exempting Degree Pathway), we will ask you to provide information and authenticated evidence of non-BOHS qualifications that you are relying on to meet the entry criteria;
 - 6) We would also need to have a work history in whatever format you prefer, as long as it provides sufficient information for us to determine that you meet our criteria for working in occupational hygiene. It should therefore make clear:
 - a. that you have worked in occupational hygiene for at least five years;
 - b. in what capacity you have been working;
 - c. if in a mixed role, it should be clear that more than 50% of the time (on average) you have been engaged in occupational hygiene;
 - d. if part-time (except where it is by reason of illness, disability or care responsibilities) that role has been more than 50% of a full-time role;
 - e. that those five years, if not consecutive, have been within the last decade;
 - f. the name, address and contact details of the employer (or where no longer trading, a person who can verify that you worked there). We will not routinely contact further employers, but as part of any audit of the integrity of our applications process, we may be required to.

Some further points on our eligibility checks:

- a) If you are not able to demonstrate a. to f. above, but feel you meet the five- year eligibility criteria in some other way, or that it should not be applied because of special circumstances, please contact professional@bohs.org. We have some discretion to ensure that the application of these principles does not unfairly exclude people we ought to consider for Diploma assessment.
 - b) The decision about whether you meet the eligibility criteria is an important one that will be made carefully by the Head Office team under the supervision of the Principal Examiner for Professional Qualifications. Decisions are based on how you meet the criteria in line with how those criteria have been applied to others, taking into account all of the information we have been provided with. The decision not to allow an application to proceed at a particular time does not prevent further future applications. Candidates who we do not think are eligible to proceed yet, will be provided with guidance as to what steps they may need to take to meet the criteria.
- Self-evaluation

A significant element of the Diploma process is your ability to reflect on your own professional practice. Often Chartered Hygienists do not benefit from professional oversight by a more senior occupational hygienist. The ability to understand your development needs, to plan for your professional development and, crucially to know the limits of your competence, are crucial elements of professional practice, especially at this level.

For this reason, a vital part of the application process is for you to undertake a self-evaluation. This is not something that will be used qualitatively to make a judgement on your application, but we do expect that what is provided with your application demonstrates meaningful and substantial engagement. It is an element that will also be brought forward to comprise the introduction to your Professional Experience Portfolio.

There are two elements of the self-evaluation, neither of which is really about the end product, but y more to do with the process you go through to get there.

1) Personal statement This is your opportunity for you to investigate why the Diploma is the right professional development step for you. It is an exploration of your honest appraisal of where you are in your career and what you hope to gain from engaging with the process, as well as **any** concerns, reservations **and** challenges you feel you may encounter. It might help you to consider why the Diploma, rather than another investment of time, is the right thing for you at this stage of your career.

You might also want to think about what it may enable you to do once you attain Chartered status. This should not be an application statement, trying to show that you should be doing the Diploma, but a representation of a balanced and honest evaluation of where you are in your professional development and what you hope to get out of the Diploma process, as well as the status that Chartered Membership confers.

The personal statement is not something that will be marked or assessed, but it will be valuable to talk through it prior to submission with a mentor - preferably someone who is at Chartered level. It's helpful to reflect, but always good to do so with the support of a mentor. You will develop your personal statement to be part of your Personal Experience Portfolio submission, so it's not wasted effort.

Head Office may refer to it to help understand what we can do to better support professionals, but your thoughts are confidential to you and the applications team.

2) Self-evaluation tool This is a tool to enable you to undertake a structured self-analysis to help identify where you are in your professional experience and what further steps you need to take. Again, the tool is there for you to assess yourself, to help organise the evidence that you may want to put into your portfolio and help plan activities that may strengthen or add to your experience and help you prepare for other assessments. The tool can be found in Appendix 1. Please read the instructions for further explanation and detailed guidance.

On completion of the tool, you should feel broadly confident that you have objective evidence of meeting the headline competence criteria A to J, even if some areas need further development. If you are not meeting this level, you are probably not yet at the right place to proceed with your application, but you should use the tool to drive your CPD planning to address those areas of challenge.

Can I get help to check my application?

We hope that the guidance provided at the Diploma Day and in this document is sufficient to enable you to make a successful application. However, if you are unsure of any of the requirements, you can contact professional@bohs.org to discuss whether you have the right information, or if you need additional support because of disability or neurodiversity.

Mentors can be invaluable also to assist in the process, so it may be worthwhile discussing your application with a mentor if you think it would be helpful.

Can my application get rejected?

The Head Office team will assess whether you have included all the information we require in your application. If anything is missing, they will contact you and invite you to complete the missing parts.

If your application requires a decision about whether a qualification is exempting or it is non-standard, the Head Office team will refer to the Professional Examining team for advice and guidance. If there is a query on your application or, for some reason, you do not meet the criteria in relation to qualifications or meeting the time requirements, we will write to you to provide the reasons why you are not eligible. We will explain what steps you may want to consider to enable yourself to be eligible.

Since there is no bar on reapplication, there is no direct appeal process. However, if you feel that there has been an administrative mistake or you feel that we have not considered your application in a fair way, you can raise an incident for investigation through quality@bohs.org

We aim to respond to routine applications within 14 days and to respond to more complex applications within 28 days.

What happens when I am accepted?

When your application is accepted, the ball is in your court. The Head Office team will keep in touch and provide gentle reminders, as well as inviting you to Diploma Days. Even if you have not made as much progress as you might have hoped to, we recommend that you do attend. These aim to provide support for your motivation and an opportunity to take time out to focus on your professional development in a supportive and friendly environment.

To help you manage your progress, it is advisable to make a progress plan of your time with the following things in mind:

- 1) Your desired timescale for completing your PEP and Research Essay;
- 2) Booked meetings with your mentor;
- 3) Putting a marker in your diary to pre-book your professional discussion (slots disappear quickly)

- 4) Sharing this progress plan with Head Office, so that if you forget, there is someone to help you manage your desired timescales and offer you additional support should you find yourself needing it.

Your first assessment task is the professional experience portfolio.