



International Safety Awards 2020

Chief Adjudicator's Report

British Safety Council

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Results

A total of 577 applications were received for the International Safety Awards in 2020 and 88 % of these successfully achieved a Pass grade or higher.

The grading distribution among the applications in 2020 was as follows.

Distinction	87	(15%)
Merit	250	(43%)
Pass	172	(30%)
Fail	68	(12%)

There was no quota of grades to be awarded and nor will there be in future years. If every applicant meets the required standard, every applicant will be awarded a Distinction.

General comments

As with previous awards, it was clear that considerable effort had been invested in those submissions that scored well – with examples and supporting evidence provided to deliver a more complete and rounded answer. Strong applications were once more characterised by each question being analysed and answered in comprehensive terms, with the use of examples where required, and having made a clear link back to the marking scheme. Another characteristic of high scoring applications was the full use of the allocated word count - these applicants developed each individual response with care and consequently achieved higher scores without breaching the word limit.

New and repeat applicants are once more firmly encouraged to make use of the marking scheme and the Chief Adjudicator's Report from the previous year, together with the award scheme pre-entry webinar as a guide to the standards expected; the introduction this year of the command word appendix seeks to further support applicants. Taken together, the questions, marking scheme, Chief Adjudicator's Report, webinar and command word appendix are clearly of essential importance to any successful application. It is therefore a matter of disappointment and frustration that a proportion of applicants continue to overlook aspects of this information despite the emphasis regularly applied to it.

The application of practical real-life examples from the workplace are important and a key requirement in a number of questions, these once more served as an effective differentiator between the higher and lower-scoring submissions. The highest-scoring submissions were noted for their consistently focused, site-specific nature and use of examples. The introduction of the command word appendix was designed to assist with understanding – it is my experienced view that this appendix was only used by the highest scoring applicants.

The adjudicators again reported many instances of good or even exceptional initiatives among the submissions, with innovation featuring strongly in a number of applications across the range of scores; given the range of political, financial, global and resource challenges faced by many organisations and

the implications of this on planning, available finance, budgets and deployment this was encouraging to see. The adjudicators were again greatly encouraged to observe safety, health, welfare *and* wellbeing retaining the prominence that these areas warrant within organisations' financial expenditure and future commitments. The emergence of sound mental health and financial health management was particularly encouraging.

As applicants will observe from the grading distribution above, the standards required of applicants to the International Safety Awards continue to be robust. Each submission is carefully reviewed and scored according to its merits. For applicants wishing to score well, it is essential that they dedicate sufficient time to the analysis of each question and its requirements before a response is embarked upon; as a further reminder, the highest-scoring applicants utilised the reference documents, provided a complete answer, provided relevant examples, actioned the command word and used the allocated word count.

It is important that applicants ensure each question is answered in complete terms since the top mark bands for each question can only be accessed where all its aspects have been addressed in sufficient detail. As in previous years, weaker submissions tended to digress from the questions posed or otherwise restricted responses through partly relevant information. Similarly, responses of less than 300 words almost inevitably scored lower marks through insufficient detail - again, those that simply listed activities or factors with limited context could not expect to access the higher mark bands.

The adjudicators recognise that there is a limit to the amount of detail that can be provided given the word limits that are in place. Applicants should look to communicate the salient points of their systems, methodologies and approaches to planning and include some *relevant* detail or examples in support. It is not a requirement of these awards for applicants to describe everything in detail in order to gain full marks. Taken together with the preliminary questions, a 5,000-word submission (i.e. 10 x 500 words) across a range of questions is quite sufficient for an adjudicator to make a valid judgment regarding an organisation's approach to health and safety management.

Question 1

Describe the nature and scope of the main operation activities carried out at the site.

As indicated in the marking scheme *“This question is not marked but is **mandatory** as the response is essential for the adjudicators to understand the context and background of scored Questions 3-12.”*

A number of responses to this question included lots of corporate information. Whilst often interesting, such commentary offered limited insight in terms of the site and its operational activities.

Question 2

What are considered to be the most significant issues at the site in relation to the following. Please provide at least one example of each.

- **Occupational health hazards**
- **Occupational safety hazards**
- **Welfare concerns**

Again, as indicated in the marking scheme *“This question is not marked but is **mandatory** as the response is essential for the adjudicators to understand the context and background of scored Questions 3-12.”*

As with Question 1, whilst not marked, carefully considered and articulated responses to this **mandatory** question were essential for adjudication of the scored component of the application. This question supported applicants through further development of the context and operational environment. A general correlation was apparent between responses to this particular question and the overall score obtained by the submission - higher-scoring applicants consistently answered all three components of the question and focused on those activities posing the **most significant** issues at the site to occupational health, occupational safety and welfare concerns. In doing so, these applicants established a stable foundation for the remainder of their application.

Regrettably, a proportion of responses to this question consisted of simple lists lacking in the depth or description required to ‘set the scene’ in terms of health, safety and welfare at the site concerned. Failing to provide examples was a missed opportunity to give the adjudicators additional context for the remainder of the marked aspects of the submission. The use of Questions 1 and 2 to “set the scene” helps with the marking process overall and gives the adjudicator a greater understanding of the submission in its entirety and so may be more favourable for the applicant overall.

3. Explain how control measures implemented for one of the significant health and/or safety hazards identified within question 2 are monitored for effectiveness. Use specific examples to illustrate.

Question 3 had a clear association with Questions 1 and 2 and was specifically linked to Question 2. The question was designed to assist applicants in the development of their commentary to cover **one of the significant health and/or safety hazards identified within question 2** and explain how the control measures were monitored for their effectiveness – negatively or positively. It was notable that only the stronger submissions identified this link and built directly upon their preceding responses; a number of applicants listed hazards at the site. This was not required as this question asked for one area to be identified then expanded upon.

Applicants were required to explain how the measures were monitored for effectiveness, essentially how did the measures identified work (or otherwise). The operative word here being effectiveness. Higher-scoring responses included focused commentary on how the effectiveness of control measures was monitored and what was achieved in terms of continuous improvement and learning for the site

concerned. Such applicants frequently explored effectiveness in the context of both positive and negative experiences.

Regrettably, there were a number of very brief, generic answers to this question which neglected important aspects of effectiveness analysis. In order to achieve high marks, applicants needed to link their response to Question 2 in an effective manner and detail the process used to monitor the effectiveness of both the approach (e.g. improvement in accident performance or direct feedback from employees) and the controls in place.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive explanation of the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the control measures associated with one of the significant health and/or safety hazards identified within Question 2.

4. Describe how the organisation identified OH&S training and competency needs which are reflective of role requirements and any legislative duties.

This question was designed to examine the commitment of the organisation to training and competence across the various levels and how this competence was determined to reflect the requirements of the role and legislative requirements. Given the profile of most applicants to these awards, this question offered the potential to achieve very high marks where it was deconstructed appropriately and answered in full.

Regrettably, this question was answered poorly on a number of occasions. The question involved coverage of operational competency, health and safety training and a range (e.g. directors, managers and supervisors). Lower-scoring responses typically listed the safety training provided to operatives/supervisors or alternatively provided a rather bland overview of the training provision in general. Some applicants noted the impact of financial constraints and the need to defer aspects of their training provision. Frank and honest responses of this nature were not disadvantaged in terms of their ability to attract marks; this award looks for both positive and negative dimensions of safety, health and welfare at work and the financial restrictions routinely negotiated by those responsible for health and safety are fully acknowledged by the adjudicators.

The highest-scoring responses acknowledged what were ostensibly unrelated matters and linked them appropriately to safety (e.g. leadership training, project management). In doing so, these applicants demonstrated an understanding that good management and competence has a direct relationship with positive health and safety performance. Higher-scoring responses also included a detailed description of the training delivered and its objectives. As one would expect, this question prioritised quality over quantity and accordingly a number of applicants scored highly here despite the limited number of examples included in their response.

5. Explain how non-managerial workers participate in incident/near-miss/non-conformance investigations

Continual improvement, development of standards and process are considered essential – robust and thorough accident investigation, audit and inspection play a key role in this regard – as does the inclusion of those involved. This question sought to explore the methods and routes to improving performance through people and the how individuals groups were involved in this important process, specifically relating to incidents, near-misses and non-conformance. Noting the value that these individuals and groups give to continual improvement as they are the people that often experience issues ‘first hand’.

Low to mid-scoring applicants tended to focus on accident investigation and, in the main, discussed how findings were communicated internally; they did not discuss inclusion or participation. Whilst this is important they neglected to discuss the implications/lessons learned and sharing of best practice opportunities in the supply chain and wider groups and at the various level in an organisations structure.

Highest-scoring applicants firstly defined their understanding of non-managerial workers and then went on to provide a comprehensive description of how participation was sought and achieved across incident/near-miss/non-conformance investigations. Examples were provided and explanation of how data was gathered, filtered and then communicated (as appropriate). They provided a view of the routes to achieving this e.g. formal correspondence, sharing of documents, workshops, joint development groups etc. Their responses typically included a range of examples, relevant to the size of the organisation, that were pragmatic and which illustrated an understanding of non-managerial groups and their requirements.

6. Explain how the content of risk assessments are effectively communicated to relevant parties/stakeholders

This question was about ensuring that relevant parties – including internal and external stakeholders - were aware of the content of the appropriate risk assessments, including the process (hazard identification, risk assessment and controls) and outputs. It was vital that relevant parties/stakeholders were identified (e.g. employees, contractors, agency casual employees etc.) in the first instance – not all applicants did this. High-scoring responses addressed these various components of risk assessment in site-specific terms, across a range of appropriate stakeholders and provided appropriate examples and the rationale.

Weaker applicants typically made reference to one-way communication methods and failed to discuss the importance of inclusion, participation and engagement and the importance of a relationship.

Strongest responses recognised that parties/stakeholder groups are varied and that some are also vulnerable groups that fall into a number of categories (e.g. client, contractor, supplier or member of the public). These responses then described how risk assessment and associated communications were tailored to meet these specific groups. Strongest responses explored the challenges faced when involving stakeholders e.g. numeracy and literacy issues or when English is a second language or when cultural issues/hierarchies are evident. In doing so, the applicants exhibited an understanding that these issues require managing to ensure inclusion and reduce exposure to risk. The highest-scoring applicants explained the procedures that they had in place to engage parties/stakeholders and specifically vulnerable groups in high risk areas/hazardous industries.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive description of how relevant stakeholders effectively participate in the risk assessment process, with their response including specific examples of how parties/stakeholders participated to benefit all concerned.

7. Describe how progress on achieving health and safety objectives for the site is monitored and reported

This question provided a great deal of scope for the applicant to showcase novel methods, innovative approaches and the culture of their organisation – only the highest-scoring applicants took advantage of this.

This question was looking for a discussion around monitoring e.g. philosophy, approach, tools etc. and then what action was taken as a consequence of any unsatisfactory performance e.g. senior

management intervention, removal from site, penalties etc. The adjudicators noted that this was, in the main, focussed on punitive as opposed to rehabilitation or education and that partnering was not as evident as perhaps it could/should have been. This in itself is an interesting insight and the Chief Adjudicator would encourage those reading this to reflect on their own/organisational philosophy and the implications this may have.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive description of how the health and safety performance of contractors is monitored and gave a clear outline of what actions may be taken as a consequence of any unsatisfactory performance; using positive and negative improvement tools.

As with several other questions for this award, the flexibility provided here to applicants offered the potential to score highly - though again, only where the marking scheme was followed and an appropriate rationale included within the response.

Lower-scoring applicants tended towards rather generic commentary, typically with a disproportionate focus on safety.

Only the higher-scoring applicants provided enough discussion, with examples, to illustrate that adequacy and effectiveness had been considered. Higher-scoring applicants typically answered this question in full by identifying how progress was monitored and reported (**tools and process**) and then how this linked to the organisations objectives e.g. business plans, strategic reviews, health and safety committees etc. These applicants listed demonstrated a 'read-across' from operational objectives to health and safety objectives and vice-versa.

8. Describe how top/senior management are demonstrably involved in the continual improvement of the OHSMS

This question concerned the top/senior management team at this site (i.e. senior leaders) assuming an active role in setting standards and associated objectives to deliver a positive culture of continual improvement across the site.

Internal and external stakeholder populations (directly employed individuals, contractors, suppliers, suppliers, manufacturers, enforcing authorities, etc.) play a key part here. The adjudicators were therefore looking for examples of how the top management team exert a positive influence over those in the operation and how non-health and safety managers - for instance, those in HR, Procurement or Finance functions or others not traditionally associated with operations - demonstrated an active engagement in these important matters. As most health and safety practitioners will recognise, these groups play an important role in maintaining a positive attitude throughout the operation and they are to be actively engaged with in the pursuit of continual improvement.

The strongest responses provided clear evidence of how the top management actively role model and 'walk the talk' - and how this delivers significantly more value than rhetoric (i.e. delivering a flow-through benefit that contributes to a positive employee attitude right across the stakeholder populations). Their application provided a comprehensive description of how senior management are proactively involved in setting health and safety objectives for the site.

Weaker responses often framed their answer with close reference to their health and safety manager rather than the wider top/senior management team. Here, references to the Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director (or similar role) also tended towards routine or 'business as usual' activity such as chairing meetings, approving budgets and signing policies/agreements. Higher-scoring applicants provided examples of senior management team members engaging directly with the workforce and

other stakeholders (e.g. key suppliers, audit bodies and enforcement authorities) in defining and setting objectives. Such responses recognised that visible and felt leadership, active intervention and support can positively impact upon employee attitude, morale and relationships and ultimately upon performance. Responses of this nature also acknowledged the challenges faced by senior managers in their implementation of relevant initiatives, such as employee turnover, inertia or cynicism.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive description of how top/senior management are **demonstrably** involved and provided relevant examples to illustrate their point.

9. Describe how the mental health and wellbeing of workers is monitored

This question was deliberately broad natured and gave the applicant the opportunity to showcase the work they do at their site across mental health and wellbeing. In my capacity as Chief Adjudicator and practitioner I was heartened to read of the great work being done, across a huge range of sectors and on a global scale – well done!

Lower scoring applicants provided details of activities and interventions and the monitoring activities they had in place e.g. stress risk assessment, health promotion, health events. The higher scoring applicants did this but expanded their answer to give further insight into how what they did made a difference to the site (e.g. improved productivity, improved engagement, reputational enhancement and how “good health makes good business”) they supplemented their answer with examples and expanded descriptions and those in higher risk environments explored both health surveillance and health promotion whilst also discussing mental health and wellbeing and its relationship with physical health and wellbeing.

Another opportunity for applicants to showcase the work being carried out at their site, specifically around health and lifestyle – key aspects of broader wellbeing. It offered an open, flexible opportunity to discuss any range of interventions, activities and undertakings at the site that promoted and supported health and lifestyle.

Stronger applicants described their broad wellbeing arrangements and provided examples of enhanced provision such as employee assistance programmes, wellness programmes, health promotion and illustrated the tripartite relationship between health, safety and wellbeing.

The strongest responses to this question acknowledged tripartite relationship between health, safety and wellbeing and built on this to include financial wellbeing – an increasingly emerging topic in the contemporary wellbeing debates. They then went on to discuss the difficulties that are sometimes faced when trying to gain traction for health and lifestyle initiatives, the frequent absence of ROI (return on investment) data and the challenges faced in terms of securing resources (particularly budgetary-related resources).

Applicants in this category invariably structured their responses towards wellbeing and health promotion initiatives in place at the site and discussed the impact that these initiatives had made (i.e. improvements in attendance, improvements in safety performance, improvements in employee engagement scores, improvements in employee retention, etc.). Other examples from high-scoring applicants explored lifestyle and included flexible working arrangements, alternative leave arrangements, to accommodate specific needs and the effective inclusion of other vulnerable groups such as those for whom English is a second language.

It should be noted that the question required both support and information to be discussed. Weaker responses tended to focus on standard workplace initiatives or rudimentary practices such as safety

committees, the provision of drinking water in towers (i.e. rather than via taps) and working hours - and did so with little or no reference to broader wellbeing in respect of health and lifestyle considerations.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive description of the support and information made available to employees in relation to health and lifestyle issues (work-related and non- work-related) and the way(s) this can be accessed. They also provided a range of work and non- work-related examples to support the commentary.

10. Explain how relevant stakeholders participate in the management of change process

Only the strongest applicants answered this question in its entirety. A disappointingly high number of responses failed to see this as an issue and underestimated the importance of change management. This question sought to explore how agile risk assessment/risk management at the site is in practice and how risk review/dynamic risk assessment is deployed.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive explanation of how the potential health and safety impact of any changes in the workplace are assessed. Their response included a range of examples of how the impact of changes are assessed and health and safety standards and controls maintained.

Lowest-scoring applicants failed to provide sufficient information, with supporting examples, to demonstrate they understood the importance of assessing and supporting change.

11. Explain how the effectiveness of arrangements for emergency evacuation of persons with specific needs is ensured

This question served as a good example of how effective reference to the marking scheme can support an applicant. Applicants needed to consider the means and effectiveness and evaluation; only the highest-scoring applicants achieved this

High-scoring responses were, in most cases, comprehensive in terms of the activities and stakeholder groups considered and they recognised that partnering with specialist services (e.g. fire authority, rescue services, insurers, regulators and enforcers) may be necessary. The highest-scoring responses determined activities by high, medium and low risk and detailed the emergency arrangement discussions that had been conducted. Responses of this nature also typically reported on scenario planning, business continuity/disaster recovery planning and the importance of employee engagement in effecting high quality emergency plans.

Taking the above into account, generic or insufficiently detailed responses to this question inevitably struggled to secure high marks. Responses limited to “We tell our employees at induction” (and similar) were observed with frustrating frequency in lower-scoring submissions.

High-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive description of how the emergency incident arrangements at the site are communicated to all **relevant** parties, with a brief word on how relevance had been determined. Highest-scoring applicants provided the information above and then ensured that their response built on this and identified all **relevant** stakeholders (including non-employee groups) and includes specific examples of how effective communication is **evaluated**.

12. Explain how the health and safety performance of potential contractors is reviewed as part of the appointment process

Again, this question provided a great deal of scope for the applicant to showcase novel methods, innovative approaches and the culture of their organisation – only the highest-scoring applicants took advantage of this.

This question gave the applicant the opportunity to explain the extent to which they exercised their duty of care in the supply chain – an area known for having failings in certain sectors and how the appointment process was a key gateway to success.

Highest-scoring applicants provided a comprehensive explanation of how the health and safety performance of potential contractors is reviewed as part of the appointment process – discussing the tools and processes used, the frequency of reviews, actions taken if aspects were unsatisfactory and the importance they themselves placed upon it.

The lower scoring applicants tended to explain the process but did not then discuss the value of the process and importance of it, tending to just make references to the standard/procedure relating to the process and not the process itself.