



International Safety Awards 2021

Chief Adjudicator's Report

British Safety Council

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Results

A total of 532 applications were received for the International Safety Awards in 2021 and 73% of these successfully achieved a Pass grade or higher.

The grading distribution among the applications in 2021 was as follows.

Distinction	85	(16%)
Merit	155	(28%)
Pass	147	(29%)
Fail	145	(27%)

There was no quota of grades to be awarded. Nor will there be in future years. If every applicant meets the required standard every applicant is awarded a Pass / Merit / Distinction accordingly.

The International Safety Awards have a key part to play in driving continual improvement in the management of workplace health, safety and wellbeing. The Chief Adjudicator's Report is intended to assist organisations in identifying what high performing organisations are doing each day to effectively manage the risk of injury and ill-health and to emulate their success.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected organisations of all sizes and sectors across the globe. Many applicant organisations identified COVID-19 as one of the most significant issues they were facing in the challenge to keep their workers healthy and safe. It was both impressive and re-assuring to learn of measures that organisations had put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infecting their workers and to ensure that their respective businesses could continue to operate.

Inevitably the pandemic has added to the workloads of health and safety managers and those involved directly in the management of the risks to workplace health and safety. This year, by exception, we extended the deadline for the submission of applications by two weeks recognising the demands the pandemic had placed on organisations.

General comments

Considerable time and effort were invested in those submissions that scored well. High scoring applicants were characterised by each question being thoroughly analysed and answered using appropriate evidence relevant to the risk that particular workplace had to manage. These applications used the allocated word count most effectively ensuring that their answer fully addressed the question. Additionally, high scoring applications demonstrated that all of the questions could be answered comprehensively within the word count.

Conversely applicants who provided short answers inevitably failed to provide the evidence necessary to score more than one mark. There were examples of answers running to no more than a few sentences. In consequence this impacted negatively on the mark attributed by the adjudicator.

Applicants were once again 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 use of the command words – "Describe" and "Explain" – are intended to assist the applicants in ensuring the questions are properly addressed in their answers.

Taken together, the questions, marking scheme, Chief Adjudicator's Report, webinar and command word appendix are clearly of essential importance to any successful application. A small but significant number of applicant organisations failed to follow the extensive advice and guidance and scores suffered in consequence.

The importance of ensuring that supporting evidence is relevant to the question cannot be under-stated – see Questions 5, 6, 8, 9 and 11. This supporting evidence attracts a total of five additional marks. Used effectively, the supporting evidence can lift scores making the difference between a Merit and a Distinction or Pass and Merit. No marks were awarded, for example, for a photograph lacking explanation.

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 adjudicators again reported many instances of good or even exceptional initiatives among the submissions. Organisations have had to be quick to respond and adapt in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were many examples of the speed with which organisations responded, including short-term lockdowns, to enable implementation of measures necessary to prevent contagion. At the same time, all of these organisations were continuing to daily manage the ongoing risks inherent in the hazards they faced.

The adjudicators were again greatly encouraged to see the importance that the senior management of applicant organisations attached to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of their respective workforces. Year-on-year we are seeing an exponential growth in initiatives designed to promote health and well-being and in particular prevent poor mental health. The International Safety Award applications contained many examples of organisations investing time and money to protect the health of their workers and promote wellbeing.

The bar for applicant organisations to achieve a Distinction has been deliberately set high. Whilst the Awards are intended to acknowledge the success organisations have achieved in managing the risk of workplace injury and ill health, it is only right that degrees of success are differentiated through the awarding of Distinction, Pass and Merit. Each submission is carefully scored and then reviewed, to ensure that the appropriate grade is awarded.

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. However, 700 words is considered sufficient for applicants to provide a comprehensive, relevant and compelling answer underpinned by appropriate evidence.

The adjudicators hope that the information provided in this Report, helps you not only in preparing for the 2022 International Safety Awards, but equally importantly, in providing information that helps you to continue to meet the challenges in ensuring the prevention of injuries and ill health occurrences in your workplace.

Site details

Applicants are asked to provide details of any Improvement Notices, Reportable Injuries, Dangerous Occurrences or Occupational Ill Health cases and any remedial actions taken. Although not attracting marks, this is important contextual information for the adjudicators. There were organisations, whilst not having had a notice served or relevant injury, occurrence or case, provided extensive information in these two boxes, which would have been more appropriate in answering Questions 1 and 2.

Question 1

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

As explained 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 respondents included extensive corporate information, whilst omitting sufficient detail on the full extent of the operational activities undertaken at that site.

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
- Wellbeing concerns

Again, the marking scheme explains that *“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. Higher-scoring applicants consistently answered all three components of the question and focused on those activities posing the **most significant** hazards at the site and the risks posed to the safety, health and wellbeing not only to their workers but also, for example, to contractors and other stakeholders. Lower-scoring applicants only briefly listed hazards and concerns, without an explanation of their significance.

Question 3

Explain how control measures implemented for one of the significant health, safety and/or wellbeing hazards identified within question 2 are monitored for effectiveness.

Question 3 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, safety and/or wellbeing hazards identified within question 2 and explain how the control measures were monitored for their effectiveness – negatively or positively. Higher scoring submissions were able to articulate the significance of the hazard, the control measures put in place, the arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the control measures, the impact of those measures and very importantly how the results of monitoring influenced any changes in the management of the particular hazard going forward.

A significant number of applicants replicated all of the hazards at the site listed in their answer to Question 2 with little additional information. This was not required as this question asked for one area to be identified, then expanded upon. This resulted in superficial answers and consequently a low score. Other low scoring answers focused solely on the process of carrying out the particular operation, whilst not providing sound evidence regarding the identification of control measures and the monitoring necessary to ensure effectiveness.

Question 4

Describe the internal and external factors which senior site management consider during the review of health and safety performance.

To secure top marks an applicant organisation needed to identify three or more internal and external factors which senior management needed to consider during their review of health and safety performance. What was clear from the answers was that the degree to which senior management was directly involved in the process of reviewing health and safety performance varied considerably. This was highlighted in the factors identified by applicants when answering the question.

Low scoring organisations provided few examples of the factors taken into consideration and/or the examples they provided were cursory in failing to identify why these particular factors were considered significant. High scoring organisations demonstrated that senior management was regularly provided with the necessary evidence to be assured that the risk of injury and ill health was being effectively controlled. Internal factors will vary from organisation to organisation.

Whilst there is no definite list of relevant internal factors, the high scoring organisations, as part of the senior management review among other things, examined the adequacy of current policies, a range of metrics including days lost, feedback from employees and audit outcomes. External factors included

regulatory compliance, legislative change, political and financial considerations, insurance requirements and community concerns.

Question 5

Describe how non-managerial staff participate in determining suitable control measures intended to manage hazards and risks identified through the risk assessment process.

Applicants have the option of submitting supporting evidence to pick up an additional mark.

The awarding of maximum marks for this question is dependent on the applicant including a range of specific examples of non-managerial staff's involvement in the identification of control measures.

High scoring applications included details of who in the organisation matched the non-managerial role descriptor. Identification of those involved in the risk assessment process was key – why were these non-managerial staff involved, what training was provided to help them participate effectively in the process, how the outcome of that process was fed through to non-managerial staff more widely and a detailed explanation of media/forums used to communicate new or revised control measures. In order to score top marks, it was necessary to describe in detail how non-managerial staff participated in the risk assessment process, for example, through hazard walks and how their involvement influenced and informed control measures.

Low scoring applications provided one or no examples. The example in such cases was often cursory, failing to identify those involved and lacking evidence of real participation.

Supporting evidence included outcomes of risk assessments, identifying those involved in the process, audit reports, team meetings and staff suggestion schemes.

Question 6

Explain how the outcome of internal health and safety audits are communicated to relevant stakeholders.

Applicants have the option of submitting supporting evidence to pick up an additional mark.

This question was about ensuring that relevant parties, including internal and external stakeholders, were aware of the content of health and safety audits.

A top scoring response included a full explanation of more than one communication method. The answer should also clearly identify both relevant internal and external stakeholders. Top scoring answers identified the key components to ensure the effective communication of audit outcomes and communication methods used. Relevant stakeholders were identified both internal and external including, for example, externally the regulator, investors, insurers, contractors and certification bodies and internally senior managers, supervisory staff and worker representatives.

A weak explanation of how audit outcomes are communicated to relevant stakeholders, to whom and how, resulted in a low score. Examples of the reason for low scoring answers include focusing on the audit process whilst failing to explain how the outcome is communicated.

Supporting evidence included summaries of audit reports, safety officer inspection report, notes of health and safety committee meetings and the use of communications technology such as mobile phones.

Question 7

Describe how progress for managing operational change which may impact on health and safety performance across the site.

The awarding of maximum marks for this question was dependent on the applicant including a full description of the management of change process in that particular organisation. Top scoring organisations provided a range of operational changes which had an impact across that particular site, together with examples of implementation. These changes included, for example, staffing levels, shift changes, changes in machinery and equipment, technology and working practices. High scoring organisations were able to describe the measures put in place to identify, assess and control the impact of changes.

Low scores were awarded to those organisations who provided a weak description of the process for operational change, with one or no examples. A number of applicants appeared to have copied text concerning organisational change from management textbooks without linking to their own particular site.

High scoring organisations, particularly those having British Safety Council Five Star, OHSAS 18001 or ISO 45001 certification, explained the importance of having in place proven systems for managing operational change and were able to explain the components essential to successful change.

Question 8

Explain how persons with specific responsibilities during an emergency event are provided with suitable training to effectively implement their roles(s).

Applicants have the option of submitting supporting evidence to pick up an additional mark.

High scoring organisations provided an extensive explanation of the role and responsibilities of members of management and staff in the event of an emergency. Importantly, applicants were asked to detail the training these members of management and staff had received to carry out their roles in the event of an emergency.

The quality of the answers to this question were generally disappointing. An example of organisations, in a number of cases, not properly analysing what evidence the question required. This particular question, of all of the questions, attracted low scores.

There were, however, high scoring organisations who properly grasped the issues the question raised and responded with the evidence that the question required. The hierarchy of control was fully explained by such organisations – importantly who does what during an emergency event. The answers gave you the necessary assurance that in the event of an emergency those with assigned responsibilities had clearly defined roles and the knowledge and expertise to carry out their respective roles.

Low scoring organisations failed to identify who were the relevant persons with roles and responsibilities during an emergency event. These and other low scoring organisations said little or nothing about the training that those persons had to undertake in order to carry out their duties effectively.

Supporting evidence included logs of specific training, training certificates, first aid, transportation of dead bodies and an emergency plan.

Question 9

Describe how the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is assessed for suitability when identified as a control measure.

Applicants have the option of submitting supporting evidence to pick up an additional mark.

Full marks for this question were dependent on applicants providing a full description of the assessment process used to ensure the identification and selection of suitable PPE. The question was not looking for a re-statement of what the law requires in that particular jurisdiction. Again, there were low scoring applications that were wholly theoretical and while correct, completely missed what evidence the question was seeking to elicit.

High scoring organisations provided, as requested, a range of examples of stakeholder involvement in assessing suitability. These organisations took as their starting point the hierarchy of risk management, making clear that the use of PPE should always be the last resort rather than the first resort. High scoring organisations made clear that there are no shortcuts to PPE selection. Although not exhaustive, organisations needed to take steps to ensure that the PPE matched the hazard, including adhering to the regulatory requirements; following laid-down standards; considering ergonomic issues; fit testing; consulting the workforce both during selection and once in use; providing training, and regularly and continuously monitoring effectiveness.

Supporting documentary and photographic evidence included extensive records of PPE risk assessments, outcomes of PPE trials and advice and guidance to workers on the use of chemical suits.

Question 10

Describe the health and safety related factors considered when approving contractors/suppliers or outsourced functions.

In order to secure a top score, the applicant must be able to comprehensively describe the health and safety factors considered when approving contractors/suppliers and those organisations providing outsourced functions. Top scoring organisations provided a wide range of factors with sound evidence of the review process.

Low scoring organisations only provided a limited or weak description of the factors and no examples of the review process. There were a small number of applicants who focused on providing theoretical answers rather than providing evidence of the measures their organisation had in place to ensure the suitability of contractors and suppliers.

Many high scoring organisations had an 'Approved Contractor' list. The challenge for contractors and suppliers was to answer the pre-qualification questionnaire to the satisfaction of the client (in this case the award applicant). Organisations differed on the requirements that the contractor and supplier had to satisfy in order to be awarded a contract.

While not exhaustive, factors considered included the supplier or contractor's health and safety performance, compliance with regulatory requirements, relevant risk assessments for previous contracts, a record of the skills, expertise and qualifications of the workforce to carry out the contracted work, details of similar contracts previously undertaken, client references, insurance coverage and certification as OHSAS 18001 or ISO 45001. High scoring organisations also provided evidence of the measures they had put in place to review the performance of the contractor or supplier and the action they would take in the event of non-compliance.

Question 11

Explain how the organisation (site level) has consulted with relevant stakeholders regarding work/workplace issues which could affect their wellbeing

Applicants have the option of submitting supporting evidence to pick up an additional mark.

A number of organisations obtained low scores by failing to explain how they had consulted with relevant stakeholders. Some applicants focused on the risk of injury and/or work-related ill health occurrences, neglecting to address the impact on the wellbeing of their workers.

For some organisations, wellbeing remains an area that is low on their respective agendas or they are on the beginning of a challenging but essential journey to put in place programmes and initiatives to tackle stress and poor mental health. There were a small number of organisations who missed the crux of the question, for example, providing a lengthy explanation of the role of ergonomics in the abstract.

A top scoring response would include an explanation of how relevant stakeholders are consulted concerning wellbeing in their workplace. Consultation methods could include staff surveys, employee forums, staff suggestions, risk assessments, audit reports, feedback on the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives and metrics from the analysis of data concerning staff absences. A number of high scoring applicants have 'wellbeing champions' whose role includes actively promoting wellbeing, organising wellbeing activities and feeding back issues that impact on workplace wellbeing to senior management and staff more widely.

Supporting evidence included documentary and photographic evidence of events and activities promoting wellbeing, detailed action plans to prevent COVID-19 infesting the workforce and their families, the provision of a virtual GP (doctor) service and the provision of confidential employee assistance programmes.

Question 12

Describe how senior (top) management develop and promote a positive culture within the organisation that supports the health and safety management system and arrangements.

An organisation may have comprehensive policies in place to prevent injury and ill health in the workplace and highly competent managers with the necessary skills to manage relevant risks. But without committed and an active top-level leadership and an engaged workforce, it would be impossible for that organisation to effectively manage the risks to workplace health and safety it faces.

ISO 45001 attaches great importance to the role played by top management in ensuring the effective management of risks to health and safety. There were low scoring applications, while setting out the organisation's philosophy concerning health and safety failed to provide any evidence of top management involvement in actively driving good health and safety.

Top scoring responses included a comprehensive description of how senior management promote a positive culture across the organisation and demonstrate their commitment to continued improvement. A range of examples were provided by these applicants as to how that culture is developed and promoted. High scoring applicants were able to demonstrate precisely why and how top management were involved in driving continuous improvement.

Visibility of top management was considered key. Health and safety for some high scoring organisations is top of the agenda of senior leadership team meetings, for example, before sales, revenue and productivity. The involvement of top management in accident investigation was also seen by high scoring organisations as a demonstration of their commitment to ensuring going forward that risks were effectively managed. Other examples included the provision of health and safety leadership training to assist top management understand and apply their responsibilities as set out in ISO 45001.

Certification evidence

The 2021 International Safety Awards recognise that many organisations are currently transitioning from OHSAS 18001 to ISO 45001 certification. We have made allowances for this by awarding three marks to those organisations who have provided evidence of having such certification and/or have achieved three to five stars in the British Safety Council's audit scheme.