



Report from SAIOH's President and Council Members

MESSAGE FROM THE SAIOH PRESIDENT

It is always exciting to be part of a growing organisation and to recognise the continuous developments and rising membership numbers. This proves that we are part of a profession that is growing at a good rate in southern Africa. Whilst this trend is positive, we need to recognise that occupational hygiene remains a small profession worldwide, and that many more qualified and competent occupational hygienists are needed to make an impact on reducing workplace exposures and related occupational illnesses.

In southern Africa we have many young and enthusiastic members entering our profession, and we need to encourage them to study and grow into competent practitioners. Our academic institutions are working on curricula and the development of programmes to serve our needs better. For example, the Bachelor of Science degree at North West University (NWU) is well supported and is due to deliver our first set of practitioners with a specialised qualification in occupational hygiene; and the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA) modular learning programme continues to operate and gain popularity.

There are many options for members to improve their knowledge and close gaps in their subject-related competence. The Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) provides excellent guidance and tutorials on its website, to increase members' knowledge and to prepare them for SAIOH registration assessments. We encourage you to access this information and to make use of the tools provided.

Other important opportunities to learn and share experiences are the local branch meetings (usually at no cost, and offering excellent presentations by experienced peers), and the SAIOH Annual Conference. Preparation for the Conference, with the theme, 'Raising the bar in occupational hygiene: informed control reduces worker exposures', is progressing well. Three excellent international facilitators have been secured to present the pre-conference Professional Development Courses (PDCs). Several other international experts have been invited to deliver keynote addresses. More details will be provided on these presenters and the PDC content in upcoming issues of *Occupational Health Southern Africa*. We also urge you to keep a look-out for mail drops and notices on the website – you will not want to miss these amazing PDCs, or the Conference.

I was lucky to participate in the Eastern Cape Discussion Group meeting early in March. I found a wonderful group of enthusiastic members keen to learn and share experiences and, of course, to support and promote SAIOH. This group is well supported and is on the right track to becoming a fully-fledged SAIOH branch. Please bear in mind that all of these initiatives earn you important Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points, so it is in your best interests to make an effort to attend the branch meetings.

SAIOH PARTICIPATION IN THE RE-CURRICULATION MEETING AT CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (CPUT)

Representatives from the Environmental Science Departments of the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), the Durban University of Technology (DUT), and the



All the President's men (and women): Julie Hills, SAIOH President, participated in the March meeting of the SAIOH Eastern Cape Discussion Group in Port Elizabeth

Photograph: Brett Williams

Central University of Technology (CUT), meet on an annual basis to discuss the curricula for qualification programmes which incorporate occupational hygiene content. The aim of the collaborative meeting is to standardise the subject content throughout technical institutions in South Africa. This year, SAIOH representatives were invited to share information that will ensure that our recognised requirements for occupational hygiene practice are included in the curricula. The input from SAIOH will also ensure that students are better prepared for obtaining SAIOH certification once they are qualified.

This year's re-curriculation meeting was hosted by CPUT at the end of January. SAIOH representatives actively participated as follows:

- **Objectives of SAIOH:** Hennie van der Westhuizen (SAIOH Council Member: Technical Portfolio) gave an overview of the SAIOH objectives, and in particular, focused on the growth of SAIOH. His presentation was well-aligned with the objectives of the technical institutions in terms of student development.
- **OHTA courses:** Mark Harrison (Public Relations Officer, SAIOH Western Cape Branch) presented on the OHTA courses that he had completed, providing a personal account of his own learning experiences. His presentation was well received, and generated much interest and many questions from the audience.
- **The SAIOH Self-Assessment Tool and Skills Definitions:** Celia Keet (SAIOH Vice President and Immediate Past Chair of the Western Cape Branch) presented the SAIOH self-assessment tool and, more importantly, the skills definitions used by SAIOH to allocate certification levels and required knowledge. The collaboration representatives requested permission from the SAIOH Professional Certification Committee (PCC) to use the content and definitions contained within the tool to align the content of their own qualification specifications better. Subsequent to their request, SAIOH drafted an official communication, recommending and allowing the use of the tool to aid the development and the education of students.

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