

REFERENCES

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Letter to the Editor

In response to the Letter to the Editor published in the previous issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa* (Vol. 29 No. 2 of 2023), SAIOH received requests from members to provide more information regarding the decision about recognition of the Wits School of Public Health MSc Med in Exposure Science (ES) programme.

SAIOH included reference to “*recognised programmes*” in its criteria for members to apply for upgrading of their certification levels. If a candidate did not complete a SAIOH-recognised programme, s/he needs to complete the International Certificate in Occupational Hygiene (ICertOH) offered by the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA), in addition to the academic programme. By recognising a programme, SAIOH declares that, to its knowledge, it covers at least the content covered in the OHTA modules, and sufficient information regarding the 17 skill sets included in the SAIOH self-assessment tool, i.e. the referred to 50% occupational hygiene content. This was, amongst other reasons, an attempt to improve the assessment pass rate, by ensuring that members applying for upgrades have completed an academic programme that covered all topics that may be addressed in assessments, thereby improving knowledge and competency in the occupational hygiene field.

The minimum qualification requirement to apply for upgrade to the Registered Occupational Hygiene Technologist (ROHT) level is a recognised NQF Level 7 qualification. The minimum qualification requirement to apply for upgrade to the Registered Occupational Hygienist (ROH) level is a B Tech Environmental Health degree at NQF Level 7, or a recognised NQF Level 8 qualification, provided that the aforementioned qualifications meet the SAIOH occupational hygiene content requirements.

The Wits MSc Med ES programme is offered at NQF Level 9, with entry requirements into the programme being a relevant four-year B-degree, e.g. BSc Hons or B Tech. This may include the fields of occupational hygiene, occupational health, engineering and environmental health, or other relevant areas.

The course content of the Wits ES programme does cover the health effects and possible control approaches for most occupational health hazards. However, as stated in the application for recognition to SAIOH, the ES programme “... *does not go into the technical details of a measurement method, since our approach is that these kinds of technical skills should be learned in practice, or at an undergraduate level!*” Therefore, if a candidate completed a qualification that did not address occupational hygiene measurements before enrolling in the ES programme, his/her knowledge thereof may be lacking. Occupational hygiene certification assessments administered by SAIOH focus extensively on the technical details of measurement, as well as “*compliance testing*” as referred to by the author of the previous Letter, which is a regulated requirement within the occupational environment in South Africa.

It is important to note that recognition by SAIOH does not constitute endorsement of a programme in general, but merely recognises programmes already identified and offered by tertiary institutions as occupational hygiene degrees, or degrees with an occupational hygiene content of 50% or more.

The author referred to the Exposure Science-Industrial Hygiene programme offered by the University of Michigan. On the University's website, the mission of the programme is described as follows: “*Studying Exposure Science-Industrial Hygiene at U-M: The mission of the Industrial Hygiene program is to provide outstanding comprehensive graduate-level education in occupational health science; ensuring that graduates (sic) are qualified to pursue careers and assume leadership roles in the modern practice of industrial hygiene.*” <https://sph.umich.edu/ehs/programs/ih.html>

The aim of the programme offered by Wits is described on their website as follows: “*This degree is targeted at potential academics, specialists or professionals in the field of occupational hygiene, environmental health, environmental sciences, chemistry, toxicology, physiology etc., with a scientific interest to bridge these fields.*” <https://www.wits.ac.za/course-finder/postgraduate/health/mscmed-exposure-science/>

The SAIOH Occupational Hygiene Skills Forum (OHSF) recognises the Wits MSc ES programme as an excellent post-certification degree for SAIOH members wishing to study towards an NQF Level 9 qualification, to broaden their understanding of a holistic approach to exposure, and control thereof, within and beyond the occupational environment. In our opinion, this aligns well with the purpose of the programme as stated on the Wits website, and as mentioned by the author.

Candidates who completed the Wits MSc ES programme after obtaining a B Tech Environmental Health degree at NQF Level 7, or a recognised four-year B-degree at NQF Level 8 in the field of occupational hygiene, will be recognised as suitably qualified to apply for ROHT or ROH upgrade.

Candidates who did not obtain a recognised occupational hygiene qualification at NQF Level 7 or 8 prior to enrolling for the Wits MSc ES programme and wish to obtain SAIOH certification, will have to complete the following OHTA modules, in addition, before applying for certification at ROHT or ROH level:

- W201: Basic Principles in Occupational Hygiene – strongly recommended if not familiar with basic occupational hygiene concepts
- W501: Measurement of Hazardous Chemicals – required
- W503: Noise – required

The above applies to the qualification requirement for certification. Candidates wishing to apply for SAIOH certification also need to prove practical experience relevant to the respective certification levels, as specified on the SAIOH website.

Any further information on the matter can be obtained from SAIOH on request. 