



Second Annual Report

2012-2013



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1 Report by Registrar and Chairperson

The Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board is now completing its second year of operation. Originally established for the sole purpose of accrediting OHS professional education programs the Accreditation Board has taken on a much broader role in OHS professional education and OHS capability than envisaged at its commencement. The Board is active in three main areas:

- Recognising university-level programs that meet the accreditation criteria
- Advocating for a sustainable environment for OHS education, and
- Custodian of the OHS Body of Knowledge.

These activities are particularly important in the light of the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022 *Healthy, safe and productive working lives*, which includes the strategic outcome that those providing work health and safety education, training and advice have appropriate capabilities.

Accreditation of university level OHS education programs

There are currently 15 universities offering a total of 29 OHS professional education programs:

5 Bachelor programs (1 being processed for accreditation)

13 Graduate Diploma programs (4 accredited, 2 being processed, 3 not in a situation to consider accreditation)¹

- 11 Master programs (3 accredited, 1 being processed, 1 not in a situation to consider accreditation).

A total of 7 programs have been accredited from RMIT University, Latrobe University, Monash University and Edith Cowan University. Programs from three other universities are currently being assessed.

Changes to the Australian Qualification Framework have required all universities to review their programs. In some cases this has delayed the applications for accreditation but as the Accreditation Board has been able to align our criteria and process with the structural changes in the Higher Education sector all universities that have gone through the accreditation have found it a constructive and supportive process. Universities with accredited programs are able to display the Accredited Program logo on their web site and related publications. A register of OHS professional education programs is also available on the Accreditation Board website which is becoming a first port of call for potential students.

Advocating for a sustainable environment for OHS education

It quickly became clear that the Accreditation Board had to engage more broadly to influence factors that potentially threatened the availability and quality of OHS professional education.

OHS VET education

OHS practitioner qualifications are offered by the VET sector at Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced diploma levels. While many of these programs are of good quality there is concern about some providers especially those offering short course programs. These quality concerns are not restricted to OHS qualifications but apply more broadly across the VET sector and were identified in a recent review and COAG paper issued by the National Skills Standards Council. The quality of OHS VET qualifications is important to the OHS profession as:

¹ Nine of the Graduate Diploma programs are nested in masters programs.



- A Diploma in OHS is seen as a pathway into some university-level OHS programs
- A national professional certification program is being implemented for OHS professionals and practitioners with certification at the practitioner level based on the Diploma of OHS
- Many OHS practitioners work as solo practitioners and so do not have mentoring and job support from experienced OHS practitioners and professionals.

The Accreditation Board has prepared a position statement on the duration of VET OHS qualifications as a guide to potential students, employers and recruiters. We have also provided a response to the NSSC/COAG consultation paper on regulation of the VET sector; we have engaged with the Australian Skills Quality Agency and Innovation and Business Skills Australia (the skills council responsible for OHS qualifications) on addressing the quality issues.

Capability and supply of OHS educators and small centres of OHS education

As commented earlier, there are 15 universities providing OHS professional education programs. The teaching units frequently only comprise 2-3 people with some programs relying on one staff member supported by sessional lecturers. University criteria for appointment include a PhD for even base level lecturing positions and not only are there few people with OHS related PhDs in Australia creating a limited supply of people meeting university requirements but the significant pay differential between academia and industry makes an academic role unattractive.

The Accreditation Board is looking to promote a collaborative model for the delivery of OHS professional education to create centres of excellence in OHS knowledge and teaching to ensure the expertise to deliver quality OHS education. Unfortunately there is resistance to collaborative models of program delivery by the university hierarchy.

Another aspect of capability of OHS educators derives from their background in educational theory and methods as they apply to OHS. While it may be occurring in other areas of professional education there has been little or no engagement in pedagogical discussion as it relates to OHS education, particularly the development of theoretical knowledge and critical thinking as part of capability. As with all education, OHS has seen a move to online and distance modes of delivery with some programs having no face to face component. This move has not been associated with research and discussion on how to develop and assess required OHS professional skills and attributes in such an environment. The Accreditation Board sees it has a vital role in promoting such discussion. When the OHS education conference originally scheduled for February 2013 was cancelled due to university restrictions on education the Board moved into planning a webinar program.

Recognition of OHS professional education

OHS education tends to have a low profile in universities which can impact on allocation of resources and even viability of the program. The universities that have gone through accreditation have all reported an increase in profile and recognition of the OHS teaching unit within the university.

Awards are also part of the Accreditation Board recognition program. The Accreditation Board joined with the Safety Institute of Australia to provide the annual OHS Education Awards at the bachelor, graduate diploma/masters and PhD levels.

OHS Capability

While all of the activities of the Accreditation Board are directed toward OHS capability there have been two exciting developments in this area: the Australian WHS strategy and the compilation of the *Developing OHS Capability Package*.



OHS Capability and the Australian WHS Strategy

The registrar of the Accreditation Board was engaged by Safe Work Australia to work with agency staff to develop an issues, gaps and opportunities paper for the WHS strategic outcomes on capability. This paper was the basis for developing the agency action plan for 2013-15 for capability.

Developing OHS Capability Package

Managers may meet their due diligence requirements in some respects by proper reliance on advice from and the activities of others however they must be able to demonstrate the reasonableness of relying on that advice. There are no mandatory requirements to practice OHS and, until recently, no benchmarks for assessing the competence of those in the OHS function. Thus managers have to consider what constitutes 'credible' and 'appropriate' advice.

The *Developing OHS Capability Package* has been compiled by the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board to assist employers to evaluate their OHS capability and where appropriate support development of capability in their organisation. The materials in this package have been developed from capability statements and learning outcomes developed through workshops with OHS educators and professionals, other activities undertaken by the Accreditation Board together with input by one of our Supporting Partners *Safesearch*.

The value of this approach was recently recognised by the Australian Qualification Framework Council. The registrar was invited to speak at an industry forum on the *Developing OHS Capability Package* as a case study on how the qualification framework could be applied to defining the requirements of a profession.

OHS Body of Knowledge

The OHS Body of Knowledge for Generalist OHS Professionals was developed as part of the OHS Body of Knowledge project funded by WorkSafe Victoria. It has attracted acclaim both in Australia and internationally. It describes the theoretical knowledge which should underpin OHS practice. It provides the basis for accreditation of university level OHS education programs, professional certification and continuing professional development for OHS professionals. The OHS Body of Knowledge is available free of charge for individual professional, non commercial use at www.ohsbok.org.au. A license is required for its use for commercial purposes.

The copyright of the OHS Body of Knowledge is held by the Safety Institute of Australia with the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board having a custodian role responsible for currency and further development. Originally published in 2012 the Accreditation Board has developed a seven year review and update schedule.

The Accreditation Board is very excited that the contribution of the OHS Body of Knowledge to capability has been recognised by Safe Work Australia. SWA is supporting the development of four additional chapters addressing the topics of work health and safety jurisprudence, organisational culture, risk and decision making and user centred and safe design. The development of the new chapters will be managed by the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board with technical input and writing of the chapters managed through Topic Specific Technical Panels.

International engagement

With international recognition of the OHS Body of Knowledge and the work the Accreditation Board has undertaken around OHS capability the Registrar has been invited and sponsored to present at the Global Leaders OHS Week in Bangkok and the National Education Symposium conducted by the Board



of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals. She is also part of an international network developing a framework for the OHS profession.

The view ahead to 2014

The next year will be a busy one for the Accreditation Board. As our core activity we will continue to work with universities, both those with accredited programs and those yet to be accredited. We are looking to run a series of webinars for educators on educational theory and practice as it applies to OHS. With the support of Safe Work Australia we will be managing the development and writing of four new chapters of the OHS Body of Knowledge. The culmination of this work will be the release and ongoing enhancement of the *Developing OHS Capability Package*. This will include a Capability Workshop and a range of promotion activities to engage employers, recruiters, regulators, OHS professionals and others.

Pam Pryor
Registrar

August 2013

Mike Capra
Chairperson



2 Core principles

2.1 Purpose statement

To contribute to workplace health and safety by facilitating the education of graduates equipped with the knowledge and skills to enter the workplace as effective entry-level OHS professionals.

2.2 Vision

That OHS professional education is based on strong scientific and technical concepts, evidenced-informed, delivered by suitably competent persons and so recognised by the profession, government, industry and the community.

2.3 Mission

To ensure that OHS professional education is based on educational design and review processes, and delivery of learning appropriate to develop graduates equipped with the knowledge and skills to enter the workplace as an entry-level generalist OHS professional.

2.4 Corporate and business structure

The Accreditation Board is created under the By Laws of the Safety Institute of Australia. As such it is auspiced by the Safety Institute of Australia but is independent in its decision-making regarding standards and accreditation of OHS education programs. The SIA By Laws describing the governance arrangements for the Accreditation Board were revised in December 2012.

Membership of the Board is an honorary non-executive position with travel expenses for meetings and for participation in assessment panels reimbursed. The chair of the Board is determined by the Board members. Members the Board are appointed as individuals based on their expertise and experience related to the activities of OHS professionals and the education of OHS professionals. The Board is supported by a registrar which is a part time remunerated position.

3 Operating environment

3.1 The Australian WHS Strategy and Safe Work Australia

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022, with the vision of *Healthy, safe and productive working lives*, was released in October 2012. This strategy sets the focus and direction for activities of Safe Work Australia (SWA) and OHS regulators, employer bodies and other bodies involved in promoting improvements in OHS. The strategy defines seven action areas one of which is Work Health and Safety (WHS) capabilities. The capability action area has four strategic outcomes one of which relates specifically to the work of the Accreditation Board: *those providing work health and safety education, training and advice have the appropriate capabilities*.

The role of Safe Work Australia in implementing the strategy has three key components: building relationships: collecting and collating information: and monitoring and assessing achievement against the Australian Strategy targets. The SWA focus on relationship building has provided a significant opportunity for the Accreditation Board and SWA to work together on identifying issues, developing



strategies and actions to support achievement of the strategic action that *those providing work health and safety education, training and advice have the appropriate capabilities.*

3.2 Higher Education Sector

The Higher Education sector comprises 39 universities, 15 of which provide OHS professional education programs. While universities are self accrediting in that they can develop, approve and provide qualifications without reference to outside bodies there are professional education accreditation bodies for most professions.

With the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) and changes to the Australian Qualification Framework the Higher Education sector has undergone structural change which has required universities to review most of their programs, particularly post graduate programs. This environment of change has offered significant opportunity for the Accreditation Board to be a leader in implementing accreditation criteria and processes aligned with the new requirements but has also delayed some universities in applying for accreditation.

OHS professional education in the Higher Education sector is experiencing challenges both internal to the university and from external influences which are impacting on the availability of qualified and experienced OHS educators.

3.3 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The quality and credibility of OHS Practitioner qualifications provided by the VET sector is important to the work of the Accreditation Board in that:

- A Diploma in OHS is seen as a pathway into some university-level OHS programs attracting credit points for some bachelor programs or, together with OHS experience, taken in lieu of a bachelor qualification for entry to some graduate diploma programs
- A national professional certification program is being implemented for OHS professionals and practitioners with certification at the practitioner level based on the Diploma of WHS and Advanced Diploma of WHS qualifications
- Many OHS practitioners work as solo practitioners in small and medium organisations and so do not have mentoring and job support from experienced OHS practitioners and professionals.

Currently there are broad based concerns around the quality and credibility of VET qualifications generally the Standing Council on Tertiary Education Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) directed the National Skills Standards Council (NSSC) to undertake a broad ranging review of the standards for delivery of vocational education and training focusing on issues of quality. The NSSC review confirmed that while there are examples of good practice there was need for reform (NSSC, 2013). Proposed changes to the regulation and standards for the VET sector were circulated through a COAG consultation document in May this year. The final outcomes have not been announced.

3.4 The OHS profession

The OHS profession is undergoing significant change with a number of developments likely to impact positively on the profession and education of OHS professionals. The first edition of the OHS Body of Knowledge for Generalist OHS Professionals was published in 2012. The OHS Body of Knowledge has



given the OHS role a professional profile by emphasising that there is a theoretical knowledge base to OHS and defining the depth and breadth of the knowledge base. The OHS Body of Knowledge is receiving interest and acclaim both in Australia and internationally.

A profession wide certification process for Generalist OHS Professionals will be implemented in 2013-14 as an outcome of the OHS Body of Knowledge project. Accredited professional qualifications and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are key requirements for certification.

4 Background: The first year

The Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board is a direct outcome of the OHS Body of Knowledge project funded by WorkSafe Victoria and owned by the Health and Safety Professionals Alliance (HaSPA). Inaugural members of the Board were selected and approved by HaSPA with the first meeting held in August 2011.

The establishment and first year of operation of the Accreditation Board was funded through seed funding provided by the OHS Body of Knowledge project and a \$10,000 subsidy by the Safety Institute of Australia. The business model that underpinned the establishment of the Accreditation Board included administrative, IT, communications and marketing support by the SIA. While there was a will within the SIA National Office to provide this support staffing and recruitment matters limited the support provided which presented management challenges for the Accreditation Board.

The involvement of two Victorian universities, particularly RMIT, in the pilot program enabled the Board to develop quality support documentation for the accreditation process. The engagement of OHS educators and OHS professionals in the learning outcome workshops led the Board into breaking new ground by using the Australian Qualification Framework to develop profession-specific graduate attributes for bachelor, graduate diploma and masters programs. Being new to accreditation of professional education the Board was also the first to use the new Higher Education Standards Framework to structure the accreditation criteria.

While only one program was accredited in the first year there was a high level of interest by universities. A number of universities advised they were not in a position to apply for accreditation at the time as they were undertaking reviews to ensure compliance with the AQF.

With the SIA becoming the owner of the OHS Body of Knowledge and the Accreditation Board being 'custodian' the scope of activity for the Accreditation Board expanded considerably.

A strategic and operational plan was developed to guide activities for the next three years. This plan was based on the premise that in addition to the core activity of accrediting OHS programs the Accreditation Board needed to undertake activities to advocate for and support a sustainable environment for OHS professional education. Funding and resourcing the plan were identified as future challenges.



5. Board administration

5.1 Board structure

The Accreditation Board Charter requires that the members of the Board appoint one of their members as the chair for the 12 month period. Professor Mike Capra was appointed the chair for the period 2012-13.

The Board has three standing committees.

Strategy and Budget Committee	Mike Capra, Chris Sutherland, Angela Seidel, Mike Walsh Pam Pryor
Conference, workshops and webinars	Mike Capra, Bruce King, Margaret Cook, Meagan Browne, Leo Ruschena, David Cliff Pam Pryor
OHS Body of Knowledge Evolution and Application (OHSBOKEA)	Leo Ruschena (chair), David Cliff Pam Pryor Non-Board members: David Borys, Ralph Willson, Greg Stagbouer

5.2 Board meetings

The Board held four meetings in 2012-13; two face to face, one by teleconference and one by GoToMeetings video/teleconference.

Meagan Browne.	3
Mike Capra	4
David Cliff	3
Margaret Cook	4
Tim Driscoll	3
David Goddard	3
Bruce King	4
Sue Reed#	3 (1 part)
Leo Ruschena	3
Angela Seidel	4
Chris Sutherland	3
Deborah Vallance	3
Mike Walsh	4
Pam Pryor	4

arranged substitute for meetings when absent

5.3 Supporting partners

Originally established for the sole purpose of accrediting OHS professional education programs the Accreditation Board has taken on a much broader role in OHS professional education and OHS capability than envisaged at its commencement. The Accreditation fees and subsidy by the SIA is insufficient to fund this broader role. The Accreditation Board has implemented a Supporting Partner



Program to enable organisations who share the vision and goals of the Accreditation Board to contribute to and support the activities of the Accreditation Board.

Through the Supporting Partner Program the Accreditation Board may form partnerships and alliances with organisations that share common goals. Such organisations may be non-profit, for-profit or government agencies based within or outside Australia. They may be associations, corporations, non government agencies (NGO), peer accreditation agencies or other. The partnership provides the Accreditation Board with financial support. It may involve grants, sponsorship, advocacy or promotion of the aims and objectives of the Accreditation Board in other agreed ways. Each partnership and the nature of support provided is approved by the members of the Accreditation Board and documented as a written agreement. The creation of a partnership does not imply that the Accreditation Board endorses the products or services provided by the partner nor does the agreement influence decision making by the Accreditation Board or prevent the Accreditation Board from exercising independent judgment on any matter.

The Accreditation Board currently has six Supporting Partners: Programmed; Leighton Contractors, Goodman Fielder; Sparke Helmore lawyers; QBE Insurance and Safesearch recruitment. In 2013-14 the Board will be seeking to renew and engage at greater depth with current Supporting Partners and recruit additional Supporting Partners.

6 Report against Strategic Plan

The strategic plan for the Accreditation Board was developed by the Board meeting in June 2012. The plan was mapped against the strategic outcomes of the Australian National WHS Strategy 2012 -2022 and the strategic plan for the Safety Institute of Australia. The status of actions against the strategic plan is summarised below.

1	Program development	Priority	Status	Review
1.1	Define learning outcomes for new graduate OHS professionals	Critical	Completed	Review 3 yearly
1.2	Conduct education conference/workshops/webinars	Important	Active	
1.3	Provide OHS Professional Educator Award	Important	Postponed	
1.4	Provide OHS Education Awards (in liaison with SIA)	Important	Completed	Annual
1.5	Offer strategic consultancy	Desirable	Active	As per contract
2	Program accreditation			
2.1	Maintain accreditation criteria	Critical	Completed	Review 3 yearly
2.2	Conduct accreditation assessments	Critical	Active	
2.3	Monitor accredited programs	Critical	Completed	Annual
3	Recognition of OHS qualifications and OHS professional development programs			
3.1	Maintain accredited program register	Critical	Completed	Annual
3.2	Map equivalence of international qualifications	Important	Completed	3 yearly
3.3	Liaise with relevant agencies regarding quality of VET OHS qualifications that are part of practitioner certification	Important	Active	
3.4	Accredit PD events for CPD recognition	Desirable	Postponed	
4	Body of Knowledge			
4.1	Maintain web site	Critical	Active	
4.2	Conduct activities to review, analyse and update OHS Body of Knowledge	Critical	Active	



4.3	Support research	Important	Postponed	
4.4	Disseminate OHS Body of Knowledge and OHS research to OHS educators and OHS professionals	Important	Active	
5	Engagement			
5.1	Maintain web site	Critical	Active	
5.2	Conduct accreditation briefings	Critical	Active	
5.3	Engage with and influence relevant Australian groups	Critical	Active	
5.4	Engage with and influence relevant international bodies	Important	Active	
5.5	Provide information on accreditation and OHS education	Important	Active	
5.6	Make conference presentations	Important	Active	

7 Long term strategy

7.1 Strategic and operational plan

The Strategic and Operational Plan first developed in June 2012 has been revised with the updated plan approved by the Accreditation Board. The Plan is available on the Accreditation Board web site.

7.2 Opportunities and challenges for 2013 and beyond

7.2.1 Opportunities

While certification of Generalist OHS Professionals will be voluntary this is likely to create demand for accredited qualifications.

The inclusion of work health and safety capabilities in the Australian Strategy and the collaborative, relationship building approach taken by SWA, together with the willingness and capacity of the Accreditation Board to respond, has presented an opportunity for a professional body to engage and influence at a national level that has not previously occurred in Australia.

The OHS Body of Knowledge and the Accreditation Board role as custodian present opportunities for recognition of the work of the Accreditation Board, influencing the profession and the perception of the profession by others. The funding agreement with SWA not only enables further development but brings a significant level of recognition to the Body of Knowledge.

The *Developing OHS Capability Package* which brings together the OHS Body of Knowledge, capability statements and learning outcomes together with a range of tools and other support documents will be major focus of Accreditation Board activities in the coming year.

Supporting partners represent not only a source of income but an opportunity to engage with industry in range of ways.

International engagement, particularly in the project work on developing an international framework not only offers the opportunity to bring an international perspective to the Australian OHS professional scene but to influence the international work at the ground level.

7.2.2 Challenges

While the opportunities are broad the challenges come from three main areas:

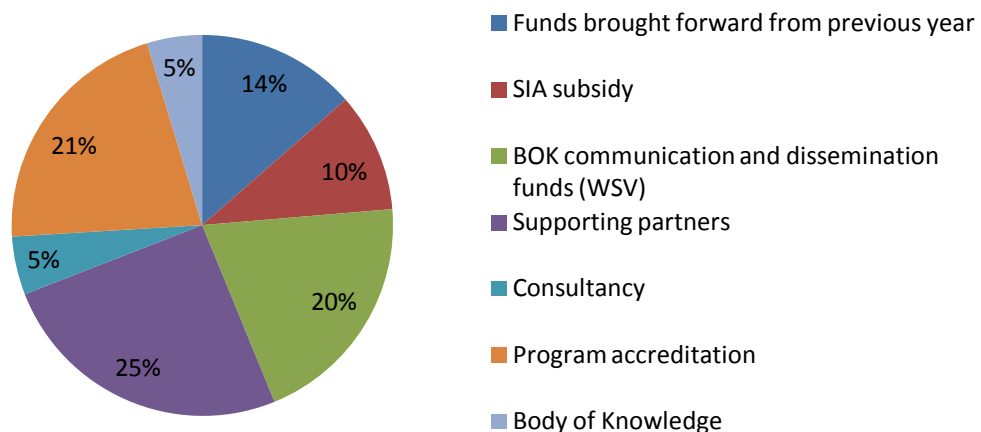


- Budget and resources to achieve the strategic and operational plan
- The optimisation of the governance relationship with the SIA to ensure actual and perceived independence of the Accreditation Board
- The internal university, and external, factors impacting on the supply of qualified and experienced OHS educators.

8 Financial Report

The Accreditation Board commenced the year with \$13,391 cash at hand; income for the year was \$78,508 of which \$7000 was deferred income making total income for the year \$91,899. Expenses paid out totalled \$75,014 with \$16,650 payable making total expenses for the year \$91,664. Thus the Accreditation Board completed the year with a surplus of \$235. The sources of income and distribution of expenses are shown below.

Sources of Income 2012-13



Distribution of expenses

