

Recent changes to the CPD point allocations

In line with the requirement of the SAIOH QMS procedures and continuous improvement programme the CPD points system was updated.

After several complaints and queries relating to the new allocations I realise that we rolled the new system out quickly with poor communication to our members. I apologise on behalf of myself and the PCB and detail the reasons for the changes and additional support and allowance we will make for the 2015 submissions.

Please read the information and understand the new requirements that need to be implemented during 2016 to allow you to ensure that you claim all relevant points at the end of this year.

1. Why did we change the points?

Any of you who attended the PCB feedback session at the conference or have read my recent articles in the national Safety magazine would have heard and understood the problems we are having with high failure rates for the assessments at both OHT and OH level.

With less than 44% pass rate at both OH and OHT in the written assessment, both down on 2014 numbers, and despite a concerted effort by the PCB to provide guidance, support materials, mentorship and feedback reports detailing areas of weakness and concern needing further work and learning.

Discussion with many candidates revealed that they are not willing to study further, read or attempt to uplift their knowledge and experience outside of their present academic studies and learning, many of which unfortunately, obviously fail to provide the necessary required minimum learning.

As qualified OH practitioners, we have all constantly worked hard to uplift knowledge and experience, with an understanding that our profession grows and expands, even new areas and hazards enter the work environment (e.g. Nano technology) and we need to keep abreast of these developments to deliver high quality service, yet we seem happy to sit back and allow uniformed juniors to practice? The options for us at SAIOH and for our practice in SA are to reduce pass rates and accommodate substandard practice, or to find ways to aid and encourage learning and competence?

It is imperative that we develop means to improve the present level and knowledge of OH practitioners to help them attain improved grades, pass assessments and learn to practice at high internationally comparable levels, this is a requirement for our continued recognition by the NAR and SAQA, we cannot water down our requirements.

2. Who decided on the new points allocations and changes?

The changes and discussions involved many active members of the PCB, plus the need to review the CPD points for other reasons including practice as Inspectors in Government departments, part time work being poorly defined etc., led us to look at options to encourage these developing OH practitioners to uplift their knowledge.

The system was modified to serve a required purpose, it was modified as per any good quality system – the system at that time was in fact broken – failure rates and attitudes supported this fact, the new points were suggested by multiple PCB team members, a draft was formulated and sent out to all PCB members for comment. Many commented and changes were applied accordingly as per any democratic practice.

The final document was then discussed and debated at the November PCB meeting and voted for adoption on completion of final changes at said meeting. This fact is documented in the minutes of that meeting. Any practicing PCB assessor is automatically a member of the PCB committee and is notified, may attend or telephone conference into the meetings.

It is important to note that the core principles and total points requirement over a 5 year period for each level of registration remain the same, these did not change, nor did the basic procedure. The changes were modification and addition of categories for points.

3. What has actually changed?

The main changes relate to reduction of the base points for practice now 5 down from 8. This was agreed upon by majority vote as Assistants and Technologists only need one or two additional points per year to attain required points, this does not encourage them to read, study or attend meeting and workshops etc.. This gives little encouragement for the much needed learning and improvement. For OH level the loss of points is made up by addition of 3 points for management related work , which the majority of Occupational Hygienist will do as part of their work at senior level.

We have added many new points categories including points for reading small editorials to be released by the PCB, taking part in very simple on line quizzes to be rolled out shortly. All of these things will be aimed at areas where we see weakness (simple calculations, methodology etc.), and aim to help junior OH practitioners to improve and develop. Most of the categories have no cost attached to them and can be done in the persons own time.

SAIOH branch meetings are generally free or very cheap for workshops where higher points are available, we wish to encourage juniors to sit on local branch committees and support SAIOH, the present office bearers are ageing and we need a new younger more demographic team in place going forward. All of these things not only earn good CPD points but serve to improve the knowledge base of members.

With regards internal training points, please note that these are actually claimed under the provision of a Personal Learning Portfolio (Basically a formal documentation of training and experience records) where internal training and mentorship issues are documented, thus there are more opportunities to claim, this is for all levels. If you re practicing and running the SANS 17020 system you will be keeping such records, your employees should have copies in their PLP file which is used as part of the new registration and assessment process.

SAIOH are rolling out a supported mentorship programme to help develop junior practitioners, this and the new registration process require all members to start keeping a Personal learning Portfolio. This is basically a detailed file containing training and practice

records (a detailed CV). So whilst internal training courses are not detailed for individual points in the system, the keeping of records of internal training, which most AIA employers will require as part of the SANS 17020 QMS system on file and in your personal PLP will allow you to claim the CPD points for your PLP.

As Occupational Hygienists involved in supervising and teaching junior staff (on the job training) and as junior staff receiving such training you may claim points under the Mentorship category.

Both Guides are available on the SAIOH Web site and it is important that you read these and implement the requirements going forward to allow you to claim maximum points in these categories going forward.

4. How can we make up shortfall points due to new categories which were not supported during 2015

It is possible that people will battle this year with the new categories, but the points are allocated and summed up over a 5 year rolling total as per the Procedure, thus if they fall short by a point this year they can make this up next year. Failing to get the average points will not disqualify you from re certification.

Should you be selected for audit of your claimed points, recognition will be given for a fall short related to the mentorship and PLP categories as these were not fully implemented in 2015.

It is advisable to aim for more points than the minimum recommended year by year to cover for unusual circumstances going forward.

5. What can you do going forward to improve and support the SAIOH Systems and uplift your level of knowledge and competence?

As mentioned above, join in SAIOH supported initiative. Start by reading and understanding the new guides. These systems and planned educational support programmes are all developed by volunteers in their own time, to help our members develop.

Read and read some more, look at the contents of SAIOH generated emails, read the journals sent to you as part of your SAIOH membership. Visit the SAIOH web site on a regular basis. We will be adding tutorials and small quizzes on a regular basis going forward – taking part in these all earn points!

Attend SAIOH and related sister Association meetings, meet your peers and chat, share ideas. Volunteer to sit on Local branch committees and give back to your Institute.

And finally - I assure you this work was performed in good faith to aid, not to hinder professional development and to better categorise development areas, many people commented and made suggestions and all were incorporated, but we had to work to encourage junior levels to fill knowledge gaps and to get involved – the continued survival of SAIOH and the Occupational Hygiene Profession in SA depends on this.

Any change is difficult, but we hope that 2016 will start to pay off with an increase in better assessment results, partly due to the new initiative and the carrot of the required points being dangled.

I hope this information goes some way to a better acceptance of said changes.

Report prepared by:

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