

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA IN SAFETY ENGINEERING (IDSE)

Sample Unit 1 Exam

Achieving Continual Improvement in OH&S Management System



FORMAT	QUESTIONS	TOTAL MARKS	PASS BENCHMARK
Open book	15 compulsory	150 marks	75 / 150

Exam instructions

- 01 This is an open-book, non-invigilated practice paper. You may consult books and online reference material. This sample may be shared with prospective learners; it is not a live assessment or a certification result.
- 02 Answer all 15 questions. Section A carries 50 marks; Section B carries 100 marks. Each question carries 10 marks. The practice pass benchmark is 75 out of 150.
- 03 For a realistic practice attempt, allow a 24-hour completion window. This PDF has no online timer or submission facility; follow your registration instructions for any live assessment.
- 04 Write your answers in a separate document and clearly identify the unit and question number. The maximum length is 500 words per question, including any table you provide.
- 05 Apply every answer to the relevant scenario. Explain your reasoning and use specific workplace evidence or examples. Unsupported phrases such as 'poor training' or 'lack of management commitment' do not demonstrate analysis.
- 06 Use the marking guidance beneath each question to understand the expected depth and balance. Relevant, reasoned and concise answers earn marks; length alone does not. Avoid irrelevant material.
- 07 Write entirely in your own words. To practise under live-exam conditions, do not copy from reference sources, use AI tools to prepare answers, or ask another person to complete or write any part of your response.
- 08 Where a question asks for a checklist or table, use the column headings provided. State reasonable assumptions explicitly and distinguish them from facts supplied in the scenario.
- 09 Save your work regularly. In a live assessment, follow the examination system's saving and submission instructions and be prepared to explain your reasoning during a closing interview.
- 10 All organisations, incidents and figures in these sample scenarios are fictional. No model answers are included. This paper illustrates the assessment style and does not predict live examination questions.

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SECTION A / WORKPLACE SITUATION - 50 MARKS

Designing a proportionate management system

Read this scenario and answer Questions 1-5. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Harbourline Components manufactures insulated panels for refrigeration equipment. Its 120 employees work across two shifts, supported by 18 agency workers during seasonal peaks. Automated cutting and assembly machines have fixed guards and interlocked access points. Staff are trained to inspect finished panels, but heavy packs are moved manually between benches and forklifts share the loading area with pedestrians. Maintenance contractors attend during production hours. The business plans to add a second production line within a year.

The quality department already maintains training records, maintenance schedules and a digital defect-reporting system. Supervisors also complete seven separate daily safety forms, several of which repeat the same information. A sample of 40 forms contains identical entries even when different equipment was operating. Two forklift near misses were discussed informally but never entered into the reporting system. Agency workers say they are unsure who can stop an unsafe job and that instructions are available only in one language.

The managing director wants an OH&S management system that improves operational control and supports future certification. The production manager predicts that certification will require a form for every task and reduce output. A consultant instead proposes mapping the business processes, using existing records where suitable and prioritising higher-risk interfaces. Worker representatives request involvement before procedures are approved.

Last year's review authorised a segregated loading route, revised manual-handling arrangements and supervisor coaching. The loading barrier was installed, but deliveries now take place through a temporary entrance. Coaching attendance was recorded without checking changes in supervision. No baseline or success criteria were agreed for the handling changes. Management currently judges performance using injury totals and the percentage of forms completed. You have been asked to design a three-year improvement programme with annual reviews and interim checks.

Question 01

10 marks

Evaluate the production manager's claim that an OH&S management system will necessarily reduce productive time through paperwork. Use two examples from Harbourline to explain how documentation can either support control or create unnecessary work.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 6 marks | Reasoned evaluation of the claim and the relationship between documentation and operational control. |
| 4 marks | Two relevant examples, each explaining its effect on work and safety. |

Question 02**10 marks**

Determine the extent of documented information appropriate for Harbourline. Explain which existing records you would retain or adapt, which additional information is needed, and the organisational factors that justify your choices.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 2 marks | Clear explanation of what determines the extent of documented information. |
| 4 marks | Relevant document or record choices with reasons. |
| 4 marks | Application of organisational factors, including change, workforce needs and risk. |

Question 03**10 marks**

Distinguish effectiveness from efficiency when evaluating Harbourline's OH&S management system. Give one scenario-specific example of each and explain why a high form-completion rate alone cannot establish either.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 3 marks | Accurate explanation of effectiveness. |
| 2 marks | Relevant effectiveness example. |
| 3 marks | Accurate explanation of efficiency, including resource use. |
| 2 marks | Relevant efficiency example and the limitation of form-completion data. |

Question 04**10 marks**

Explain how you would analyse and then evaluate the handling and loading-route performance data before the next management review. Identify useful evidence, an appropriate basis for comparison and how the findings should influence decisions.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 2 marks | A clear analytical approach. |
| 2 marks | A clear evaluative approach using criteria or comparisons. |
| 4 marks | Reasoned connection between evidence, conclusions and improvement decisions. |
| 2 marks | A worked workplace example from the scenario; numerical calculations are not required. |

Question 05**10 marks**

Develop a five-stage audit trail to determine whether the three decisions from last year's management review achieved their intended outcomes. Explain how the output of each stage informs the next, using the loading route, handling changes or supervisor coaching as examples.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 5 marks | Five logically connected stages from the review decision to verified outcomes and follow-up. |
| 5 marks | Specific evidence and relevant examples that test effectiveness rather than completion alone. |

SECTION B / APPLIED SCENARIO 1 OF 5 - 20 MARKS

Financial management in OH&S

Read this scenario and answer Questions 6-7. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Rivermark Distribution operates three warehouses. It spends heavily on repeated awareness campaigns and agency cover for staff attending training, yet vehicle-pedestrian conflicts continue. Managers propose spending another GBP 18,000 on posters and briefings. An alternative is to trial a redesigned goods-in route and physical separation costing GBP 42,000. A previous proposal used an unsupported claim that every accident costs GBP 100,000 and was rejected by finance. The operations director is concerned about cash flow and disruption during installation. Maintenance records, damage reports, overtime data and loading delays are available, but no one has brought them together. The safety team has been asked to justify a targeted trial and show how its results will be assessed.

Question 06

10 marks

Explain why a general financial argument has failed to secure funding at Rivermark. Develop a more credible case for the proposed trial, using at least two examples of available evidence and acknowledging uncertainty and cash-flow constraints.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 6 marks | Critical analysis of the rejected argument and a credible, balanced replacement. |
| 4 marks | Two relevant evidence-based examples and their significance to the decision. |

Question 07

10 marks

Propose a four-step approach to improving the financial performance of Rivermark's OH&S arrangements while maintaining effective risk control. Explain how you would identify waste, select changes, test them and judge the outcome.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 4 marks | Specific diagnosis of ineffective or inefficient spending. |
| 4 marks | Four practical, connected improvement steps. |
| 2 marks | Explanation of how the changes improve value without weakening controls. |

SECTION B / APPLIED SCENARIO 2 OF 5 - 20 MARKS

Human factors and safety culture

Read this scenario and answer Questions 8-9. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Cedar Express operates 160 delivery vans. Dispatch bonuses depend on delivery counts, and experienced drivers praise colleagues who skip vehicle checks to leave early. New drivers who report defects are described as unreliable. Some drivers have limited confidence reading the company's written instructions. The fleet manager introduced an online reporting form, but drivers receive no feedback and several reports remain unresolved. A classroom safety course achieved full attendance without changing these behaviours. The company cannot add a permanent training department, but dispatch briefings, peer mentors and existing supervisor meetings are available.

Question 08

10 marks

Recommend five affordable interventions to improve Cedar Express's safety culture. For each, explain which behaviour or organisational influence it addresses and how you would check whether it is working.

MARKING GUIDANCE**10 marks**

Five interventions at 2 marks each: a specific, feasible action and a credible link to behaviour change or verification.

Question 09

10 marks

Explain five ways Cedar Express's current culture increases the cost of establishing, operating or maintaining its OH&S management system. Focus on management-system costs rather than the costs of injuries or vehicle damage.

MARKING GUIDANCE**10 marks**

Five distinct, scenario-specific causal explanations at 2 marks each.

SECTION B / APPLIED SCENARIO 3 OF 5 - 20 MARKS

Competence and information technology

Read this scenario and answer Questions 10-11. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Oakmere Foods has introduced digital maintenance permits across two sites. Experienced technicians understand the plant but some struggle with the tablet interface; recently recruited technicians use the software confidently but have limited knowledge of process isolation. Supervisors approve permits using shared logins because individual access is slow to arrange. Network coverage is unreliable in the refrigeration area. Managers consider eliminating practical competence assessments because the system records completion of online training. You are asked to reduce administrative effort without reducing the reliability of work authorisation.

Question 10

10 marks

Assess the relationship between worker competence and OH&S management-system performance at Oakmere. Explain why recorded training completion is insufficient and use two examples to propose how relevant competence should be demonstrated.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 6 marks | Reasoned explanation of competence, performance and the limits of training records. |
| 4 marks | Two specific examples of suitable competence evidence. |

Question 11

10 marks

Evaluate how the digital permit system could improve both effectiveness and efficiency. Identify the changes needed to address the scenario's limitations and use two examples to explain where technology should support, rather than replace, competent judgement.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 6 marks | Balanced evaluation of practical system changes, limitations and resource implications. |
| 4 marks | Two relevant examples linking features to reliable control and competent decisions. |

SECTION B / APPLIED SCENARIO 4 OF 5 - 20 MARKS

Auditing the safety function

Read this scenario and answer Questions 12-13. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Stonebridge Modules produces prefabricated building units. Its safety department completes monthly inspections and reports a 98% action-closure rate. However, the same access and lifting issues recur, closure often means a reminder email was sent, and inspection schedules have not changed following the addition of a night shift. Supervisors spend several hours each week preparing duplicate reports. The director wants an audit of the safety department's contribution to effective and economical control, rather than another physical inspection of the factory. You can examine inspection plans, action records, staff responsibilities, management reports and interviews with workers.

Question 12

10 marks

Prepare a five-row audit checklist for the performance of Stonebridge's safety department. For each row, identify specific evidence you would seek and explain what it would reveal about the department's effectiveness or efficiency.

Use these table headings: Evidence to examine / question to ask | What this would establish

MARKING GUIDANCE

5 marks Five relevant, precise evidence requests at 1 mark each.

5 marks Five corresponding audit rationales at 1 mark each.

Question 13

10 marks

Assume your checklist identifies an unsatisfactory finding in each of its five areas. Recommend one corrective action per finding and explain how each action would improve the safety department's performance. Link your actions to your Question 12 checklist.

MARKING GUIDANCE

10 marks Five linked corrective actions at 2 marks each, including a clear mechanism for improvement.

SECTION B / APPLIED SCENARIO 5 OF 5 - 20 MARKS

Risk assessment and consistency

Read this scenario and answer Questions 14-15. Apply your reasoning to the facts provided.

Larch Retail has 45 stores. Each store rates risks using a locally modified matrix. A delivery-bay vehicle conflict is classed as low risk at one branch because no injury has occurred, but high risk at another because pedestrians cross the reversing route daily. Managers multiply numbers from their matrices and call the result a quantitative assessment. Head office has useful records of delivery frequency, pedestrian movements and vehicle speeds from selected stores, but data quality varies. It wants comparable priorities without losing important differences between sites.

Question 14

10 marks

Develop a practical framework for making Larch's risk assessments consistent across stores. Explain the criteria to standardise, how local conditions should be retained, and how the approach would be introduced and checked.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 2 marks | Clear purpose and limits of standardisation. |
| 6 marks | Relevant assessment criteria and calibration arrangements. |
| 2 marks | Practical implementation and consistency checks. |

Question 15

10 marks

Compare qualitative, semi-quantitative and quantitative approaches for Larch's delivery-bay risk. Explain why multiplying matrix scores does not by itself establish a numerical probability of harm. Give one suitable example of a qualitative assessment and one of an evidence-based quantitative measure, noting its limitations.

MARKING GUIDANCE

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 3 marks | Clear distinction between the approaches. |
| 3 marks | Explanation of matrix scores, numerical estimates and uncertainty. |
| 4 marks | Two relevant examples with limitations. |

END OF SAMPLE PAPER

Check that you have answered all 15 questions and clearly numbered each response.