

IFE Level 4 Certificate in Fire Service Operations and Incident Command

Examiner Report – March 2026

Introduction

Of the 72 candidates who sat this paper, 30 achieved a pass (42%). While this represents a significant decrease compared with the previous examination session, it is a slight improvement on the pass rate achieved in March 2025. The best-performing question was question 8, with an average of 11 marks. This was also the most popular question. Question 7 was the least attempted and also the lowest scoring, with an average mark of 3.7.

Question 1

A Tactical Commander is responding to an incident in a public place where a number of members of the public have been exposed to, or contaminated by, a hazardous substance. The primary objectives of Initial Operational Response (IOR) are to maximise the safety of the public and save lives, minimise the risk to responders and ensure an effective transition to Specialist Operational Response (SOR).

Identify and explain the IOR 'Recognise, Assess, React' principles that can be used to assist in directing first responders to effectively deal with the incident. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many responses did not directly address the specific requirements of the question. A common issue was the inclusion of generic incident command, JESIP principles, or broader Hazmat response procedures rather than focusing on the expected content.

Many candidates were able to gain marks through reference to BAD COLDS, although a small number failed to identify or apply this acronym. Candidates are reminded to read questions carefully and ensure their responses remain focused on the specific topic being assessed. Further guidance on this subject can be found within *Initial Operational Response (IOR) to Incidents Suspected to Involve Hazardous Substances or CBRN Materials*.

Question 2

Debriefing is an essential part of closing the learning loop from every incident.

- a) Identify the reasons why a structured debrief may be required. (10 marks)*
- b) Outline the considerations that must be taken into account when delivering a structured debrief. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

Many answer scripts featured descriptions of 'Hot' and 'Cold' debriefs, which didn't gain any marks. Some also focused on the purpose of a structured debrief, rather than the reasons why a structured debrief was initiated. As such, marks couldn't be awarded. The reading list features a good source of information for this question in: *Fire and Rescue Incident Command – A practical Guide to incident ground management*.

Question 3

The skill sets and behaviours of the Incident Commander are as varied as the definitions of leadership and leadership traits. Outline and briefly describe the leadership behaviours and skills expected of an Incident Commander. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

The answers in many cases failed to adequately elaborate on leadership behaviours and skills in clear terms. Many candidates, however, gave enough narrative to enable marks to be extracted. Those who provided bullet points, failed to provide enough detail for examiners to adequately identify marks related to the reading material.

Question 4

The overarching aim of the strategic commander is to protect life, property and the environment by setting the policy, strategy and overall response framework for the incident, for the tactical and operational command levels to act on and implement. Outline each of the responsibilities of the strategic command role. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many candidates offered answers that focused on incident management at large incidents. Candidates who were successful in achieving a pass for this question took a more strategic view of the incident command role.

A good source of study material for this question could be found in: *JESIP Joint Doctrine (Appendix D)*.

Question 5

Planning for Fire and Rescue Service actions at railway incidents on each rail system may take place at three organisational levels. Describe each level and indicate the potential attendees. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This question was popular and many of those who attempted it appeared to be familiar with the detail provided in *GRA 4.2: Incidents involving transport systems – Rail*.

Question 6

It is necessary for Incident Commanders to have a good understanding of building construction when assessing the integrity of a building during operations. Identify the main methods of building construction and give a brief description. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

Many answer scripts gave great detail relating to the reaction of building materials in fire, or the signs of building collapse, neither of which was asked for. Those that provided good scripts featured information that could be found in *Fire Service Manual V3, Fire Safety: Basic Principles of Building Construction*.

Question 7

Fire and Rescue Services must make arrangements for attending aircraft incidents. Identify and detail the types of incidents, as classified by the Civil Aviation Authority and outline the relevant guidance. (20 marks)

Examiner Feedback

This was the least popular question and many of those who attempted it, focussed on the hazards and risks associated with aircraft incidents and types of incidents, rather than the CAA recognised categories of incidents. As such many didn't achieve pass marks for this question. Not many answer scripts were able to identify CAP 168 as relevant guidance.

Question 8

You have been appointed as the Safety Sector Officer at a complex Road Traffic Collision.

- a) Detail the potential hazards that may be present. (10 marks)*
- b) Detail the possible control measures. (10 marks)*

Examiner Feedback

The most popular question, which attracted the best overall marks. This was a question based on core subject knowledge, and most candidates who attempted it achieved a pass.