

Introduction

Core Body of Knowledge for the
Generalist OHS Professional

Second Edition, 2019

2



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The *OHS Body of Knowledge* forms the basis of the AIHS OHS capability agenda and informs the other platforms of the agenda: education assurance through accreditation; role clarity, capability assurance through individual certification and continuing professional development.

Thus, the *OHS Body of Knowledge* is strategically important to the AIHS and vital for the profession.

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The *OHS Body of Knowledge* provides a framework for OHS professional education and continuing professional development. As the body managing accreditation of OHS professional education, the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board influences, supports and monitors the *OHS Body of Knowledge*, and has a major role in the development and review of individual chapters to ensure that the quality and evidence base reflects current OHS research and leading-edge thinking, and so provides a suitable standard for OHS education and professional development.

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Introduction

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With a background in OHS consulting and OHS education Pam now specialises in activities around OHS capability and related aspects of OHS professionalism. She was the chair of the Technical Panel that developed the OHS Body of Knowledge and inaugural Registrar of the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board. Her current role as Manager OHS Body of Knowledge Development focuses on the ongoing maintenance and further development of the OHS Body of Knowledge and associated resources. Pam is also involved in an international research network on OHS capability and was a key player in the development of the INSHPO Global OHS Capability Framework. Pam received an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2018 for her contribution to OHS through leadership and advisory roles, particularly in developing standards for education frameworks. Pam also received the 2017-18 President's Award from American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) for her work on developing the Global OHS Capability Framework.



Introduction

Abstract

A defined body of knowledge is required as a basis for professional certification and for accreditation of education programs giving entry to a profession. The lack of such a body of knowledge for OHS professionals was identified in reviews of OHS legislation and OHS education in Australia. After a 2009 scoping study, WorkSafe Victoria provided funding to support a national project to develop and implement a core body of knowledge for generalist OHS professionals. The technical aspects of the project were managed by a technical panel with representation from universities and the professional body. An analysis and consultation process was used to develop a conceptual framework. Specialist authors were invited to contribute specific chapters, which then were subjected to peer review and editing. The outcome provides a basis for accreditation of OHS professional education programs and certification of OHS professionals. It provides guidance for OHS educators in course development, and for OHS professionals and professional bodies in developing continuing professional development activities. Also, OHS regulators, employers and recruiters will find it useful for benchmarking OHS professional practice. The OHS Body of Knowledge continues to be updated and further developed as people use and interpret it and as the evidence base expands.

Keywords

OHS, safety, body of knowledge, professional, certification, accreditation

Contextual reading

Readers should refer to 1 *Preliminaries* for a full list of chapters and authors and a synopsis of the OHS Body of Knowledge and Chapter 3, *The OHS Professional: National and international perspectives* provides a context by describing the role and professional environment.

Terminology

Depending on the jurisdiction and the organisation, Australian terminology refers to 'Occupational Health and Safety' (OHS), 'Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) or 'Work Health and Safety' (WHS). In line with international practice this publication uses OHS with the exception of specific reference to the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act and related legislation.

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1 Background to the OHS Body of Knowledge

In June 2009 WorkSafe Victoria provided funding of \$390 000 for the development and implementation of a core body of knowledge for generalist Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) professionals. The OHS Body of Knowledge project was 'owned' by the Health and Safety Professionals Alliance (HaSPA), which was sponsored by WorkSafe Victoria and brought together OHS professional associations and OHS educators. Under HaSPA's guidance, technical aspects of the project were managed by a Technical Panel – comprising representatives of La Trobe University, University of Ballarat, RMIT University and the OHS Education Chapter of the Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) with project management and administration contracted to a consultant service. As HaSPA was not a legal entity, the SIA was the contract holder and responsible for financial governance. Despite being funded in Victoria and managed by a largely Victorian-based Technical Panel, the project has national relevance as a result of extensive input from interested parties around Australia.

The project had two phases: *Development of the Core Body of Knowledge* and *Implementation of the Core Body of Knowledge*. The latter phase included development of course accreditation and professional certification processes. This chapter addresses the background, development process, conceptual framework and application of the OHS Body of Knowledge as for the first edition published in 2012 with updates on the development and output since the first edition and considers the future direction.

1.1 Why the project was necessary

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is not a regulated profession. At the time of commencement of the OHS Body of Knowledge project, and still today, there are no educational or experience requirements for employment as an OHS advisor/coordinator/manager/consultant (Pryor, 2004, p. 12). Also, there was substantial variation in OHS education provided by universities which may have reflected the specialties of host schools, e.g. health, sciences or engineering, or the interests of key educators within particular programs (Pryor, 2004; Toft et al., 2010). This variation was explored by Toft et al. (2009) in the project *Safeguarding Australians: Mapping the strengths and challenges toward sustainable improvements in OHS education and practice*.

In 2008, HaSPA developed a *Victorian Code of Ethics and Minimum Service Standards for Professional Members of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Associations (HaSPA, 2008)*. These minimum service standards included the requirement for professional certification of OHS professionals providing independent advice. The resultant certification criteria stipulated "completion of an approved education program or some alternative means

of establishing that the applicant has the required knowledge, expertise and competencies; demonstrated practical expertise; and a minimum period of full-time practice or its equivalent” (HaSPA, 2009). During discussions underpinning the development of the code and standards, members of HaSPA identified the lack of a recognised core body of knowledge informing the education and practice of generalist OHS professionals as not only impacting the quality of advice in the workplace, but also inhibiting the implementation of a professional certification process.

The importance of a defined body of knowledge for a profession is highlighted in the definition of a profession:

A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as possessing *special knowledge* and skills in a *widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level*, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. [emphasis added] (Professions Australia, 1997).

1.2 Scope of the project and some definitions

In developing the project and its methodology, members of the Technical Panel spent some time clarifying the scope of the project and defining key terms. The following questions and answers provide an important base of understanding for anyone reading or applying the OHS Body of Knowledge.

1.2.1 Who is the focus of the OHS Body of Knowledge?

This project focused on the ‘generalist OHS professional,’ a term developed for this project to clearly differentiate the target role from that of ‘specialist’ OHS roles, such as occupational ergonomist and occupational hygienist. However, as the project progressed, it became apparent that the ‘generalist OHS professional’ should be considered a specialty role in its own right, similar to the medical specialty of ‘general practice.’ For the purposes of this project, a generalist OHS professional is defined as *one who applies a multidisciplinary body of knowledge in a unique way to provide enterprises with advice on the organisational arrangements that will lead to the systemic and systematic management of OHS to prevent work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health (FIDI). This advice may be given by an internal consultant who is an employee of the business or by an external consultant on a fee-for-service basis.*

This role is differentiated from that of an OHS specialist who applies high-level knowledge and skills from a particular domain/discipline to solve specific problems. Some OHS specialists also may be OHS generalists, but it is not a pre-requisite for working in a

specialist field. While the generalist OHS professional may undertake activities related to claims management and return to work, environment and sustainability, or security, these allied fields may be considered bodies of knowledge in their own right and are not included in the Body of Knowledge for the generalist OHS professional.

The role and scope of the generalist OHS professional considered in the first edition was attuned to the Australian context. With the professional developments at the global level (see section 5.6) the further development and implementation of the OHS Body of Knowledge has an increasing international scope.

1.2.2 What is the OHS Body of Knowledge?

The OHS Body of Knowledge is the collective knowledge that should be shared by generalist OHS professionals to provide a sound basis for understanding the aetiology and control of work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health (FIDI). This knowledge can be described in terms of its key concepts and language, its core theories and related empirical evidence, and the application of these to facilitate a safe and healthy workplace. In defining the OHS Body of Knowledge it is recognised that knowledge is not static. Rather it is subject to continual reinterpretation and evolution as people engage with it, apply it and extend it by conducting research. As experience is an important contributor to knowledge and its application, it should not be assumed that any educational program can address the whole of the Body of Knowledge for the generalist OHS professional.

1.2.3 What is the scope of the OHS Body of Knowledge?

The scope of the OHS Body of Knowledge was originally restricted to what might be considered the *core* knowledge with which all generalist OHS professionals would be expected to engage. It was assumed that generalist OHS professionals will have additional areas of knowledge based on their background, education and experience.

The multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of OHS created inherent difficulties in defining the *core* knowledge. The boundaries of the core have expanded and become more fluid since the first publication of the OHS Body of Knowledge as the generalist role becomes more developed, as more is expected of the generalist roles and as OHS practice becomes more complex. These expanding expectations are reflected in the development of new chapters in the OHS Body of Knowledge.

1.2.4 Who are the intended users of the OHS Body of Knowledge?

The primary intended users of the OHS Body of Knowledge comprise:

- OHS professional bodies that use it as a basis for course accreditation and professional certification
- OHS educators who use it to inform development of education programs
- OHS professionals who use it to guide their professional development.

Also, the Body of Knowledge is important to regulators, employers and recruiters as a standard for OHS professional practice.

1.3 Principles underpinning development of the OHS Body of Knowledge

Three groups of principles underpinned development of the Body of Knowledge. The first group of principles related to the project's *rigour*:

- There would be a broad range of inputs in developing the structure and content for the Body of Knowledge, including Australian and international sources, educators and academics, OHS professionals, OHS professional bodies and other interested parties
- The Body of Knowledge would not be based on the opinions of individuals but, wherever possible, be derived from the evidence base reported in peer-reviewed literature
- As the evidence base expands, the Body of Knowledge will be updated to ensure its continued relevance.

The second group of principles related to the *nature* of the Body of Knowledge. The Body of Knowledge was:

- Not a text book
- Not a program of study or a course
- Not a series of dot points.

The third group of principles related to *application* of the Body of Knowledge. The Body of Knowledge would:

- Inform OHS education, but not prescribe a curriculum
- Provide a basis for course accreditation and professional certification
- Inform continuing professional development
- Be able to be applied in different contexts and frameworks.

This last application principle relating to different contexts and frameworks is particularly important. It means that the OHS Body of Knowledge focuses on key concepts and core theories, and acknowledges that individual OHS professionals bring their specific industry, organisation and task knowledge to the application of these key concepts and core theories in a particular context. This ability to contextualise key concepts and core theories is the defining characteristic of a professional.

2 Development process (Edition 1)

The OHS Body of Knowledge project development process is illustrated in Figure 1. Further information about its conceptual framework, and consultation, writing and review/validation processes are provided below.



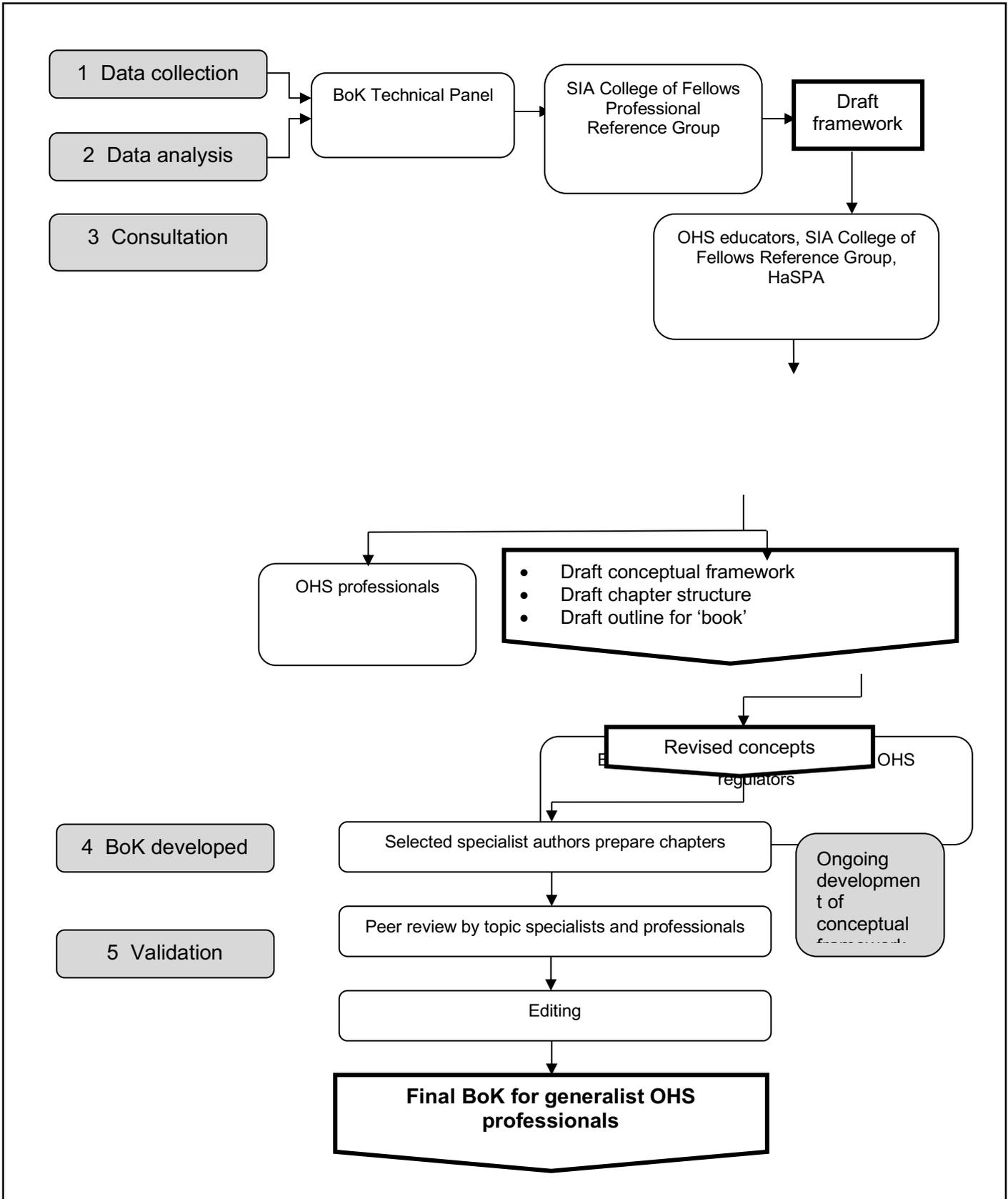


Figure 1: Development process for the OHS Body of Knowledge (OHS BoK)

2.1 Conceptual framework

Development of the OHS Body of Knowledge began in 2008 with a series of workshops that resulted in an application by HaSPA for a grant from WorkSafe Victoria to fund the project. In June 2009, the grant was announced and work formally began.

Initial data collection included mapping the programs offered by all Australian universities providing OHS professional education, and reviewing the relevant literature and information provided by Australian and international OHS professional bodies. After analysis of this information by the Technical Panel, several options for defining the framework for the Body of Knowledge were considered. Following a workshop with a specially convened Professional Reference Group from the SIA College of Fellows, these options were reduced to a single proposed framework. This model was tested and further refined at a forum attended by more than 30 OHS educators from 16 Australian universities. The framework was refined still further through the consultation, writing and review processes.

2.2 Consultation

Consultation was integral to the development of the OHS Body of Knowledge. Initially data gathered for the project *Safeguarding Australians: Mapping the strengths and challenges to sustainable improvement in OHS education and practice* (Toft et al., 2010) was revisited to glean the opinions of various stakeholders. Subsequently, representatives from the following groups were consulted:

- OHS educators
- OHS professionals
- OHS professional bodies
- Employers, recruiters, unions and OHS regulators.

Also, the input of these and other stakeholders was encouraged via the education discussion forum on the SIA website.

2.2.1 OHS educators

Early in the project, consultation with OHS educators was undertaken on the basis that the content of current OHS courses could be viewed as a 'surrogate' for the OHS Body of Knowledge. Course material was examined and a two-day workshop was attended by more than 30 OHS educators.

2.2.2 OHS professionals

Face-to-face engagement sessions with generalist OHS professionals were held in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart. While organised by the SIA, these free half-day sessions were open to all OHS generalists. The sessions were attended by 140 OHS professionals.

2.2.3 OHS professional bodies

OHS professional bodies were kept apprised of project developments through their HaSPA representatives, and were invited to nominate peer reviewers.

2.2.4 Employers, recruiters, unions, OHS regulators

Targeted interviews were held with representatives of these groups, and they were invited to comment as part of the review process.

2.3 Writing

Having developed the framework and structure for the Body of Knowledge, the Technical Panel identified individuals they considered to be experts in the various OHS areas and invited them to contribute chapters. Writers were not remunerated and all welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the Body of Knowledge. The Technical Panel remain appreciative of the time, commitment and professionalism brought to the task by all contributing authors.

2.4 Review

Initially, chapter drafts were reviewed by the Technical Panel, and suggested changes were made by the authors. The amended drafts were peer reviewed by people considered specialists in the relevant area. The resultant feedback was reviewed and collated by the Technical Panel and provided to the authors; once again, changes were made as necessary. Final drafts were then edited for cohesion and consistency. The Technical Panel were appreciative of the time and professionalism of all involved in the review and validation process.



3 Development from 2012 to 2018

3.1 Responsibility

Having funded the first edition, WorkSafe Victoria assigned the copyright of the OHS Body of Knowledge to the Safety Institute of Australia. Initially, the Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board was nominated as the 'custodian' responsible for managing updating processes to ensure currency. In 2016 the SIA developed their OHS Capability agenda with the OHS Body of Knowledge not only being the foundation of their agenda but informing each layer of the agenda. (Figure 2.) With this change in priority the SIA took a more 'hands-on' approach to managing the OHS Body of Knowledge with the Accreditation Board being recognised as a major stakeholder. The role of the Accreditation Board being to:

Influence the OHS Body of Knowledge

- To ensure that the priorities for new chapters and the review schedule for existing chapters takes account of priority topics for OHS education.
- To monitor and provide feedback so that the quality and evidence-base in individual chapters reflects current OHS research and leading edge thinking and so provides a suitable standard for OHS education.
- To engage with the SIA to advocate for development of appropriate resources to accompany the OHS BoK chapters to support quality OHS education.

(AOHSEAB, 2016. p. 9)

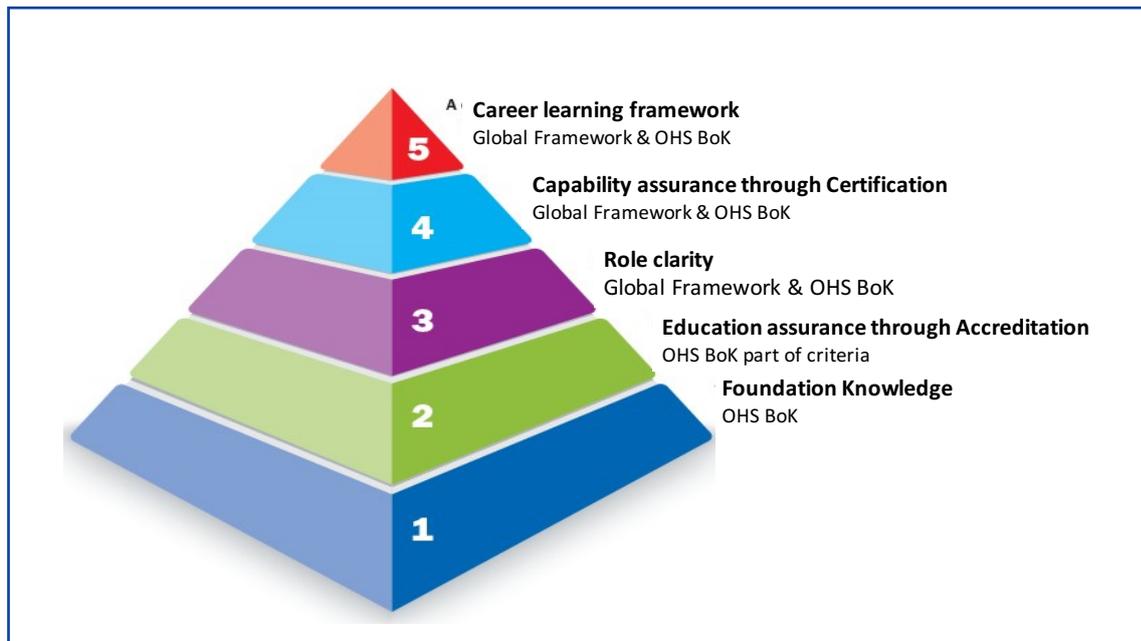


Figure 2: Australian Institute of Safety and Health¹ OHS Capability Agenda (modified from AIHS, 2019a)

3.2 Development models

As the development and implementation of the OHS Body of Knowledge has progressed the topics have tended to become more complex and the development models have been adapted to suit the topics, the circumstances and to provide for more consultation and ‘testing’ of the chapter drafts.

The development models have included:

- Topic Specific Technical Panels (TSTPs)
- Single person or team authoring arrangements
- Joint projects with related professional bodies
- Workshops and focus groups.

Topic Specific Technical Panels contributed to four new chapters developed during 2013-14 with the support of Safe Work Australia:

- Principles of OHS law
- User-centred safe design

¹ As of July 1, 2019 the Safety Institute of Australia changed their name to the Australian Institute of Health and Safety (AIHS).

- Organisational culture
- OHS risk and decision-making.

A Topic Specific Technical Panel with a multidisciplinary composition (engineering, ergonomics, and OHS) contributed to the chapter on Safety in Design.

In 2017, as an outcome of a joint project with the Institution of Chemical Engineers Safety Centre, two chapters on process safety: *Process hazards (Chemical)* and *Managing process safety* were published. A joint project between the Australian New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM) resulted in a total revision of the chapter on *Mitigation of health impacts* with the new edition published in 2018.

4 Development of Edition 2 (2019)

With the objective that all chapters will be reviewed as least 5 yearly a schedule of review as developed. The review of some chapters has resulted in significant change, others have has a 'routine' review. New chapters have been written to address identified gaps with other chapters planned.²

Specialist authors have been contracted to write some new chapters and review others including *Rules, procedures and documentation* and *Emergency management*. Building on the recognised international application of the OHS Body of Knowledge, a joint project between the SIA and the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (BCRSP) developed the chapter on *The Ethical Professional*. Peer review and academic editing continue to be a standard requirement for all new chapters and where there has been substantial change as a result of a chapter review.

The release of the second (2019) of the OHS Body of Knowledge is celebrated with a new chapter format and a new website that also acknowledges the change of name of the Safety Institute of Australia to the Australian Institute of Health and Safety (AIHS). These changes reflect the changing nature of OHS professional practice as we move into the 2020s.

² See www.ohsbok.org.au for a full list of current and planned chapters.

5 OHS Body of Knowledge and research

OHS research should influence the practice of OHS professionals. The importance of evidence-informed practice is reflected in the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-22 where the action area of *Evidence-informed policy, programs and practice* has the strategic outcomes that:

- Evidence is translated to assist practical application
- The results of research and evaluation are disseminated and implemented. (SWA, 2012. p.9.)

However, there are a number of barriers inhibiting the translation of research to inform OHS practice including:

- Lack of awareness by OHS professionals as to what research knowledge is available
- Inability of OHS professionals to access peer review literature due to cost of subscriptions³
- Time and skill requirement for OHS professionals to read across research topics and synthesise research findings to inform practice.

Each chapter of the OHS Body of Knowledge focuses on a particular topic, translating the research into a practice context while ensuring the academic tone and evidence base is not lost. Each chapter is presented in a format accessible by the OHS professional and encourages informed discussion and adaptation to suit circumstances rather than a limited 'how to'.⁴

6 Outline of the OHS Body of Knowledge

Members of the Technical Panel dedicated considerable time to analysing course information and discussing possible frameworks for the OHS Body of Knowledge. For example, did the risk-management process represent an appropriate framework? It was realised that practising OHS professionals do not always apply a risk-management framework, but rather they employ the knowledge and skills that are appropriate for the particular problem or matter at hand, at a particular stage in the problem-solving cycle. Thus, the Technical Panel arrived at a 'conceptual' approach where concepts and sub-concepts were defined and described with little structure applied to the relationship between them.

³ It should be noted that the AIHS provides access to EBSCOHost as part of membership benefits and anybody can access a range of peer reviewed literature via Google Scholar.

⁴ For more information on the OHS Body of Knowledge and research to practice see presentation at www.ohsbok.org.au.

The generalist OHS professional should have an understanding of these concepts,⁵ their sub-concepts or components, and the underpinning evidence. However, as concepts are abstract, the OHS professional also needs to organise the concepts into a framework in order to solve a problem.

As the development of the OHS Body of Knowledge continued a framework developed that showed the linkages between the concepts in preventing and managing work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health. Figure 3 provides a 'storyline' behind the OHS Body of Knowledge:

Work impacts on the **safety** and **health** of humans who work in **organisations**. Organisations are influenced by the **socio-political context**. Organisations may be considered a **system** which may contain **hazards** which must be under control to minimise **risk**. This can be achieved by understanding **models of causation** for safety and for health which will result in improvement and safety and health of people at work. The OHS professional applies **professional practice** to influence the organisation to being about this improvement. (AIHS, 2019b.)

With reference to key papers, each chapter gives a synoptic overview of a concept, its development and its application to understanding the aetiology and control of work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health (FIDI). The Body of Knowledge is not a textbook detailing all that the OHS professional needs to know; rather, it provides a 'picture' of current thinking that highlights key aspects and how that thinking evolved.

⁵ 'Concepts' are defined by Babbie (Fawcett, 2005, p. 4) as words or phrases that summarise ideas, observations and experiences. She describes concepts as tools that provide mental images that can facilitate communication about and understanding of a phenomenon.



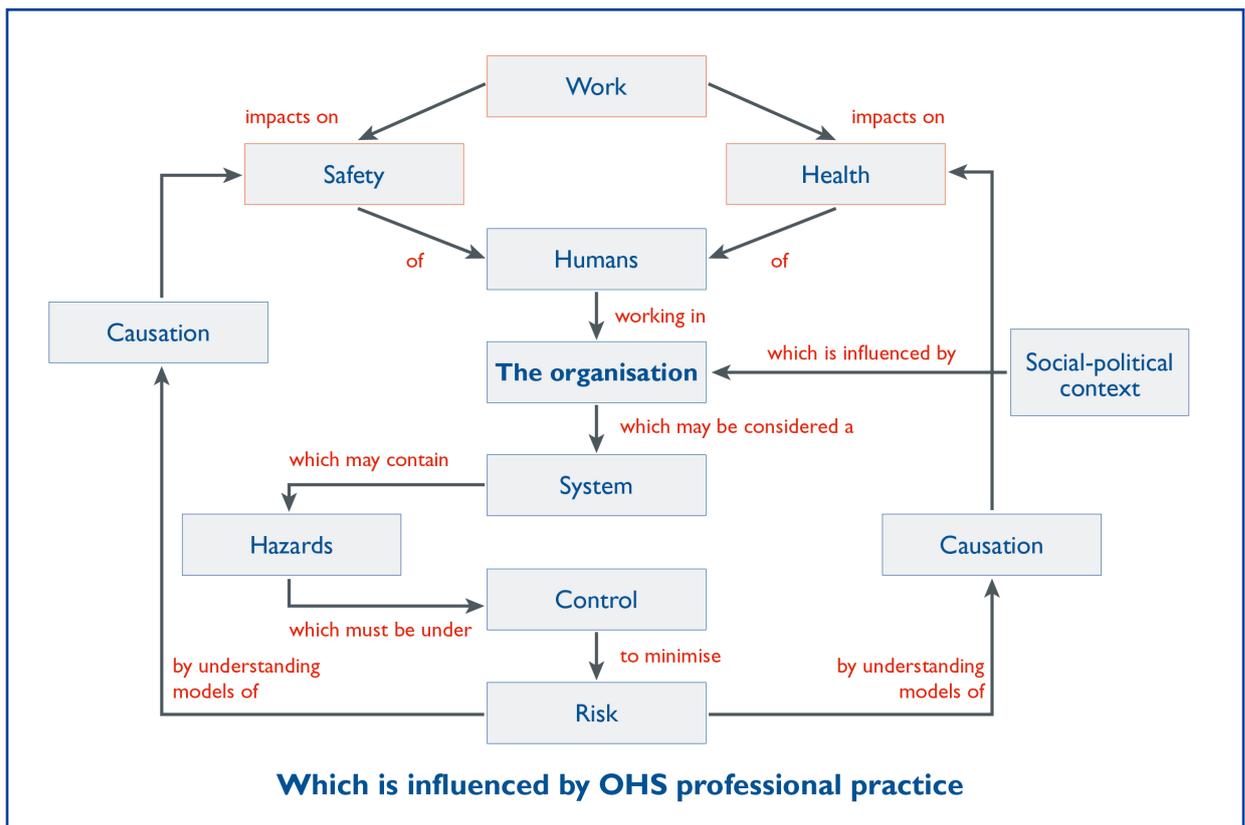


Figure 3: The conceptual structure of the OHS Body of Knowledge

7 Application of the OHS Body of Knowledge

As stated in section 1.2, the primary users groups for the OHS Body of Knowledge comprise OHS professional bodies that use it as a basis for course accreditation and professional certification; OHS educators who use it to inform the development of education programs; and OHS professionals who use it to guide their professional development.

7.1 As a basis for accreditation of OHS professional education programs

The Australian OHS Education Accreditation Board, auspiced by the Safety Institute of Australia, was established in the implementation phase of the Body of Knowledge project to accredit OHS professional education programs in Australia. A key criterion for accreditation

is “integrated tasks and structured learning experiences addressing the conceptual structure of the OHS Body of Knowledge”.

Learning outcomes and assessment:

1.9 The program includes integrated tasks and structured learning experiences that address the conceptual structure of the OHS Body of Knowledge as defined in the current version of the Accreditation Information Pack. (AOHSEAB, 2018. p.7)

All universities in Australia and overseas are encouraged to seek accreditation for their OHS professional education programs. While accreditation of OHS education programs is voluntary, completion of an accredited OHS education program is deemed to meet the knowledge requirements for professional certification.

7.2 As a basis for professional certification

As indicated in section 1.1, an objective of the OHS Body of Knowledge project was to enable certification of OHS professionals; one of the criteria for certification was completion of an approved education program or some alternative means of establishing that the applicant has the knowledge as reflected in the OHS Body of Knowledge:

“...special knowledge as defined in the OHS Body of Knowledge demonstrated by completion of an accredited OHS professional education program. For equity reasons an alternative route for demonstrating knowledge is available via a Challenge Assessment structured around the OHS Body of Knowledge. There are criteria that must be satisfied to access this alternative route.”(HaSPA, 2010, p. 12)

The certification scheme developed by the SIA (now the AIHS) addresses this knowledge requirement through criteria addressing qualifications, experience and capability with all three components being structured around the OHS Body of Knowledge conceptual framework.⁶

7.3 To inform OHS professional education programs

As integrated tasks and learning experiences related to the OHS Body of Knowledge represent a key requirement for program accreditation, the OHS Body of Knowledge has a major impact on OHS professional education. However, the OHS Body of Knowledge is neither a textbook nor a curriculum. The accreditation process recognises that the uniqueness of each institution and program is to be valued and that educational institutions

⁶ For information on the AIHS OHS certification see <https://www.aihs.org.au/certification/criteria-requirements-fees>.

should have maximum flexibility in achieving the required standards. Also, the accreditation process respects the expertise and academic autonomy of institutions providing OHS professional education.

Thus, it is expected that OHS educators will refer to the OHS Body of Knowledge as they develop curricula, courses and learning activities, and incorporate Body of Knowledge concepts and sub-concepts as appropriate.

7.4 To inform continuing professional development

The OHS Body of Knowledge is the core knowledge with which all OHS professionals should be able to engage. This does not mean that all OHS professionals will have the same depth of knowledge for each concept and sub-concept, but they should have some knowledge of all concepts and most sub-concepts as well as an understanding of how that knowledge developed. It is expected that, as part of their continuing professional development, OHS professionals will review the Body of Knowledge and identify gaps in their knowledge and/or areas where they would benefit from increasing the breadth or depth of their knowledge as relevant to their professional practice. These professional development opportunities can be supported by OHS professional bodies, OHS training providers and conferences.⁷

7.5 Use by other groups

While the Australian model OHS legislation does not specifically require employment or engagement of suitably qualified OHS advice, it is implied through the requirement for a person in control of a business or undertaking “to eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable; and if it is not reasonably practicable...to minimise those risks so far as is reasonably practicable” (Safe Work Australia, 2016) (WHS s 18). Evaluation of what is ‘reasonably practicable’ may well require professional knowledge pertaining to the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring, the degree of harm that might result, ways of eliminating the hazard or risk, and whether the cost of elimination or minimisation is grossly disproportionate to the risk (WHS s 18)⁸.

As OHS regulators and the courts may use the OHS Body of Knowledge to benchmark what is ‘reasonably practicable,’ it would be prudent for employers and recruiters to consider the OHS Body of Knowledge (and professional certification) as a benchmark when selecting

⁷ See www.ohsbok.org.au for a presentation on using the OHS BoK to develop and implement a CPD plan.

⁸ See OHS BoK 8.2 Work Health and Safety Law in Australia.

OHS professionals. Similarly, organisations engaging the services of an OHS consultant should consider the OHS Body of Knowledge relevant to a particular issue/task with professional certification being a useful selection criterion.

7.6 International influence

The OHS Body of Knowledge was initially developed for the Australian workplace safety context. The international application of the OHS Body of Knowledge has been recognised by the International Network of Safety and Health Practitioner Organizations (INSHPO). The OHS Body of Knowledge informed the development of the INSHPO (2017a) publication *The Occupational Health and Safety Professional Capability Framework: A Global Framework for Practice*. As part of the liaison with INSHPO the OHS Body of Knowledge has been mapped to the knowledge topics in the Framework. (INSHPO, 2017b.)

8 Dissemination

The OHS Body of Knowledge is an open-source resource, freely available to all with an interest in OHS via the OHS BoK website.⁹ The OHS Body of Knowledge website provides a portal to:

- Information about the OHS Body of Knowledge including introductory presentations
- Chapters for download
- Learning outcomes for each chapter
- Topic-specific resources.

The OHS Body of Knowledge is promoted through social media via Twitter and LinkedIn and engagement with the detail of chapter topics is facilitated through the OHS BoK *Sandbox*. The OHS Body of Knowledge is also promoted through AIHS and other conferences. Each new or revised chapter is launched with a webinar and other promotion activities.

As discussed in section 5, there are a number of intended user groups through which the OHS Body of Knowledge influences OHS practice:

University OHS students

The OHS Body of Knowledge forms part of the accreditation requirements for OHS professional education and OHS educators are provided with updates on new chapters and revision of current chapters. Students are provided with links to the OHS Body of Knowledge as part of their topic specific education resources and an

⁹ See www.ohsbok.org.au.

online introduction package is provided to introduce students to the OHS Body of Knowledge.

VET training in WHS

While the OHS Body of Knowledge does not specifically target VET level WHS training, it is increasingly being used in the VET sector.

OHS professionals and OHS practitioners

The OHS Body of Knowledge provides a framework for certification of OHS professionals and practitioners and for their continuing professional development required as a condition of certification.

Industry and the community

While the OHS Body of Knowledge is specifically designed as a resource and reference for OHS professionals it provides a valuable resource for anybody interested in workplace safety.

9 Future directions

The AIHS is committed to the ongoing maintenance and development of the OHS Body of Knowledge. In addition to review of current chapters to ensure their relevance and reflection of current research and leading edge thinking and practice in OHS, future development will focus on:

- The concept of systems and system thinking
- OHS performance evaluation
- Occupational health
- Psychological health in the workplace as it relates to the role of the generalist OHS professional
- Expansion of the *Practice* concept including
 - Working in organisations
 - Leadership
- Development of practice skills such workplace research and investigations.

Recognition of and access to the OHS Body of Knowledge and related resources will be supported by the OHS Body of Knowledge web site.

10 Summary

The OHS Body of Knowledge project formally commenced in 2009 with a substantial grant from WorkSafe Victoria. An identified need for certification of OHS professionals dictated the necessity for definition of the required knowledge as a basis for accreditation of OHS education programs and assessment of individuals. The project had two phases – development of the Body of Knowledge followed by its implementation, which included the establishment of course-accreditation and professional-certification processes.

The OHS Body of Knowledge defines the core knowledge with which a generalist OHS professional should be able to engage to provide advice on the prevention and minimisation of work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill-health. A broad range of topic specialists contributed to writing the first edition of the Body of Knowledge, which was reviewed and validated by other topic specialists and OHS professionals. With the ongoing development the boundaries of the core have expanded and become more fluid.

The Body of Knowledge is being used by the AIHS as a basis for accreditation of OHS professional education programs and certification of OHS professionals, by OHS educators to inform development of OHS education programs and by OHS professionals to guide their professional development. The OHS Body of Knowledge is not a textbook or a curriculum of study and, as experience is an important contributor to knowledge, it should not be assumed that any educational program can address the whole of the Body of Knowledge. While it is not expected that all OHS professionals will have depth of knowledge in each concept and sub-concept, it is assumed that they will be able to engage in informed discussion on each concept and sub-concept. The Body of Knowledge (and the resultant certification of OHS professionals) is a benchmark for engagement of OHS advisors to ensure capable advice on determining what is reasonably practicable in preventing and minimising work-related fatality, injury, disease and ill health. Ongoing and future development of the OHS Body of Knowledge will ensure it not only remains relevant but leads the thinking and practice of occupational health and safety.

See also:

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