Developing the Core Body Knowledge for the generalist OHS professional

A project conducted by HaSPA (the Victorian Health and Safety Professionals Alliance) and funded by WorkSafe Victoria

In June 2009 WorkSafe Victoria provided funding of $390,000 for the development and implementation of a Core Body of Knowledge for generalist OHS professionals.

WorkSafe Victoria granted this funding in recognition that enterprises will benefit significantly by the increased availability and use of suitably qualified OHS professionals to provide advice and services to improve workplace health and safety. The criteria defining ‘suitably qualified’ include having appropriate knowledge and experience. However there is currently considerable diversity and variation in the education, training and continuing professional development of OHS professionals, due mainly to the current lack of a defined common core body of knowledge for generalist OHS professionals.

The Body of Knowledge project has two major components:

1: To develop and define the Core Body of Knowledge;
2: To implement the Core Body of Knowledge.

The Health and Safety Professionals Alliance (HaSPA) is the ‘owner’ of the project and will provide oversight. The project plan has been developed to include consultation and input on a national basis from key stakeholder groups including educators, OHS professionals, OHS regulators, and employer and employee bodies.

The key phases of this project are:

Phase 1: Development and definition of the Core Body of Knowledge:

1. **Data collection** including: identification of OHS databases; details of programs currently being taught; key references, papers and books influencing teaching and research; current OHS education research; standards required by OHS professional bodies, and other Australian and international information.

2. **Data analysis and development of the framework of themes** for the Body of Knowledge by the Technical Panel in consultation with OHS educators nationally and a reference group of OHS professionals.

3. **Consultation** with OHS professionals, OHS professional bodies, recruiters, employer bodies, union bodies and regulators through surveys, focus groups and interviews.

4. **Finalisation of the Draft Body of Knowledge** by the Technical Panel and two non-Victorian OHS educators.

5. **Validation and publication of the defined Core Body of Knowledge.**
Phase 2: Implementation of the Core Body of Knowledge

The full implementation of the Core Body of Knowledge has many aspects. The scope of this project is limited to the following:

1. **Definition of professional gradings** for OHS Professional bodies to certify their generalist OHS professional members, in line with international standards and gradings.

2. **Development of Accreditation and Certification processes**, to certify individual professionals, and to accredit educational courses in accordance with requirements of the Core Body of Knowledge.

3. **Investigation of the potential for collaboration between Universities** to make optimal use of their different areas of expertise, and production of a position paper documenting how best to support provision of courses across the Core Body of Knowledge.

4. **Work by participating Universities towards aligning course content** with the Core Body of Knowledge as required for course accreditation.

5. **Development of strategies to influence Public Policy** such as National OHS model Legislation, National Training Framework as a result of the outcomes of the definition and implementation of the core Body of Knowledge for generalist OHS professionals.

6. **Development of future recommendations** for transitioning/ grandfathering processes for current OHS Professionals, future research topics.

The full effect of this project will be evident between six months and two years after completion of the planned work.

The project is a fundamental component of the process of sustainably repositioning the OHS professional. It will have a systemic, long term effect on OHS professional education, resulting in improved quality of OHS advice and more effective prevention activities across Victorian and interstate workplaces.

**Technical Panel**

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**For information on this project:**

Refer to [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

Comments or contributions can be made through the online discussion forum under the OHS Education Chapter or contact any of the Technical Panel above.

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