



Sword of Honour 2019

Chief Adjudicator's Report

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In 2019, 92 submissions were received for the Sword of Honour awards and 84 (91%) of these were adjudged to have reached the pass standard.

There is no quota of Swords to be awarded and nor will there be in future years. If every applicant meets the minimum criteria, every applicant will be awarded a Sword of Honour.

General Comments

A maximum of 60 marks are available for the written aspect of the Sword of Honour application. Applicants must score a minimum of 45 marks to remain eligible with a minimum of two individual responses being scored within the top mark band (11-15 marks). Submissions become ineligible for a Sword of Honour should any individual responses be scored within the lower mark band (0-5 marks).

With the pass standard set high (45 out of 60), it is important to score well on each question. One or two weak answers will put the pass standard out of reach. As in previous years, high-scoring applicants answered all aspects of each question and adhered closely to the marking scheme and it was evident that the advice to read the prior year's Chief Adjudicators Report had been taken. This allowed them to give a much more complete answer and so access the top mark band for each question. Notwithstanding this improvement applicants are again reminded to read the Chief Adjudicator's Report from the previous year prior to completing the application as this report provides helpful insight, comments and direction on what is required when completing the application. The Chief Adjudicator strongly emphasises that relevant care and attention should be made when completing the applications. The Sword of Honour award recognises excellence in health and safety and when applicants do not answer the question fully, or provide a less than complete answer, the implication is that they are not demonstrating due deference to this award process. In addition, applicants are reminded that the marking scheme is made available to applicants for reference when completing their application; this marking scheme should be considered throughout the application process. The Chief Adjudicator is of the belief that these documents are often neglected by some of the lower scoring applicants - something which needlessly risks their achievement of the award.

High-scoring applicants adhered to the requirement that responses to each question must not exceed 750 words (i.e. 3,000 words overall per submission) and provided clear, succinct and well-structured answers supported with written examples where required.

The Sword of Honour assessment methodology is closely linked to the Five Star Occupational Health and Safety Audit report and findings. Despite it being an **explicit** requirement of both the questions and marking scheme, a number of applicants failed to develop responses incorporating a clear link to the Audit findings. The statement '***With relevant reference to the outcomes from your recent Five Star Audit:***', prefixing each individual question, was inconsistently observed by the applicants to these awards and it was notable that only the strongest submissions maintained this important link throughout. This is a key component of the question and failing to address it is a limiting factor as the Sword of Honour has a direct relationship with the Five Star Occupational Health and Safety Audit.

There were a large number of high quality, well written submissions. It was obvious that a considerable amount of preparation, thought, time and effort had been put into these submissions for which the applicants concerned are to be commended, the use of examples to support the answer and illustrate the point was evident this year and the adjudicating team commented on how helpful this was and that it provided for a more complete and engaging answer. Whilst some submissions did fall short of the standard required for a Sword of Honour, it should be acknowledged that these organisations nonetheless have excellent health and safety management systems as recognised by their overall rating in the audit process.

As noted in previous years there still remains some work to be done on the 'health' part of health and safety; this often neglected area of 'health and safety' is assuming more prominence however there is still more to be done to give parity of esteem to the two aspects. Some applicants went into great detail about safety but made little reference to health. Health is an issue that affects us all; personally, collectively and universally. This scheme aims to promote health at work as a key consideration. The introduction of a mental health specific question demonstrates the importance of this to the British Safety Council.

**1. With relevant reference to the outcomes from your recent Five Star Audit:
Explain how the site ensures the participation of nonmanagerial groups in the continual improvement of the OHSMS and associated arrangements.**

This question had a number of components to it – stakeholder identification and mapping to specifically identify non-managerial groups, engagement and participation and continuous improvement. It also had a risk identification aspect and there was considerable scope for the applicant to showcase how the Five Star Audit is used in practice and the value it adds.

Only the highest scoring applicants made reference to the audit findings, gave relevant examples and discussed the range of non-managerial groups, continual improvement and the OHSMS as required by the question set and the marking scheme. A large number of applicants tended to be somewhat general in nature (i.e. rather than specific to the site concerned) - this was a commonly occurring theme in the applications.

This question had a number of components and only the best scoring applicants addressed them fully – aspect by aspect.

Most applicants adequately addressed continual improvement but only the better applicants discussed their approach to identifying non-managerial groups, the lowest scoring applicants simply defined non-managerial groups as frontline operatives and this was considered simplistic when there are layers of operational and functional teams that could have been explored – stakeholder analysis and mapping would have identified this. Only the highest scoring applicants made reference to the OHSMS and associated arrangements and how participation, not just engagement, was a key component of successful health and safety at work, providing examples of groups and their involvement.

Most applicants adequately addressed safety but only the stronger submissions made appropriate reference to health and how health surveillance requirements can and do flex in the face of a changing activity.

The strongest responses offered a clear description of the how the audit had been used for continual improvement – including the methodologies used, why these were appropriate and how they impacted on the activities.

A minority of responses, typically from applicants achieving high or maximum scores across their submission, provided details of the various levels at which OHSMA changes were evaluated for effectiveness (Board level, Health & Safety committee, regional level management meetings, site level performance reviews, etc.) and how lessons were learned and continual improvement achieved; such responses offered an overview of how the effectiveness review

fed-back into high level reviews and future amendments to process (thus closing the loop). They also considered stakeholder involvement and how seeking the views of others (e.g. unions, HSE) had provided a more complete evaluation.

A number of applicants provided generic responses lacking both in depth and scope. Applicants are again reminded to answer all parts of the question.

**2. With relevant reference to the outcomes from your recent Five Star Audit:
Describe how the site has established suitable processes to recognise and support employee mental health.**

This question was designed to demonstrate the increasing importance of mental health at work – a subject the British Safety Council and their partner Mates in Mind take very seriously. This question sought explore the avenues open to employees should mental health support be required. In order to achieve top scores a **full description** of how the site identifies and supports employee mental health was required – by referencing the marking scheme the applicant could see that actual and potential issues needed to be discussed, only the highest scoring applicants did this.

Another trait of the highest scoring applicants was the provision of **clear examples of effective support mechanisms and risk management processes** as required by the marking scheme. The majority of applicants made reference how mental ill health was supported i.e. access to counselors, employee assistance programmes, health and wellbeing interventions/days etc. but did not discuss mental health proactive risk management and identification of issues,

This question was a strong differentiator with only the highest performing applicants overall scoring well on this question. I would again encourage applicants to refer to the marking scheme to enable them to fully answer the question.

**3. With relevant reference to the outcomes from your recent Five Star Audit:
Describe how the site ensures that contractors effectively meet the requirements of the (organisations) OHSMS.**

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

This question was looking for a discussion around contractor management and the full relationship chain e.g. philosophy, approach, principles, practice tools etc. It then required

further discussion as to what action was taken as a consequence of any unsatisfactory performance e.g. senior management intervention, removal from site, penalties etc. This question gave the applicant the opportunity to discuss their methods for engaging and partnering with contractors so that both parties achieved a safe and healthy place of work. The adjudicators noted that discussion was, in the main, focussed on punitive as opposed to developmental, 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 – especially as supply and contractor relationships are key to organisational success.

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

4. With relevant reference to the outcomes from your recent Five Star Audit: Explain how the site's top management ensures the continued effectiveness of the OHSMS.

This question was designed to give applicants the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the importance of senior level leadership and sponsorship in OHSMS. It is commonly accepted that participation, communication, engagement and collaboration are important aspects when seeking to improve the OHSMS, this question though sought to explore the importance of workplace health and safety as an integral part of the organisation and not the traditional “bolt on” some may view it as.

This question was designed to explore the commitment that senior management gives to workplace health and safety at the core the organisation. Weaker applicants listed activities that senior management undertook e.g. site visits, letters to employees which, whilst commendable, are not detailed enough for an application such as this and did not demonstrate an understanding that top management action/activities play a part in continual improvement of the OHSMS. The issue at the heart of the question is one of governance, oversight and leadership – only the highest scoring applicants identified and discussed this.

High scoring applicants demonstrated the interdependency of workplace health and safety and the organisation achieving its objectives – they demonstrated a clear understanding that the business was committed to the “Safety is Good Business” philosophy and that workplace health and safety was integrated into the operation. As required by the marking scheme their response was **supported with a full explanation**. They then went on to explain that senior

management had demonstrated commitment throughout the process and in fact had been involved in formulating objectives, identifying resource requirements, across a broad range e.g. financial, human, material and were now “walking the talk” by actively supporting the embedding of these into the business. The best scoring applicants used data to support their assertions and demonstrated that the OHSMS maintained its effectiveness with input from a range of measures.

Highest scoring applicants provided examples of how the workplace health and safety objectives were directly interfaced with operational objectives and vice versa – the corporate balanced scorecard principle was often cited as an example of this alongside individual workplace health and safety and operational objectives being used in performance management.

Weaker applicants failed to demonstrate an understanding of the link between objectives, resource allocation and commitment as part of achieving a high performing health and safety culture and symbiotic OHSMS.