

Demand for OHS professionals grows with increase in legislation

The demand for professionals in the health and safety fields is growing with the global increase in health and safety laws and regulations and the increase in personal injury litigation.



“Maintaining health and safety in the workplace is a legal requirement for all businesses and most companies require qualified and trained staff to look after these specialised portfolios,” says Elbie Liebenberg, principal of Oxbridge Academy.

“In addition to ensuring employee safety and wellbeing in offices and corporate headquarters around the world, the safety requirements for industrial sites, building sites, factories and mines are so particular and onerous, yet non-negotiable, that entire departments of occupational health and safety (OHS) professionals are required for compliance.”

Apart from legal and regulatory requirements, employers are also increasingly appointing safety officers in an effort to avoid the financial impact of employees or members of the public getting hurt and the company being held liable, as well as the damage to its reputation because of accidents or negligence.

“This greater demand has led to an increase in employers seeking qualified professionals to fill these roles, which shows up

clearly on positions offered on local and international job search sites. This, in turn, has led to an increase in prospective students who seek to acquire a qualification to prove their competency in the field.

“However, those interested in a health and safety career need to ensure that they understand the intricacies regarding which qualifications are relevant to which potential career opportunities. There is a large variety of job opportunities in the field for those who are interested in promoting workplace health and safety but not all qualifications are relevant to all areas.”

OHS duties

“Broadly speaking, occupational health and safety workers are responsible for maintaining a safe working environment. In the public sector, health and safety workers primarily enforce health and safety legislation, and in the private sector, they primarily focus on risk management, employee productivity and reduction of liability.”

Within the term of OHS, there are many roles and job descriptions, depending on specialisation. Some of the duties of OHS officers may include:

- Developing and implementing health and safety policies
- Outlining safe operational procedures
- Promoting employee health and productivity
- Assessing and managing risk in the context of occupational health and safety
- Performing site inspections and safety audits
- Investigating workplace accidents and safety-related complaints
- Producing health and safety reports
- Conducting in-house occupational health and safety training
- Staying up to date with new developments in health and safety legislation

“Prospective health and safety officers need to ensure they understand where they want to work and what they want to do, before selecting which qualification to pursue. The qualifications you need to become a safety officer differ from one organisation and industry to another and qualification requirements differ between countries.

“The best way to make sure you study the right course is to decide which industry you would like to work in and then to contact the relevant industry body, as well as major employers in that industry, to find out what their recommendations and requirements are. Additionally, if your intention is to become an international OHS officer, where there is an enormous demand, make sure that you understand the qualification requirements in your country of choice as well,” concludes Liebenberg.

For more information, go to www.oxbridgeacademy.edu.za