



The Chartered
Society for Worker
Health Protection

Examination Guidance

P304

COSHH - Fundamentals of
Risk Assessment and Control

1 Examination Overview

The P304 written examination is an open book examination, comprising 30 short answer questions to be answered in 90 minutes. The exam includes a mixture of theoretical and scenario-based questions.

Candidates may use standard, non-programmable electronic calculators where calculations are required. However, programmable calculators, tablets, mobile phones, smart devices, or any equipment capable of storing, communicating, or processing information beyond basic calculation functions are not permitted unless specifically authorised by BOHS.

To ensure the integrity, fairness and validity of the qualification, the use of unauthorised resources is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, artificial intelligence (AI) tools, chatbots, generative AI applications, internet search engines, online forums, web-based applications, electronic communication platforms, or any other external source of assistance is not permitted by BOHS.

Candidates found to be using unauthorised materials or receiving external assistance during the examination may be subject to BOHS malpractice procedures. This could result in the examination being declared void, the withholding of results, or further sanctions in accordance with BOHS policies and procedures.

Each examination question is worth 4 marks each. The questions test the candidate's knowledge on hazardous substances in the workplace, their ill health effects, and how to carry out suitable risk assessments in line with the COSHH Regulations to reduce exposure to these substances. There are also several scenario-based questions, to determine whether the candidate can apply their learning to real-life situations.

The examination covers ALL sections of the syllabus in proportion to the time allocation as outlined in the qualification syllabus and is overseen by an invigilator in a controlled examination environment.

The pass mark for the examination is 50%

2 Examination Content

Section 1 tests that candidates fully understand the difference between a health hazard and a health risk in the workplace, by identifying different examples of each.

The questions in Section 2 focus on the legal requirements of COSHH risk assessments, drawing on important guidance notes that candidates should follow when carrying out risk assessments. Each question in this section will highlight a particular legislative document; for example, a question might ask candidates how often they should carry out a specific type of risk assessment in accordance with the COSHH Regulations.

Section 3 tests candidates on the ill health effects caused by hazardous substances, and how to measure the levels of hazard exposure in the workplace, to determine how much risk there is to the worker's health. Questions include identifying common routes of entry into the body for different hazardous substances, and the options available for monitoring and sampling the level of hazardous substance in the workplace.

Section 4 makes up half of the exam paper questions, and tests that candidates understand how to carry out a satisfactory risk assessment by following HSE's five risk assessment steps as follows:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Record significant findings
- Review assessment and update if necessary.

Questions include applying one or more of these five steps to a particular hazardous substance or workplace scenario.

The questions in Section 5 ask candidates about the different control options that can be used to control hazards in the workplace, including how to select and apply different control measures, and how to improve the efficiency of control in a specific workplace.

It is important to prepare candidates thoroughly for the exam, as poor exam technique can result in lost marks. Common errors to avoid are that candidates spend too long on the early questions, trying to get full marks, and running out of time. Advice to all candidates which should be included in their briefing needs to include:

- Read questions carefully before answering, and only then answer the question
- Avoid getting bogged down unnecessarily in the earlier questions
- Refer to course notes and other references only when necessary to help answer questions. Candidates can over-rely on references in an open book exam and spend too long double-checking facts in a book rather than trusting their own knowledge

The open book exams are designed to test application of knowledge; therefore, the direct answer may not be given in study books

- Give priority to questions that can be readily answered before tackling more challenging ones

It is recommended that candidates take a couple of minutes to look through the paper before they start answering the questions. They can then answer the questions they find easiest, which will help them to accumulate marks and hopefully give them confidence to tackle other questions.

3 Sample Examination Questions

All questions are worth 4 marks each:

Question 1

What is the difference between a hazard and a risk?

Question 2

What does the 'Sen' notation used in HSE Guidance Note EH40 mean?

Question 3

A paint decorating firm has asked you for advice on their priorities for COSHH risk assessments. Identify TWO high-risk processes or tasks within this profession, and the hazardous substances involved.

Question 4

Identify TWO sampling techniques that can be used to assess a welder for exposure to welding fumes.

Question 5

What does the hazard symbol below tell you about a hazardous substance?



Question 6

A construction site instructs their workers to mix cement manually by hand, which puts them at risk of exposure to cement dust. Name TWO control methods that could be used to reduce or eliminate exposure.

Question 7

Through which TWO routes of entry can skin hazards enter the body?

Question 8

According to COSHH Regulation 8, what are the main control measures that can be used to control exposure to hazardous substances?

Question 9

Give TWO examples of health effects that can be caused when the short-term exposure limit for isocyanate paint is exceeded.

Question 10

Identify TWO health hazards associated with welding processes. For each hazard, identify an ill health effect that could occur from exposure.

BOHS is a Chartered, science-based, charitable body that provides information, expertise and guidance in the recognition, evaluation, control and management of workplace health risks.

BOHS was founded in 1953: it is a learned society, publishing the world-renowned, scientific, peer-reviewed journal, Annals of Work Exposures and Health, and the only professional society representing qualified occupational hygienists in the UK. The Society supports, develops and connects its members with resources, guidance, events and training.

Its Faculty of Occupational Hygiene sets professional standards and is the only UK examining board for qualifications in occupational hygiene that are recognised internationally.

BOHS is the only occupational hygiene organisation to be awarded a Royal Charter: this was granted in April 2013 in recognition of BOHS' unique and pre-eminent role as the leading authority in occupational disease prevention.

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