



## **OHS Professional Capabilities**

### **For new graduates of OHS Bachelor (AQF 7), Graduate Diploma (AQF 8) and Masters (AQF 9) programs**

This outline of capabilities for new graduates of OHS professional education programs is just one part of a project that extends the OHS Body of Knowledge for Generalist OHS Professionals.<sup>1</sup> The capabilities have been developed as statements of what a new graduate should be able to do in the workplace taking account of the level of qualification from which they have graduated.

The level summaries and learning outcomes criteria of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) have been used as a basis for defining the expectations of graduates of OHS professional education programs and highlighting the difference in knowledge levels, cognitive and technical skills, and application of the outcomes of AQF 7, AQF 8 and AQF 9 qualifications. The capability statements have been developed through two workshops, the first attended by 34 OHS educators, OHS professionals and representatives of OHS professional bodies to develop a draft which was followed by a second workshop with 20 OHS educators and OHS professionals to refine the draft. Input has also been sought from OHS professionals and OHS professional bodies. The statements of capabilities are seen as dynamic and will be modified as further input is received and as the OHS professional role evolves.

The capability statements are similar to but different from graduate attributes. In Australia graduate attributes are generally considered to be the core achievements of a university education (HEC, 1992) describing the knowledge, skill and abilities, beyond disciplinary content applicable in a range of contexts and acquired as a result of a university degree program (Barrie, nd). In Australia these graduate qualities are described and defined differently in different universities and education systems and a bewildering array of terms has resulted (Barrie, nd). The Accreditation Board has utilised the level summaries and learning outcomes criteria that are an integral part of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) (Australian Qualifications Framework Council) to define what the OHS professional should be able to do as an outcome of their professional education. The capability statements should inform the development of graduate attributes specified by individual universities for their OHS programs but are not intended to replace such statements. Similarly, while the capability statements should guide the development of learning and assessment activities the capability statements reflect what the new graduate should be able to do in the workplace after completion of their education.

It is anticipated that the capability statements will inform the development of learning and assessment activities in OHS education programs; that they will assist recruiters and employers in selecting OHS advisors and inform performance appraisals and professional development plans. For current OHS professionals they provide a useful benchmark for reflective processes.

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<sup>1</sup>See also specific learning outcomes for each chapter of the OHS Body of Knowledge (HaSPA, 2012)



## **Using the capability statements**

### *For educators*

While the capability statements may inform development of assessment activities it is important to note that the capability statements are not about the assessment activities but rather what will be expected of graduates when they enter the workforce. The capability statements do not have to be specifically included in program documentation but should inform program development and assessment.

### *For employers and recruiters*

The capability statements may be used to inform the development of position descriptions and duty statements as well as interview questions in recruitment. They may also be useful in performance appraisals and professional development plans.

### *For OHS professionals*

While these capability statements describe what could be expected of new graduate generalist OHS professionals they are also useful as a stimulus for experienced professionals reflecting on their practice.

When reviewing and using the OHS graduate attributes it should be noted that:

- The **blue** text is derived from the AQF descriptors.
- The attributes are in five sections: (1) knowledge; (2) cognitive, technical and communication skills to access and analyse information; (3) cognitive, technical and communication skills to solve problems, (4) cognitive, technical and communication skills to transmit knowledge, skills and ideas; and (5) application. Thus, you may need to scan the five sections to gain an integrated view of the attributes.
- The attributes reflect the technical and cognitive levels of the relevant AQF descriptor
- The descriptors are 'attributes' and as such are content free and so do not refer to specific OHS skills or knowledge, nor are they task or action lists. [It may be useful to refer to the *OHS Body of Knowledge: Model of Practice* for more detail on professional practice skills (HaSPA, 2012).]
- Comments or feedback should be emailed to [registrar@ohseducationaccreditation.org.au](mailto:registrar@ohseducationaccreditation.org.au).



## References

Australian Qualifications Framework Council. (2011). *Australian Qualification Framework South Australia*: Australian Qualifications Framework Council.

Barrie, S. (nd). Understanding what we mean by the generic attributes of graduates [Electronic Version], from <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/barriepaper.pdf>

HaSPA (Health and Safety Professionals Alliance). (2012). *The Core Body of Knowledge for Generalist OHS Professionals*. from [www.ohsbok.org.au](http://www.ohsbok.org.au)

HEC (Higher Education Council). (1992). *Achieving Quality*: National Higher Education Council.



**OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors: Qualification**

|                                 | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>   | <b>OHS Bachelor</b> | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>   | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b> | <i>Masters by Course<br/>work AQF level 9</i>  | <b>OHS Masters</b> |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------------|---|---------------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>Purpose of qualification</b> | <i>Qualifies individuals who apply a broad and coherent body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional work and as a pathway for further learning</i> |                     | <i>Qualifies individuals who apply a body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional work and/or highly skilled work and as a pathway for further learning</i> |                     | <i>Qualifies individuals who apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts to undertake professional work and as a pathway for further learning</i> |                    |

**1 OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors: Knowledge**(refer also to detailed learning outcomes)

|  | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>  | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>  | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>  | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>   | <i>Masters by Course<br/>work AQF level 9</i>   | <b>OHS Masters</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| <b>KNOWLEDGE<br/>Graduates will have</b> | <i>A broad and coherent body of knowledge, with depth in the underlying principles and concepts as a basis for independent lifelong learning</i>                   | Demonstrable familiarity with and understanding of a broad range of concepts and sub concepts within the OHS Body of Knowledge with depth of understanding in some hazard areas. | <i>Advanced theoretical and technical knowledge within a systematic and coherent body of knowledge</i>   | Demonstrable understanding and capacity to systematically apply the concepts and sub concepts of the OHS Body of Knowledge across a range of diverse environments/situations. | <i>Advanced and integrated understanding of a complex body of knowledge in one or more disciplines or practice areas</i>                        | Demonstrable capacity to draw together relevant concepts and sub concepts from the Body of Knowledge and relate them to situations in a diverse range of environments. This may include specialized theoretical understanding of some topic areas. |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive and technical skills to demonstrate a broad understanding of knowledge with depth in some areas</i></li> </ul> | Demonstrable technical competence and the capacity to apply OHS knowledge and understanding to problems and unfamiliar situations in OHS practice.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Specialised technical and creative skills in a field of highly skilled and/or professional practice</i></li> </ul> | Demonstrable technical competence and the capacity to apply OHS knowledge and understanding to a broad range of problems and unfamiliar situations in OHS practice.           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive skills to demonstrate mastery of theoretical knowledge</i></li> </ul>                       | Demonstrable high level technical competence and the capacity to apply OHS knowledge and understanding to a broad /or specialised range of problems and unfamiliar situations in OHS practice.   |
|  |  |  |  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to a field of work or learning</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of research principles and methods applicable to OHS</li> </ul>   |



OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors: Skills

**2 Analyse and evaluate information**

|  | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>  | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>  | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>   | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>  | <i>Masters by Course<br/>work AQF level 9</i>  | <b>OHS Masters</b>   |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>SKILLS</b><br><b>Graduates will have <u>well developed</u> cognitive, technical and communication skills to</b> | <i>Analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive skills to review, critically analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge;</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access and evaluate knowledge from a range of sources relevant to OHS practice</li> <li>Critically analyse and consolidate information from such range of sources</li> <li>Synthesise the information to inform OHS practice</li> </ul> | <i>Critically evaluate and transform information to complete a range of activities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive skills to think critically and to generate and evaluate complex ideas</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access and critically evaluate information from a range of sources as part of evidenced informed OHS practice</li> <li>Challenge information and current thinking as it relates to professional practice</li> </ul> | <i>Analyse critically reflect on and synthesise complex information, concepts and theories</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Reflect critically on theory and professional practice</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access and critically evaluate the implications for OHS practice of complex information from workplace, national and international sources including academic literature</li> <li>Reflect critically on OHS theory and research and its relevance for practice</li> </ul> |  |
|  |  |  |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive skills to review, analyse, consolidate and synthesise knowledge</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access, analyse, consolidate and synthesise relevant knowledge to inform OHS practice</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate complex ideas and concepts</li> <li>Evaluate complex ideas and concepts to interpret and evaluate theoretical perspectives.</li> </ul>   |
|  |  |  |   |  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, concepts and theories and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice</i></li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, concepts and theories and demonstrate their applicability to different areas of the Body of Knowledge for Generalist OHS Professionals and/or specialised aspects of OHS practice</li> </ul> |



OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors: Skills

**3 Solve problems**

|   | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>  | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>  | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>   | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>   | <i>Masters by Course work<br/>AQF level 9</i>  | <b>OHS Masters</b>  |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>SKILLS</b><br>Graduates will have <b>well developed</b> cognitive, technical and communication skills to | <i>Analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive and creative skills to exercise critical thinking and judgment in identifying and solving problems with intellectual independence</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply critical thinking, information gathering and communication skills to identify and analyse sometimes complex OHS problems</li> <li>Generate practical evidence-informed solutions taking account of legislation and industry standards and justify the proposed solutions</li> </ul> | <i>Analyse, generate and transmit solutions to complex problems</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Cognitive skills to identify and provide solutions to complex problems</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply critical thinking, information gathering and communication skills to identify and analyse complex OHS problems</li> <li>Generate and prioritise practical evidence-informed solutions taking account of legislation and industry standards</li> <li>Justify proposed solution(s) taking account of organisational, commercial, legal, industry and other relevant factors</li> </ul> | <i>Analyse critically reflect on complex problems</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Investigate, analyse complex problems and to apply established theories to solve the problems</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply critical thinking, information gathering and communication skills to identify and analyse complex OHS problems and identify emerging issues</li> <li>Synthesise information and established theory from a variety of sources to generate practical evidence-informed solutions to OHS problems taking account of legislation and industry standards and defend the proposed solutions</li> <li>Prioritise practical evidence-informed solutions to OHS problems within a business environment taking account of legislation</li> <li>Apply a business evaluation process to justify proposed solution(s) taking account of commercial factors, industry</li> </ul> |



|  | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i> | <b>OHS Bachelor</b> | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i> | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b> | <i>Masters by Course work<br/>AQF level 9</i>   | <b>OHS Masters</b>   |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|
|  |                                 |                     |   |                     |   | standards and legal obligations  |
|  |                                 |                     |   |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Evaluate, implement, analyse and theorise about developments that contribute to professional practice</i></li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in evidence-informed reflective practice and professional discussion, encompassing the implications for practice of new research findings and theoretical developments</li> </ul>  |
|  |                                 |                     |   |                     | <p><i>Research and apply established theories to a body of knowledge or practice</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Extend knowledge and /or solve complex problems</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access and critically review academic literature and apply findings from research to inform professional practice</li> <li>Design, implement, evaluate and report on relevant activities and situations with a view to extending/deepening the OHS Body of Knowledge</li> <li>Approach the resolution of complex problems in a critically reflective manner drawing upon extant theory and appropriate evaluative activity</li> </ul> |



OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors: Skills

**4** Communication skills to transmit knowledge, skills and ideas

|   | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>   | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>  | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>   | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>   | <i>Masters by Course work<br/>AQF level 9</i>  | <b>OHS Masters</b>   |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| <b>SKILLS</b><br>Graduates will have <b>well developed</b> cognitive, technical and communication skills to | <i>Transfer knowledge, skills and ideas to others</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Communication skills to present a clear, coherent and independent exposition of knowledge and ideas.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select and appropriately apply a broad range of communications skills and formats to explain technical information and concepts to workplace audiences</li> </ul> | <i>Transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Communication skills to demonstrate an understanding of theoretical concepts</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convey technical information and theoretical concepts in a clear, concise and logical manner giving underpinning rationale</li> </ul>  | <i>Interpret and transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to specialist and non-specialist audiences</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Justify and interpret propositions, methodologies, conclusions and professional decisions to specialist and non-specialist audiences</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret and tailor technical information, complex concepts and theories to communicate knowledge and ideas to a range of specialist and non-specialist audiences using an appropriate range of communication strategies</li> <li>Provide the evidence-base and logical reasoning to explain the risks and benefits of a range of options and justify relevant propositions and recommendations</li> </ul> |
|   |   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Communication skills to transfer complex knowledge and ideas to a variety of audiences.</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret and tailor information to communicate knowledge and ideas to a range of audiences using an appropriate range of communication strategies</li> <li>Demonstrate written, oral and non verbal communication skills that reflect empathy for the audience</li> </ul> |  |  |
|   |   |  |   |   |  | <i>Communication skills to theorise about developments and that contribute to professional practice</i>  |





**OHS capabilities compared with AQF learning outcome descriptors:**

**5 Application**

|   | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>   | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>   | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>  | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>  | <i>Masters by Course<br/>work AQF level 9</i>   | <b>OHS Masters</b>  |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| <b>APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</b><br>Graduates will be able demonstrate application of knowledge and skills to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Apply initiative and judgment in professional practice</i></li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the limits of one’s own knowledge and skills and seek specialist advice as appropriate</li> <li>• Observe relevant codes of conduct</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Make high level, independent judgments in a range of technical or management functions in varied specialised contexts</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make high level independent judgements regarding technical OHS issues and plan, implement and monitor OHS-related projects</li> <li>• Recognise the limits of one’s own knowledge and skills and seek specialist advice as appropriate</li> <li>• Observe relevant codes of conduct including identifying when disclosure/whistle blowing may be appropriate</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>With high level of personal autonomy and accountability</i></li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make high level independent judgements regarding technical OHS issues and plan, implement and monitor OHS-related projects</li> <li>• Operate with a high level of autonomy to conceptualise, plan, implement and evaluate major OHS related projects</li> <li>• Recognise limits of one’s own knowledge and skills and seek specialist advice as appropriate</li> <li>• Observe relevant codes of conduct and engage in discussion on distinguishing features of professional practice</li> <li>• Identify when disclosure/whistle blowing may be appropriate and take appropriate action and be able to foster work environment elements that are conducive to open expression of worker concerns</li> </ul> |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts</i></li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise the implications of different work environments and work cultures and the implications for OHS practice</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Initiate, plan, implement and evaluate broad functions within varied</i></li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work independently and as part of a multidisciplinary team</li> <li>• Be accountable for</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>With creativity and initiative to new situations in professional</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to operate across a range of responsibilities and activities that create different demands in implementation</li> </ul>  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>With responsibility and accountability for own learning and practice and</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work independently and as part of a team in addressing a range of OHS problems</li> </ul>  |  |  |   |   |



|  | <i>Bachelor<br/>AQF Level 7</i>   | <b>OHS Bachelor</b>   | <i>Graduate Diploma<br/>AQF Level 8</i>  | <b>OHS Grad Dip</b>  | <i>Masters by Course<br/>work AQF level 9</i>   | <b>OHS Masters</b>   |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|
|  | <i>collaboration with others within broad parameters</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognise the value of professional, enterprise and industry collaboration</li> <li>Be accountable for the technical and conceptual underpinnings of one's own practice</li> <li>Be reliable in meeting commitments in accord with agreed time lines</li> </ul>      | <i>specialised technical and/or creative contexts;</i>   | <p>technical and conceptual underpinning of own practice across arrange of areas of practice and diverse contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to operate across a range of activities that create different demands in implementation while meeting agreed delivery time lines</li> </ul> | <i>practice</i>   | <p>while meeting required delivery time lines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with people from many disciplines and backgrounds, across a range of work groups including at the highest decision-making levels, demonstrating leadership capacity</li> <li>Work in diverse, complex and unfamiliar contexts</li> <li>Be accountable for technical and conceptual underpinning of own practice at a high level including currency with recent research across arrange of areas of practice and diverse contexts</li> <li>Bring an international perspective to professional practice</li> </ul> |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to and implement an agreed problem-solving strategy</li> <li>Take individual responsibility for a small research project or evaluative study of OHS practice</li> <li>Apply project management skills to conduct OHS projects of limited scope</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>With responsibility and accountability for personal outputs and all aspects of the work function of others within broad parameters.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a leadership role to operationalise and implement strategy</li> <li>Apply project management skills to conduct projects to implement change</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Plan and execute a substantial research-based project, capstone experience or professional-based project</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify priorities and develop strategies for addressing OHS problems that require the involvement of others for successful implementation</li> <li>Apply research principles to design projects to investigate issues within the workplace</li> <li>Apply project management skills to implement significant projects in the workplace</li> </ul>   |