



International Safety Awards 2023

Chief Adjudicator's Report

British Safety Council

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Results

A total of 978 applications were received for the International Safety Awards in 2023; 79% of them successfully achieved a Distinction, Merit or Pass grade.

The distribution of grades among the applications submitted in 2023 was as follows:

Distinction	136	(14%)
Merit	296	(30%)
Pass	342	(35%)
Fail	204	(21%)

Year	Total number of applications	Overall pass %	Distinction	Merit	Pass	Fail
2023	978	79%	136 (14%)	296 (30%)	342 (35%)	204 (21%)
2022	640	86%	135 (21%)	204 (32%)	210 (33%)	91 (14%)

The proportion of **Distinctions** awarded in 2023 broadly compared to those awarded in 2022. However, compared to 2022 there were 7% fewer distinctions as a proportion of total applications.

The proportion of **Merit** and **Pass** grades in 2023 were similar to those achieved in 2022: 30% of applicants achieved a Merit in 2023 compared to 32% in 2022; and 35% of applicants achieved a Pass grade in 2023 compared to 33% in 2022.

Overall, the number of applicants receiving an International Safety Award in 2023 – 79% of applicants were **successful** – fell by 7% when compared with 2022 (86% successful).

The number of award applications increased from 640 in 2022 to 978 in 2023. This significant increase, 50%, reflects the growing esteem attached to the winning an International Safety Award across the globe.

The Independent Adjudicator and myself 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.

The International Safety Awards have an extensive international reach. We received award applications from organisations in 44 countries. Organisations from China, India, the Middle East, the UK and the Republic of Ireland were strongly represented with a growing interest elsewhere across the globe including from countries in Africa, South East Asia and Central America.

The International Safety Awards have a key role to play in helping to drive continuous 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 and every day to prevent the risk of injury and ill-health and promote wellbeing in the workplace.

General comments

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

- the 2023 International Safety Awards question set and marking scheme;
- the Chief Adjudicator’s Report for the 2022 International Safety Awards;
- a guidance note concerning the eligibility requirements;
- the list of 2022 International Safety Award winners; and,
- webinars hosted by the British Safety Council.

The webinars hosted by the British Safety Council staff, the Chief Adjudicator and the award scheme’s Independent Adjudicator sought to assist applicants in navigating the online application form and assist their understanding of how best to provide the evidence necessary to answer the questions and earn high marks.

The importance of applicants accessing and understanding all of the International Safety Awards eligibility requirements as set out in the guidance and advice listed above cannot be overstated.

The adjudicators noted that in 2023 a significant number of organisations improved on their grading from the previous year. We urge applicant organisations unsuccessful in 2023 to apply again in 2024. Key to success is the need to closely follow the guidance and advice we provide.

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.

In our webinars we recommended applicants draft answers in a separate word document before transferring to the online application. It is essential that all answers are proof read 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.

This year many of the questions specifically asked for evidence of arrangements and actions being taken to prevent injury and ill health and ensure wellbeing at the applicant site. Low scoring applicants often failed to provide substantive evidence and examples or set out theoretical answers. In particular, an overly theoretical approach to answering questions was evident in responses to a number of questions by poor performing applicants. The adjudicators need to understand what is happening in the applicant’s organisation not what the textbooks say.

Applicants who provided too short answers inevitably failed to provide the evidence necessary to score more than one mark. Additionally, our advice and guidance made it clear that applications had to be submitted in the English language. Even so we still received a few applications in other languages and others with answers in a mixture of languages.

This year we reduced the number of questions for which we attached one supplementary mark from five to three, namely Questions 3b, 4b and 7b. This reduction in the number of supplementary questions attracting just one mark was intended to help simplify the application process and encourage applicants to focus on ten substantive questions each of which attracted a possible five marks. The quality of evidence provided in respect of these supplementary questions was generally of a high standard. We were seeking illustrative evidence as reports, documents, photographs or logs of activity not textual answers running to hundreds of words. Brief explanations of the relevance of the submitted evidence was essential.

This year the word count for answering each of the substantive questions was reduced to 600 words. We are mindful of the time applicants spend preparing and drafting their responses and the time adjudicators have to spend judging the applications. There were still instances of applicants

far exceeding the 600-word count. Applicants must carry out a word count when proofing their award submission. The word count limit will continue to be rigorously enforced.

It is important that applicants ensure that their answers to the questions are well presented using clear and concise language, headings and paragraphs where appropriate. Several questions contained more than one theme, and Questions 2, 3b, 6, 9 and 11 requested evidence of hazards, relevant personnel or activities. The flow of the answers in all cases was vastly improved by using headings and paragraphs.

The satisfactory provision of relevant evidence concerning accreditation is also important in earning additional marks. Five stars from the British Safety Council's Five-Star Audit within the 2023 Awards eligibility period attracted three marks. A current ISO 45001 certification or a Four-Star outcome from the British Safety Council's Five Star audit within the awards eligibility period attracted two marks. A Three-Star outcome from the British Safety Council's Five-Star audit within the awards eligibility period attracted one mark.

While some applicants made specific reference to their organisation's ISO 45001 certification in answering question 9 concerning audit and elsewhere, others failed to provide evidence of the certification consequently missing out on two additional marks.

The application of practical real-life examples from the workplace are important and a key requirement in several questions. The adjudicators want to understand how things operate in practice in specific sites or workplaces. 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. The adjudicators again reported many instances of good or even exceptional initiatives among the submissions.

The adjudicators were once again greatly encouraged to see the importance that senior management commits to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of their respective workforces and the wider community. Wellbeing has rocketed up the corporate and business agenda. We applaud the efforts made by many applicant organisations to identify and implement the improvements that are necessary to ensure the health and wellbeing of their workforce and those in the wider community impacted directly or indirectly by their activities.

Applicants were asked to provide details of any enforcement action taken by their respective regulator including 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. In the event that enforcement action has 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.

The adjudicators hope that the information provided in this report helps you not only in preparing for the 2024 International Safety Awards but equally importantly in providing 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. We wish you every success in 2024.

Application Question 1 – no marks attach to this question

Describe the nature and scope of the main operational activities carried out at the site. Include details of the number of staff working at the site and the main functions these staff perform.

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 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.

Although corporate information, for example, ownership and detailed coverage of the activities undertaken across the organisation is helpful the focus in answering this question must be on the site. The question required a description of the activities undertaken at the site including the location, the timeframe, the occupations and number of those working at the applicant site and the work activities being undertaken.

Application Question 2 – no marks attach to this question

What are considered to be the most significant issues at the site in relation to:

- Occupational health hazards
- Occupational safety hazards
- Wellbeing concerns

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.

Award winning applicants addressed all three elements of the question focussing on wellbeing concerns and the most hazardous activities at that site and the risks these posed to the safety and health of their employees, their contractors' employees and where appropriate the wider community. High scoring applications explained why the cited hazards and concerns were of significance.

Some applicants briefly listed the health and safety hazards and wellbeing concerns without an explanation of their significance to those working at the site.

Application Question 3a – a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Set out the organisation's key health, safety and wellbeing policies currently in place at your site.

Please include a brief summary of how you ensure your policies align with relevant health and safety legislation.

Describe the main channels for communicating the policies to staff at your site.

This question contained three separate elements all of which had to be satisfactorily answered in order to merit a high mark.

High scoring applicants provided a clear explanation of how and by whom their organisation's health, safety and wellbeing policies were formulated and a description of the key elements of those policies.

The second part of this question required a detailed description of how the applicant's organisation ensured that their policies aligned with the legislative health and safety framework in their country. Key sources of the legislation were identified by high scoring applicants along with details of the personnel within the organisation who had responsibility for ensuring what was required by the law was effectively communicated. The question sought a detailed description of how the applicant's organisation kept statutory and other legal requirements under constant review and how those requirements were communicated to relevant members of staff thereby helping to ensure effective compliance.

The third part of the question sought a description of the channels for communicating these policies to staff at the site. High scoring answers provided brief descriptions of the various channels used including the information these channels disseminated, details of the targeted audiences and how the effectiveness of these channels was assessed.

Application Question 3b – one mark attached to this supplementary question

Provide three examples of communication channels used at your site.

Examples of high scoring communication channels included staff inductions, instruction and training, toolbox talks, safety meetings and workshops, employee one-to-ones, staff appraisals, online communications including e-mails and learning tools.

We were looking for applicants to provide evidence of the effectiveness of these three communication channels not just list the channels used.

Application Question 4a - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe the controls that are in place for managing the risks of one of the significant health or safety hazards, or wellbeing issues identified within question 2.

Question 3 was specifically linked to Question 2. The question sought a detailed description of the control measures the applicant had put in place to effectively manage the risks posed by that particular hazard.

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 that resulted. Evidence to demonstrate that the organisation had applied the necessary resources to monitoring the effectiveness of the control measures contributed to a high score.

High scoring submissions provided details of the actions taken to reduce or eliminate the hazard applying the hierarchy of controls, that is, elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls and the use made of personal protective equipment.

A small number of applicants replicated all of the hazards at the site listed in their answer to Question 2 with little additional information. This resulted in a low score. Other low scoring answers focused solely on the process of carrying out the particular operation whilst not providing sound evidence of how control measures were monitored to ensure effectiveness.

Some applicants misunderstood the question and provided details of the controls identified in their answer to question 2. The question was examining the controls in place for just one of the hazards listed in the applicant's answer to question 2.

Application Question 4b - one mark attached to this supplementary question

Detail how you assess the effectiveness of the control measures described in 4a.

A comprehensive textual answer was sufficient to earn the one additional mark. Documentary evidence by way of example, although not essential, was helpful.

Applicants provided a whole number of measures they took to assess the effectiveness of control measures including, for example, audit, action by the regulator, review of management systems, monitoring leading and lagging KPIs and staff feedback.

Application Question 5 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe how KPIs or performance targets are developed on your site.

Give one example of a target currently in place and describe how the progress of this target is measured.

High scoring applicants provided comprehensive details of the arrangements they had in place at their site for the development of performance targets or KPIs or how these linked back to the site's health, safety and wellbeing policies and management systems. Importantly applicants needed to identify who at their site had responsibility for and involvement in the development of these targets or KPIs.

The question sought details of the steps taken in the development of the targets and KPIs including the identification of the objectives, defining measures to assess progress of the objectives, putting in place arrangements for establishing a baseline to assist in the measurement of progress, setting the targets and the timely measurement and review of progress.

Theoretical answers were not sufficient to merit other than a low score.

High scoring answers provided a detailed explanation of one example of a KPI or target including a step-by-step account of the mechanisms in place to measure progress including, wherever possible, data by way of illustration.

Application Question 6 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Identify the members of the senior executives with key responsibilities for leading health, safety and wellbeing at your site.

Describe how your senior executives are involved in the formulation of health, safety and wellbeing objectives at your site.

Every organisation should have comprehensive policies in place with the purpose of ensuring a health and safe working environment and the wellbeing of the workforce and competent managers with the necessary skills to help prevent injury, ill health and promote wellbeing. But without committed and an active top-level leadership and an engaged workforce it would be impossible for that organisation to effectively manage these risks.

ISO 45001 attaches great importance to the role played by top management in ensuring the effective management of the risks that workplace hazards pose to health and safety. Low scoring applications again focused on providing current theoretical thinking rather than the mechanics of how senior executives at the site are actively involved in the formulation of health, safety and wellbeing objectives at their site.

High scoring applicants identified each-and-every member of the senior management team and elaborate details of their particular roles and responsibilities. Examples were provided of how,

precisely, this involvement took place including setting the policies and resulting objectives, allocating resources, leading by example and monitoring performance.

Application Question 7a - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Detail the arrangements you have in place to measure the extent and effectiveness of the senior executive's engagement activities on your site.

Examples of measures to assess effectiveness include staff survey findings, 360-degree feedback, performance appraisal assessments and feedback from team meetings.

Adjudicators scored this question having taken account also of the answers provided to question 6.

The question required concrete examples of the measures in place to assess the effectiveness of senior management engagement. Answers which said little more than the senior executives at the site undertake staff surveys, seek 360-degree feedback and hold team meetings scored badly.

High scoring answers provided not only the detail of the mechanisms in place to assess effectiveness but also examples of the action taken to address the findings. Importantly the measurement of effectiveness had to identify what contribution the senior executives' engagement activities had on the health, safety and wellbeing of the workforce.

Application Question 7b - one mark attached to this supplementary question

Provide one detailed example of effective engagement activity on your site.

A comprehensive textual answer was sufficient to earn the one additional mark. Documentary evidence by way of example, although not essential, was helpful. This question was intended to help provide supporting evidence of how just one particular engagement activity operated in practice.

Application Question 8 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe the additional changes you have made to your site's health, safety and wellbeing policies and procedures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular describe the contingency arrangements you have put in place to manage any future pandemic.

The answers we received to this important question demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on the health and wellbeing of each and every one of the applicants' workforce. The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on not only the health and wellbeing of workers but is shown to have disrupted business continuity.

As in 2022, this particular question attracted high marks across all of the applications we received. What the evidence provided by applicants reveals is that the experience of managing the pandemic over the course of 2020 to 2022 has led to a deeper understanding of the policies, procedures and protocols necessary to protect workers and prevent future spread.

High scoring answers went well beyond a description of sanitising measures at the applicant site. Comprehensive details were provided in high scoring applications of coordination with Government and other agencies concerning measures to be taken and advice to be disseminated.

Examples of changes made to policies and procedures included: revised working-from-home arrangements; frequent health checks; improved communications concerning this pandemic; improved crisis management planning; improved quality control of the supply of PPE; enhanced wellbeing strategies; improvements to pay and conditions for quarantined and isolated workers; development of more rigorous business continuity plans.

High scoring applicants provided details of crisis management plans including the composition, role and responsibilities of crisis management teams for tackling future pandemics.

Application Question 9 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe the arrangements you have in place for auditing your site's health, safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

Detail three examples of how you have implemented an audit outcome and/or recommendation.

The overwhelming number of applicant organisations had recently been the subject of an ISO 45001 audit or British Safety Council Five-Star Audit and had achieved certification or accreditation.

Audit however can take several forms including but not exclusively: project management audits; performance reviews; process audits; individual performance audits; contractor audits. Importantly applicants needed to demonstrate that those persons carrying out the audits had the necessary skills and competence to perform their duties. The audit can be carried out internally or by external auditors or certification bodies.

Low scoring applicants fell short by providing a theoretical answer thereby failing to provide details of audit arrangements at their specific site. High scoring applicants provided detailed examples of three recent audit recommendations and the changes or remedial action taken to address those three recommendations. The adjudicators needed to see evidence that the audit was an effective tool and of the organisation's determination to address any resulting recommendations.

Application Question 10 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Detail the processes that you have in place for your site, firstly, to assess the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you provide to your staff to prevent the risk of injury, disease and ill health and, secondly, how you ensure that the PPE you have provided is fit-for-purpose.

Describe what action you have taken in the event that PPE is found not to be fit-for-purpose at your site.

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. Again, there were low scoring applications that were wholly theoretical and while correct, completely missed what evidence the question was seeking to elicit.

The processes in place should have regard to: the legal and certification requirements; the particular hazards at that site; findings from a site inspection; the resulting risk assessment; consultation with relevant staff and operatives; a PPE suitability assessment, and; the arrangements in place to ensure that the selected PPE remains fit for purpose.

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 matches 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.

Application Question 11 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe the procedures and processes you have in place at your site to address concerns raised by staff about their health, safety or wellbeing.

Provide at least three examples of how these concerns raised have been addressed.

The International Safety Awards attach great importance, amongst other things, to two key components considered essential to the attainment of safe and healthy workplaces and to the wellbeing of workers in those workplaces: an engaged workforce and committed top-level leadership.

A mature organisation should take pride that staff are provided with the processes to raise concerns about their health, safety and wellbeing. Staff should be encouraged to play an active role in ensuring the organisation's health, safety and wellbeing policies and the resulting management systems are effective. Mechanisms must be in place not only to enable staff to identify and communicate issues concerning non-compliance, for example, to management but to be assured that their concerns are properly addressed.

Excellent examples were provided for high scoring applicants. Low scoring applicants either did not provide any at all, let alone three examples or misunderstood the question. The question was not looking solely for a description of arrangements that the organisation had in place to communicate health and safety messages to staff.

Many applicant organisations are to be commended for the seriousness with which they took concerns and complaints and the timeliness of rectifying the underlying issues.

Application Question 12 - a maximum of five marks attached to this question

Describe the arrangements using examples that you have in place for ensuring that any contractor providing services at your site complies with your organisation's health, safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and objectives.

Top-scoring applicants were able to comprehensively describe the health and safety factors considered when approving contractors/suppliers and those organisations providing outsourced services and the arrangements in place for ensuring ongoing compliance once on site.

Low scoring organisations only provided a limited or weak description of the contractor approval process and the arrangements for ongoing compliance with the organisation's health, safety and wellbeing policies and management systems.

There were a number of applicants who focused on providing theoretical answers rather than providing evidence of the measures in place to ensure contractor compliance.

While not exhaustive factors considered include 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, ISO 45001 and/or British Safety Council Five-Star Audit accreditation.

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.

Tools for assessing compliance included: regular inspections and audits; verification of risk compliance measures; contractor meetings; health and safety observations.

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 2023 eligibility period;
- **Two marks** – Current ISO 45001 Certification or 4 Star outcome from British Safety Council Five-Star Audit within the ISA 2023 eligibility period;
- **Three marks** - 5 Star outcome from British Safety Council Five-Star Audit within the ISA 2023 eligibility period.

**Chief Adjudicator
On behalf of the British Safety Council
March 2023**