



International Safety Awards 2025

Chief Adjudicator's Report

British Safety Council

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Results

A total of 874 applications from organisations across the world were received for the British Safety Council's International Safety Awards (ISA) in 2025.

A Distinction, Merit or Pass was achieved by 90% of applicants.

The distribution of grades among the applications submitted in 2025 was as follows:

Distinction	212
Merit	371
Pass	206
Fail	85

Year	Total number of applications	Overall pass %	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Fail
2025	874	90%	212 (24%)	371 (42%)	206 (24%)	85 (10%)

Eligibility rules for entry to the 2025 ISAs were tightened by British Safety Council; the need for robust 'due diligence' is key to ensuring integrity and excellence and will continue. There were, therefore, fewer award applications in 2025 compared to 2024, but the number received returned to the patterns recorded pre-2024. The ISAs continue to be popular, reflecting the esteem in which winning the award is held.

The number of **Distinctions** awarded in 2025, 212, was the same proportionally as in 2024.

577 **Merit** and **Pass** grades were awarded in 2025, 66% of total applications, compared to 68% in 2024 and 65% in 2023.

Overall, the proportion of applicants receiving an International Safety Award in 2025 was 90%.

The International Safety Awards have an extensive international reach. Applicant organisations came from many countries across the globe including: Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Dubai, Egypt, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Ireland, Singapore, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey and United Kingdom.

The ISAs continue to have a vital role in helping to drive continuous improvement in the management of workplace health, safety and wellbeing. My report is intended to assist organisations by identifying what high performing organisations do to prevent the risk of injury and ill-health, together with the arrangements they have in place to promote wellbeing in the workplace.

A further aim of my report is to assist organisations contemplating applying for the ISAs in 2026 by providing them with advice on how best to present their evidence to achieve ISA success.

General comments

Organisations were provided with online 'easy-to-access' aides to assist them in the preparation and submission of their award applications. These included:

- The 2025 International Safety Awards question set and marking scheme
- The Chief Adjudicator's Report for the 2024 International Safety Awards
- A guidance note concerning the eligibility requirements
- The list of 2024 ISA winners; and
- Details of webinars hosted by British Safety Council in October 2024 and January 2025.

The webinars hosted by British Safety Council staff, the Chief Adjudicator and the award scheme's Independent Adjudicator were well attended. The purpose of the webinars was to assist applicants by addressing and answering their queries and helping their understanding of how best to provide the evidence necessary to achieve high marks.

The importance of applicants accessing and understanding the ISA eligibility requirements as set out in the regulations, guidance and advice listed cannot be overstated. Closely following the regulations, guidance and advice provided is key to a successful ISA application.

We asked applicants to provide details of any accidents, incidents or occurrences that had taken place at their site in 2024 and details of any regulatory sanctions that were imposed. This information is vital to the adjudication process and has a bearing on how adjudicators judge the effectiveness of the applicant organisation in ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its workforce in 2024. Had enforcement action been taken in the relevant eligibility period it is for the adjudicators to decide whether any resulting remedial action is sufficient to allow the application to proceed to adjudication.

We cannot overstate the importance of reading and understanding the questions. Low scores in many cases resulted from an incomplete reading or misunderstanding of what was being sought.

Presentation is all important. For example, applicants who provided long lists of arrangements in place or actions taken without explanation of 'how, why and to what effect' were marked down. The use of informative headings, subheadings and paragraphs are a valuable tool in enabling adjudicators to gauge how well the applicant has addressed the core elements of the question. However, it is not enough to simply cut and paste from policy or procedure manuals without tailoring answers to the specific site and its practices, and/or excluding superfluous information.

For ISA 2025 we departed from the format of previous years by eliminating the part b) questions requesting the attachment of supplementary evidence, each of which attracted just one additional mark. This time, the evidence required had to be provided in a textual form with a limit of 600 words for the answers to each question.

Supplementary marks continued to be awarded to applicants who had successfully been certified by British Safety Council under the Five Star Audit scheme or to ISO 45001 in the relevant qualifying period.

In our ISA webinars we advised applicants to draft answers in a separate word document before transferring to the online application. It is essential that all answers are proofread and ideally peer reviewed by a colleague before the application is submitted. The time taken to do so is time well spent as it can result in the extra marks that make the difference, for example, between a Pass and a Merit or a Merit and a Distinction.

British Safety Council, the Chief Adjudicator and the Independent Adjudicator are aware that in a small number of applications AI had been used to generate answers. This resulted in formulaic, theoretical, textbook answers that provided the adjudicators with little sense of how health, safety and wellbeing was being managed effectively at the applicant's site. Going forward ISA will be putting further measures in place to identify answers generated by AI or search engines and marking down such applications accordingly.

We understand that where there have been multiple applications for different sites from within one organisation there will be instances where identical text will be used when answering specific questions, for example, regarding management systems, audit arrangements and training and development activities. While this is permissible, it is essential that applicants, wherever required, provide evidence that is site specific and tailor their answers as appropriate.

Applicants who provided too short answers inevitably failed to provide the evidence necessary to score more than one mark. We advise applicants to make full use of the 600-word limit, where necessary, to ensure that the adjudicator marking that application understands the 'what, why, how and to what effect' of the actions and arrangements that are central to answering that question successfully.

The use of practical real-life examples from the workplace are essential and a key requirement in all eleven of the ISA 2025 questions. Likewise, we cannot over-stress the importance of providing comprehensive answers to questions 1 and 2. While these are both contextual non-scoring questions, they enable the adjudicators to understand how things operate in practice in the site or workplace covered by an application. This approach brings applications to life and helps improve the adjudicator's understanding of the effectiveness of the measures in place.

The highest-scoring submissions were noted for their consistently focused, site-specific nature and use of examples.

Wellbeing has moved up corporate and business agendas. Successful applications provided comprehensive and persuasive evidence of the actions taken by the organisation to ensure the health and wellbeing of their workforce and the wider community impacted by their activities.

When addressing the wellbeing questions some applicants provided details of measures taken at their site to prevent injury and ill health, neglecting to provide evidence of any initiatives and measures in place to improve and protect the quality of workers' lives and mental health more generally.

The adjudicators hope that the information provided in this report helps you not only in preparing for the 2026 International Safety Awards, but equally importantly provides information that helps you to continue to meet the challenges you and your colleagues face in preventing injuries and ill health occurrences and ensuring wellbeing in your workplace.

Our intention is that the question set for ISA 2026 will be comprehensively revised, introducing new questions, while ensuring that we address the central challenges you face each day. We wish you every success in 2026.

I wish to thank the panel of adjudicators and colleagues at the British Safety Council for their hard work and dedication in handling the applications speedily and with rigour.

Questions – Introduction

Questions 1 and 2 are contextual and scene-setting non-scoring questions that have been key features of the International Safety Awards for many years.

The information about the activities carried out by your organisation at the applicant site and the hazards and challenges concerning health, safety and wellbeing faced by your workforce is key to helping the adjudicator in judging the following point-scoring questions 3-13.

These questions will likely appear again in the 2026 International Safety Awards question set.

Application Question 1 – no marks attach to this question

Describe the main operational activities at your site. Include details of the number of staff working at the site and their main functions.

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 – 13.

The question required a description of the main activities/operations undertaken at the applicant's site including the location, the timeframe, the occupations and numbers of those working there, and including an overview of contractors working at the site.

A comprehensive answer detailing the full extent of the activities undertaken at the applicant's site is crucial to assist the adjudicators' understanding of the business operation. The focus must be on the activities at the applicant's site rather than providing extensive text on the organisation's wider operations.

Application Question 2 – no marks attach to this question

At your site, what are the most significant:

- **Occupational health hazards?**
- **Occupational safety hazards?**
- **Wellbeing and mental health challenges?**

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 – 13.

Award winning applicants addressed all three elements of the question separately, specifically focusing on health, safety and wellbeing concerns, and the most hazardous activities at that site. Their responses then outlined the risks these posed to the safety and health of their employees, their contractors' employees and, where appropriate, the wider community.

High scoring applications provided a comprehensive list of hazards with an explanation of why the cited hazards and concerns were of significance to the specific site covered by their application.

Applicants who only briefly listed health and safety hazards without an explanation of their significance did not assist adjudicators in judging the following eleven point-scoring questions.

Applicants who failed to detail significant wellbeing challenges put themselves at a disadvantage when answering subsequent linked questions.

Application Question 3 – a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Set out your key health, safety and wellbeing objectives for 2025 and identify the three top priorities you aim to achieve.

Explain how staff at your site play a part in identifying and informing your health, safety and wellbeing objectives for 2025.

High-scoring applicants comprehensively answered every component of this question. Key objectives and top priorities were detailed separately. Importantly, linking back to questions 1 and 2, the 'why and what' needed to be stated in the answer. High-scoring applicants having provided a comprehensive answer to the first part of the question, went on to provide a detailed explanation of the part played by staff at the site in informing the key objectives.

Low-scoring applications failed to answer both parts of the question, did not recognise the difference between objectives and priorities, and/or provided lists of objectives, priorities and staff engagement activities that lacked any rationale.

Application Question 4 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Describe how management at your site assesses the occupational health and safety competency needs of all staff and meets those needs through training and development.

High-scoring applicants provided comprehensive details of how the competency needs of all staff were assessed and met through the provision of training and development. The description of the method(s) used to assess competency needs and how relevant training and development was formulated and delivered were key to the award of a high score.

For high marks, it was essential for applicants to describe how the effectiveness of training and development was continually monitored and assessed and, where necessary, further reinforced. High scoring applicants also outlined their methods of assessing potential employees, for example, through review of qualifications and experience, aptitude and/or skills tests.

Low-scoring applicants invariably did no more than list training and development activities provided for staff at the site and failed to make the link to competency needs.

Application Question 5 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

In your answer to Question 2 you provided details of the most significant wellbeing challenges at your site:

(a) Which members of staff are responsible for ensuring wellness and mental health challenges are addressed? Please specify their job titles and their responsibilities.

(b) How do you ensure that these staff members are competent to carry out those responsibilities?

This was also a two-part question both parts of which needed to be comprehensively answered to earn high marks.

It was not sufficient solely to provide job titles without an explanation of the precise nature of the wellbeing responsibilities. Low-scoring applications also missed the point that the question was focussed on wellbeing and instead detailed health and safety responsibilities.

The question thus sought to ascertain 'what' responsibilities the relevant roles involved and 'how' they assisted in meeting wellbeing and mental health challenges at the applicant site.

High scoring answers highlighted the ways in which roles from senior managers to HR staff, supervisors and mental health first aiders all worked together to create an environment where awareness of wellness and mental health issues were part of the everyday conversation.

High-scoring applicants provided persuasive evidence in answering the second part of the question and provided examples of how the competency needs of relevant staff members were being met. The question required details of the training and development in place to ensure continuing competence rather just a list of activities. The highest scoring applications tended to have detailed and systematic training/development schemes, going beyond one-off workshops or courses.

Application Question 6 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Explain how management at your site identifies health, safety and wellbeing legal duties and requirements and ensure compliance?

This question was one on which a few applicant organisations scored poorly. It required applicants to identify which members of management within their organisation have responsibility for identifying applicable health, safety and wellbeing legal duties, and then going on to describe the measures in place to ensure compliance as required within the organisation and across functions.

Solely providing a list of statutory and regulatory requirements was not sufficient to merit a high or good score. The most effective answers detailed three key elements:

- How, how often, and who by, legislative requirements were identified
- How and how often applicable legislative requirements were cascaded/directed to relevant teams and individuals; and
- How compliance with the requirements was ensured, for example, through audit, performance reporting, training and development and communications.

Application Question 7 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

What reporting mechanisms do you have to ensure your senior management team receives the information to confirm that occupational health and safety at your site is managed effectively?

High-scoring answers provided comprehensive details of reporting mechanisms – the ‘what, how, when and impact’ – of information to senior management. A variety of mechanisms were identified including:

- The reporting of performance against leading and lagging indicators
- Daily, weekly and monthly reports
- Training and development activities
- Reports of accidents, incidents and occurrences
- Reports of near misses
- Feedback from staff including from team briefings, suggestion boxes, toolbox talks and via e-communication methods such as WhatsApp, email and other digital tools
- Audit – internal and external
- Management engagement including regular management walks; and
- Reports concerning regulatory compliance and non-compliance.

Low-scoring applications provided limited lists of mechanisms used. Little or no detail of the relevance of the information included was provided, nor of how senior management used it to be assured that the risks posed to the operation were being effectively managed and where necessary remedial action was being taken. Highest scoring applications not just used a variety of mechanisms but used them frequently and outlined clear purposes for each one.

Answers to this question from many applicants highlighted the increasing use by many organisations of instantaneous technology to provide senior management with immediacy and to enable employees to easily provide ad hoc and/or on the spot feedback.

Application Question 8 – a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

What training and development is provided to the senior management team at your site to help them promote a positive safety culture?

High-scoring applications identified the members of the senior management with details of their precise responsibilities concerning ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of workers at the site. Further information was provided on how the training and development needs of senior managers had been assessed and what precisely needed to be provided to ensure that they had the necessary competence and behaviours to demonstrably contribute to a positive safety culture.

High-scoring applications demonstrated how cultural learning was continually reviewed, refreshed and monitored to ensure desired behaviours were being sustained. They also included details of the use of a range of training and development mechanisms from formal training resulting in qualifications to conferences, seminars/workshops, online learning, and mentoring.

Low-scoring applications only provided the briefest of details concerning training and development for senior managers and no explanation of how these activities impacted on organisational culture. Others concentrated solely on the training and development provided to managers whose roles were primarily about health and safety and failed to include the wider senior management teams.

Application Question 9 – a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

What arrangements do you have at your site to enable and encourage staff to report health, safety and wellbeing concerns or issues?

What communication channels do you use to inform staff of the actions you take to resolve those issues?

This question, as with many others, generated well-evidenced answers resulting in high scores.

High-scoring applicant organisations provided a wide range of channels for staff to report health, safety and wellbeing concerns including staff suggestion boxes, toolbox talks, digital technology including body cameras, email and WhatsApp, near-miss reporting (often instant via digital channels), hazard identification and internal audit.

Such applicants also outlined mechanisms which allowed confidential and anonymous reporting.

Importantly high scoring organisations detailed how the information generated, and the concerns raised by staff, was addressed by management, together with the action taken. Descriptions of the feedback mechanisms in place to inform staff of actions to address the concerns raised were essential to score a high mark.

Low-scoring organisations provided little or no information of the effectiveness of the channels they had in place or were planning to introduce to enable staff to have confidence that their concerns would be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.

Application Question 10 – a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Describe the arrangements you have to recognise and reward teams at your site for outstanding behaviour in preventing ill health occurrences and injury?

Please provide two examples of behaviours you have recognised and rewarded in 2024.

Increasingly organisations are recognising the immense benefits to be gained from SMART recognition and reward schemes. High-scoring applicants provided comprehensive details of schemes recognising the contribution of individuals, teams and the entire organisation in preventing injuries and ill-health occurrences. The question sought to explore both proactive and reactive measures.

In some cases, details were provided of the way that individuals and teams worked together to change and improve practice and/or procedures having seen the impact of poor performance or poor behaviour. High scoring applicants frequently had schemes that included recognition awarded 'on the spot', together with more formal monthly, quarterly and/or annual awards schemes.

The recognition of outstanding behaviour could take many forms including through publicity in newsletters/on intranets, trophy presentations and team outings. Although not essential for a high score there were many examples of monetary rewards (small to significant) and/or an additional leave allowance for exemplary behaviour. Again, the highest scoring organisations used a variety of ways of recognising and reinforcing positive behaviours and initiative.

Some applicants provided examples of individual instead of or as well as team reward and recognition. This was acceptable.

Low-scoring applications failed to provide any examples of rewarded recognised behaviour in 2024. Applicants who provided only sparse details of such behaviour, or were not using structured and well publicised schemes, also did not receive a high score. The best examples gave a succinct but vivid picture of the rewarded behaviour and the scheme itself.

Application Question 11 – a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Describe the arrangements at your site for auditing your occupational health and safety management systems.

Please provide three examples of improvements you have made following a recent audit to enhance your occupational health and safety performance.

This question had two parts both of which had to be answered comprehensively to score a high mark. Low-scoring answers while answering the first part of the question well, either failed to provide the requisite number of examples or provided examples that lacked detail on the improvements or other remedial action taken to address audit recommendations effectively.

High-scoring applicants provided comprehensive detail of the audit arrangements in place, both internal and/or external, including frequency, who conducted the audits, who within the organisation was responsible for either carrying out/organising audits, and/or ensuring that audit results and recommendations were acted upon.

The highest scoring organisations tended to carry out informal audits on a frequent basis (e.g. quarterly), and often did so on an ad hoc basis, in addition to the regular formal external and internal auditing processes.

Examples provided had to outline the issue precisely and highlight the action(s) taken to resolve it, not just consist of a statement confirming that action had been taken.

An increasing number of organisations are subjecting their management systems to third-party audit and certification including for example, the British Safety Council's Five Star Audit and ISO 45001 certification. These organisations are aware of the immense benefits to be derived from authoritative audit not least in demonstrating to clients and customers the effectiveness of their management policies and systems.

Application Question 12 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Please provide details of the systems you have at your site for identifying and reporting potential hazards and reporting 'near misses'.

Please describe two occasions when such reports have been made.

Systems in place for identifying potential hazards and reporting 'near misses' are a sign of organisational maturity. High-scoring organisations detailed how their identification and reporting arrangements worked including: the precise mechanism(s) that facilitated reporting, the person(s) in the organisation responsible for investigating the root-cause of the potential hazard and/or near miss, and what preventative and/or remedial action had been taken.

Low-scoring applications often failed because of the lack of systems in place to identify and report potential hazards and 'near misses'. A statement from an organisation citing that it had no such systems in place, for example, as it had no 'near misses' in 2024 missed the point of the question. Low-scoring organisations invariably provided brief lists of identification and reporting arrangements that lacked detail.

Applicants which did not provide two examples or failed to describe the circumstances and resolution of the examples, did not attract a high score.

Application Question 13 - a maximum of five marks may be awarded when answering this question

Provide details of your site's plan to respond to health and safety incidents and other emergencies resulting, for example, from bad weather, fire, explosion, electrocution, exposure to hazardous or harmful substances.

To achieve a high score applicants needed to provide comprehensive details of which major incidents and emergencies their site plan addressed. The answer needed to identify the significant factors that had the potential to cause an emergency at that site including climate, environment and operational hazards, together with the resulting risks and the profile of the personnel at the site.

Applicants needed to address not only the roles of the key personnel in the organisation responsible for formulating the plan but also precise responsibilities of the key personnel for implementing action in the event of a specific emergency. High scoring answers detailed the composition of different teams for responding to different types of emergencies.

Low-scoring organisations provided little detail of the plan, including roles and responsibilities, and failed to differentiate how the plan addressed different emergencies.

For a high score it was important for applicants to detail how the effectiveness of the emergency plan was monitored, reviewed and where necessary revised. High scores were also awarded where details had been included on the arrangements for regular drills including frequency, personnel involved and any necessary improvements which resulted.

Accreditation evidence

Applicants could also gain a maximum additional three marks by uploading evidence of the following accreditations. To gain these additional marks applicants had to provide evidence of current certification or accreditation:

- **One mark** - 3 Star outcome from British Safety Council Five-Star Audit within the ISA 2025 eligibility period
- **Two marks** – Current ISO 45001 Certification or 4 Star outcome from British Safety Council Five-Star Audit within the ISA 2025 eligibility period
- **Three marks** - 5 Star outcome from British Safety Council Five-Star Audit within the ISA 2025 eligibility period.

A small but significant number of applicants made specific reference to their organisation's ISO 45001 certification in answering the substantive questions but failed to provide evidence of the

certification consequently missing out on two additional marks. The failure to get credit for ISO 45001 certification in some cases made the difference to the eventual grade achieved.

Chief Adjudicator
On behalf of British Safety Council
March 2025