

About the learning outcomes

The OHS Body of Knowledge was developed to:

- Inform OHS education, but not prescribe a curriculum
- Provide a basis for course accreditation
- Provide a basis for professional certification
- Inform continuing professional development (CPD) for current professionals
- Provide a standard for OHS practice to inform employers, recruiters and regulators.

The OHS Body of Knowledge takes a conceptual approach which enables it to be applied in different contexts and frameworks. To optimise its value from an educational perspective, learning outcomes have been developed for each technical chapter in the OHS Body of Knowledge. Developed through a series of workshops with OHS professionals and OHS educators, the learning outcomes reflect the outcomes-based quality assurance approach of the Australian Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the learning outcome descriptors in the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF).

The learning outcomes have been structured to reflect the three key categories of descriptors in the AQF 7 and above qualifications. That is that graduates will have well developed/advanced cognitive, technical and communication skills to:

- Analyse, critically evaluate and transform information to complete activities
- Analyse and generate solutions to complex problems, and
- Transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others.

These learning outcomes describe what a new graduate generalist OHS professional should be able to do in the workplace as an outcome of their OHS education which includes content addressing the OHS Body of Knowledge. There is no suggestion that the new graduate should be able to address all of the learning outcomes across all chapters of the OHS Body of Knowledge. The learning outcomes as described give an indication of what should be the capabilities of a new graduate OHS professional in the workplace. It will be up to those developing OHS education programs, OHS professionals planning their CPD or recruiters or employers selecting or developing people for the OHS function to consider the required breadth vs depth.

While there are many ways of framing learning outcomes, for this purpose the learning outcomes have three components. They define:

- What new graduates should be able to do that demonstrates the learning
- The context within which they will demonstrate the learning
- The level or standard at which they demonstrate the learning.

What the graduate be able to do is about performance, so the outcomes are expressed in terms of verbs of action, i.e. things that another person could observe occurring or see demonstrated through the action or the output. An abstract definition such as “understand” is not used as this is not observable.

The context is about the surrounding circumstances that will shape the graduate/professional’s activity, including some or all of the place, time, what has happened previously or is intended to happen subsequently, whether other people are involved and what roles they might have, the purpose of the activity, what material assistance might be available for the discharge of the responsibility involved, and who any stakeholders might be, etc. In short, when, where and how will the performance of the required activity occur.

The level involves such things as the autonomy of action or responsibility expected, whether decisions involved will be taken individually or collectively (e.g. in a committee forum), the expectation of alternative options, what supporting evidence or documentation is required, how the output will be presented and the formal approval mechanisms that might apply to the activity involved

The context and level are important in differentiating between the new graduate and the experienced professional.

The ‘cognitive level’ refers to the level in *Blooms taxonomy of education objectives* that reflects the complexity of the activity expected of the new graduate. These levels are: (1) Knowledge; (2) Comprehension; (3) Application; (4) Analysis; (5) Synthesis; and (6) Evaluation.

Using the learning outcomes

For educators

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

For OHS professionals

While these learning outcomes describe what could be expected of new graduate generalist OHS professionals they are also a guide for experienced professionals in mapping their current knowledge and skills as basis for an ongoing CPD plan. Learning outcomes for higher level, more experienced users of the OHS Body of Knowledge may be described by changing the criteria for the context and level.

For employers and recruiters

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

The first two chapters of the Body of Knowledge (2 *Introduction* and the 3 *OHS generalist OHS professional*) provide background and so are not reflected in the learning outcomes. An understanding of the global concepts *Work, Safety and Health* and also *Hazard as a concept* should underpin all aspects of the work of the generalist OHS professional and so are not specifically addressed in the learning outcomes. The chapters on *Foundation science* and those addressing the *Human as an individual* (including as a biological system and psychological principles) address the ‘science’ which should underpin or inform the practice of the generalist OHS professional. These chapters are not addressed as specific learning outcomes but their applicability is noted as appropriate in the learning outcome statements.

Learning outcomes for the hazard chapters follow a standard model to encourage the development of a hazard and risk management approach that can be applied to any hazard irrespective of whether it has been studied in depth.

The OHS Model of Practice and the other chapters under the concept of ‘practice’ including professional attributes and skills are located and numbered toward the end of the publication. However the chapters, and the learning outcomes, for these chapters should be interpreted as overarching the application of all aspects of the OHS Body of Knowledge. Thus these learning outcomes should be read prior to those relating to the ‘technical’ chapters.