



First Annual Report 2011-2012



Members of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board

Meagan Browne BSc, MAppSc(Org Dynamics), MAppSci(Toxicology), GCert Industrial Hygiene Science, DipEd
Director Operations Support, WorkSafe Victoria

Professor Mike Capra BSc, MSc, PhD
FSIA
University of Queensland

Professor David Cliff BSc(Hons), PhD, GDipEnvStud, GDipOutdoor Ed, GDip BusAdmin
CPMSIA, CChem, MRACI, MEIANZ, MCombustion Institute, MAusIMM, Member of Mine Managers Association of Australia
Professor of Occupational Health and Safety in Mining and Director, Minerals Industry Safety and Health Centre, Sustainable Minerals Institute University of Queensland

Dr Margaret Cook BOT(Hons), GDipOHS, MHealth Sci, PhD
FSIA, CPE
Senior Lecturer, OHS Education, University of Queensland

Associate Professor Timothy Driscoll BSc(Med), MBBS, MOHS, PhD
FAFOEM, FAFPHM
Post graduate Coordinator, Research; Joint Academic Coordinator, Master of Public Health; Sydney School of Public Health, University of Sydney

Dr David Goddard MBBS, BmedSc, DipOccHealth, GCert Higher Ed
FAFOEM, RACP
Senior Lecturer, Monash Centre for Occupational & Environmental Health (MonCOEH)

Professor Bruce King BA, DipT, DipEd, DipEd, MA(Research)
Fellow Australian College of Educators
Emeritus Professor, University of South Australia

Dr Sue Reed BSc, MEngSc, MSc(OccHyg), PhD
CIH, COH, FAIOH, FSIA, MAA
Associate Professor, School of Exercise & Health Sciences, Edith Cowan University

Leo Ruschena MSc(Occ Hyg), MIER, BEng, BEcon, GDipOrgBehaviour
CFSIA
Senior Lecturer, OHS, RMIT University

Angela Seidel BEc, GDipEd(Sec), CertHlthEc, GDipHlthSc(OSH), PGDipHlthSc(OSH), MOHS, MEnvMgt, MAppMgt(Pub Health), MHRM, MBA
CPMSIA
Chief Risk Officer, Goodman Fielder

Chris Sutherland BEng (Hons)
FIE (Aust)
Managing Director, Programmed Group

Dr Deborah Vallance MBBS, B Med Sci(Hons), MPH
National OHS Coordinator, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

Mike Walsh BOHS
OHS Consultant, Leightons Contractors

Registrar

Pam Pryor BSc, BEd, GDOHM
FSIA



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1 Report by Registrar and Chairperson

The first year of any new body is always challenging but this first year of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board has also been exciting and satisfying. The Accreditation Board has operated efficiently and effectively during its first year which is no small part a result of the cooperative and cohesive approach by all the Board members together with the seed funding provided by the OHS Body of Knowledge project. The registrar hours required to achieve the outputs have been greater than initially budgeted but the overall operation of the Board has been within budget.

The Board has more than achieved its objectives in many areas. The involvement of two Victorian universities, particularly RMIT, in the pilot program has 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 has led the Board into breaking new ground. No other profession has used 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 has also been the first to use the new Higher Education Standards Framework to structure the accreditation criteria. Our education advisor, Bruce King, has been instrumental in ensuring that the Accreditation Board not only works within the new Higher Education Standards Framework but is leading the way in professional accreditation in this new environment for Higher Education.

The role and activities of the Accreditation Board have taken on a higher profile with the Australian endorsement of the Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-22 and in particular the strategic outcome on Work Health and Safety Capabilities that “those providing WHS education, training and advice have the appropriate capabilities”.

The Board target was to have two to three programs accredited by this stage but various reasons mitigated against this. However there is a high level of interest by universities and it is anticipated that at least six universities will seek accreditation for their programs in the next year.

Effective operation of the Accreditation Board is contingent on administrative, IT, communications and marketing support by the SIA. While there is a will within the SIA National Office to provide this support staffing and recruitment matters have limited the support able to be provided.

The direction and activities for the next three years have been documented in a strategic and operational plan. This plan is based on the premise that in addition to the core activity of accrediting OHS programs the Accreditation Board will need to undertake activities to support a sustainable environment for OHS professional education. Funding and resourcing this plan will be challenging but options are being investigated.

With the SIA becoming the owner of the OHS Body of Knowledge and Accreditation Board being ‘custodian’ there are further challenges but also great opportunities. This is an exciting time to be part of the OHS Profession and OHS education.

Pam Pryor
Registrar
5th July, 2012

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

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.

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 and may be on a rotational basis. 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 part time remunerated position.

The activities of the Board are supported by the Safety Institute of Australia through the provision of administrative support, web site, and media and communications support to the extent as detailed in the negotiated service agreement.

3 Background

The Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board is a direct outcome of the OHS Body of Knowledge project which was funded by WorkSafe Victoria and owned by the Health and Safety Professionals Alliance (HaSPA). The Safety Institute of Australia played a key role in this project.

Accreditation of professional education programs by the relevant bodies is recognised as being an integral part of the Higher Education quality assurance processes. The OHS Body of Knowledge project recognised that accreditation of OHS professional education programs was required to:

- provide a basis for professional certification by recognising educational programs that address the required knowledge and skills for professional certification



- ensure that OHS professional education programs adequately prepare graduates to enter the workplace as an entry-level OHS professional
- increase industry and community recognition and confidence in OHS professionals.

Following a comparative analysis of accreditation processes in Australia and internationally, and consultation with OHS educators and OHS professionals, a proposal for an accreditation process and structure was approved by HaSPA in August 2010. Pam Pryor was appointed registrar in March 2011. The Accreditation Board was officially established on July 1st 2011 with the adoption of the SIA By Laws.

Inaugural members of the Board were selected and approved by HaSPA and formally appointed by the Board of the SIA.

4 Programs, events and achievements

4.1 Accreditation criteria

The accreditation criteria and process have been developed taking account of recent changes in Higher Education including the new Australian Qualification Framework and new government arrangements for managing quality in Higher Education.

4.2 Graduate attributes and learning outcomes

The changes in the arrangements for quality in Australian Higher Education focus on outputs and so learning outcomes, rather than teaching inputs, are the important quality measure. As a result learning outcomes needed to be developed for each chapter of the OHS Body of Knowledge. To address this, the Accreditation Board conducted two workshops: one in Melbourne attended by 30 OHS educators, OHS professionals and representatives of WorkSafe Victoria. A second workshop held in Sydney was attended by 20 OHS educators and OHS professionals.

Draft graduate attributes have been developed that reflect the Australian Qualification Framework and apply an OHS context to clarify the differences in outcome for a bachelor (AQF 7), graduate diploma (AQF 8) and masters by course work program (AQF 9). This draft will be subject to broad comment via the Accreditation Board web site and specific arrangements will be made for OHS regulators, Safe Work Australia, the ACTU and employers to provide comment. It is anticipated that the graduate attributes and learning outcomes will be finalised by end of November 2012. They will then be available to inform OHS program development and accreditation. The graduate attributes and learning outcomes also serve a secondary purpose of informing OHS professionals and employers as to what might be expected of new graduates in the workplace.

4.3 Process for accreditation

Detailed information and application documents have been developed to assist universities in the application process. Internal procedure documents have been developed to ensure consistency and rigour in managing and assessing the applications. This documentation was developed with the assistance of two Victorian universities that were part of the pilot program.



4.4 Accredited programs

One university has had its program accredited, one is currently being assessed and other universities are reviewing their documentation in preparation for application.

4.5 Communication and engagement

Through the learning outcomes workshops strong links have been established with OHS educators. These links have been supplemented with information emails and media releases. A total of three media releases have also provided information to universities, OHS professionals and the wider community. These media releases and other contacts have led to the registrar writing or being interviewed for four articles for OHS journals. Communication activities will be expanded early in the new financial year with a newsletter and twitter.

The registrar has actively engaged with Professions Australia by attending three workshops on the Higher Education quality arrangement and the implications for professions, accreditation of professional education, and the continuing professional development.

The Accreditation Board is working with Safe Work Australia to, where appropriate, align the activities of the Board with the National WHS strategic outcome that “those providing work health and safety education, training and advice have the appropriate capabilities, i.e. knowledge, experience and skills”.

The registrar of the Accreditation Board is part of an international network sharing information and comparing OHS roles across various countries, requirements for practice including knowledge and skills, as well as professional certification.

4.6 OHS Body of Knowledge

The ownership of the OHS Body of Knowledge has been assigned to the Safety Institute of Australia with the Accreditation Board being the ‘custodian’ responsible for maintaining and updating the Body of Knowledge. This is a major opportunity for the Safety Institute of Australia and the Accreditation Board to contribute to OHS knowledge, OHS education and the development of OHS professionals.

The registrar has worked with the SIA to manage the launch of the OHS Body of Knowledge publication, to establish the web site and to draft arrangements for licensing the OHS Body of Knowledge. The registrar has also formatted the publication so that it can be downloaded as an e-book as well as hard copies printed for sale.

5 Long term strategy

A strategic plan and operational plan has been developed by the Accreditation Board (see Appendix 1). This plan takes into account the need for a range of activities to support a sustainable OHS education environment as well the core OHS program accreditation activities.



Appendix:

Strategic plan

The **Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board** is created under the By Laws of the Safety Institute of Australia with independence in decision-making and setting standards. It has broad representation from OHS professionals, OHS academics, OHS professional bodies including the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA), Australian Institute of Occupational Hygiene (AIOH), Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Australia (HFESA), Australian New Zealand Society for Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) and the Australian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (AFOEM). It also has representation from the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), employers and regulators. The Board also benefits from the membership of an education academic.

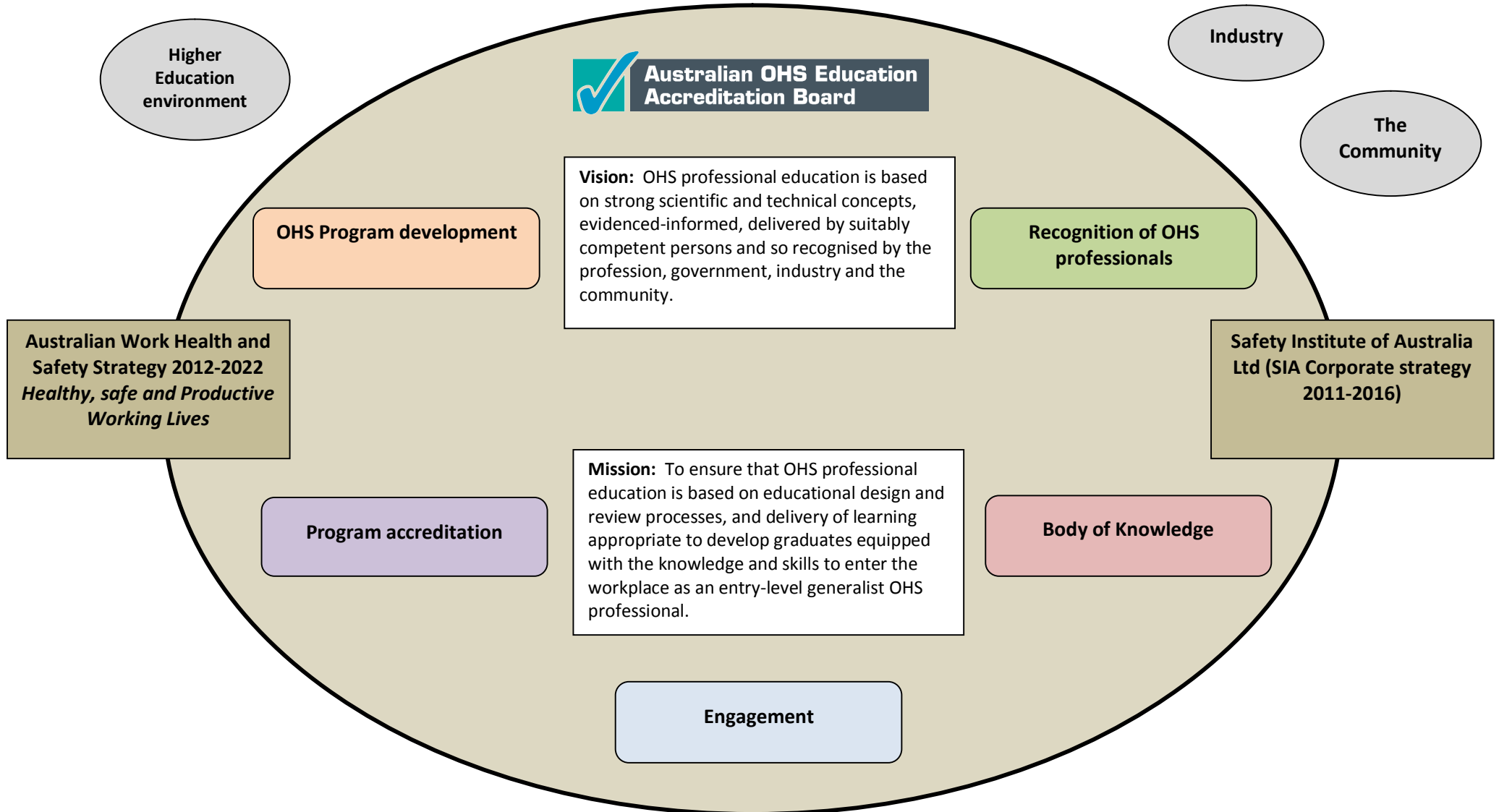
Purpose: To contribute to workplace health and safety by facilitating the education of graduates equipped with the knowledge and skills to enter the workplace as effective entry-level OHS professionals. The core activity of the Board is through accreditation to recognise those programs that meet standards established by the Board.

Vision: 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.

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.



Strategic Plan: Global view





Strategic overview

Program development	Program accreditation	Recognition of OHS qualifications and OHS professional development programs	Body of Knowledge	Engagement
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Strategy

Conduct activities to support OHS program development, delivery by competent persons and recognition of the role of OHS education and OHS educators.	Through accreditation recognise those programs that meet standards established by the Accreditation Board.	Recognise those programs that meet the accreditation criteria or, in the case of overseas qualifications, may be considered equivalent Support ongoing professional development by recognising those events and programs that extend formal qualifications in the areas addressed by the OHS Body of Knowledge	Maintain and enhance the OHS Body of Knowledge to inform OHS education and practice	Engage with educators, OHS policy makers, regulators, industry to inform OHS education and to raise the profile of OHS education Provide information to potential students on course selection
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Strategic activities

<p>Define learning outcomes for new graduate OHS professionals</p> <p>Conduct education conference Provide OHS Professional Educator Award Provide OHS Education Awards (in liaison with SIA)</p> <p>Offer strategic consultancy</p>	<p>Maintain accreditation criteria</p> <p>Conduct accreditation assessments</p> <p>Monitor accredited programs</p>	<p>Maintain accredited program register</p> <p>Map equivalence of international qualifications</p> <p>Liaise with relevant agencies regarding quality of VET OHS qualifications that are part of practitioner certification</p> <p>Accredit PD events for CPD recognition</p>	<p>Maintain web site (in associated with SIA)</p> <p>Conduct activities to review, analyse and update OHS Body of Knowledge</p> <p>Support research (in liaison with SIA)</p> <p>Workshops to disseminate OHS Body of Knowledge and OHS research to OHS educators and OHS professionals (in liaison with SIA)</p>	<p>Maintain web site</p> <p>Conduct accreditation briefings</p> <p>Engage with and influence relevant Australian groups</p> <p>Engage with and influence relevant international bodies</p> <p>Provide information on accreditation and OHS education</p> <p>Make conference presentations</p>
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Priority ranking: **Critical**, **Important**, **Desirable**