



**ДЕРЖАВНА УСТАНОВА
«Національний науково-дослідний інститут
промислової безпеки та охорони праці»**

**Міжнародна
науково-практична інтернет-конференція**

**«ОХОРОНА ПРАЦІ В УКРАЇНІ:
СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН ПРАВОВОГО РЕГУЛЮВАННЯ
ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ РОЗВИТКУ»**

в рамках Всесвітнього дня охорони праці

24 квітня 2025 року

Київ, Україна

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Секція 1
ОХОРОНА ПРАЦІ

**THE TRAINING OF SAFETY PROFESSIONALS HOW THEY
DEVELOP THEIR COMPETENCE DURING THEIR WORK,
CPD ETC**

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Introduction

When asked to say a few words on this topic led me to reflect on my journey into the family of Safety and Health professionals, with different colleagues who have come into the world of OSH by different routes. As was said to me by an Associate Professor at Middlesex University, our careers and understanding of work does come from our first learning/career”, possibly a benchmark. My first degree was Mining Engineering with my first ‘career’ underpinned with a ‘Mines and Quarries appointment’ initially under the previous Mines and Quarries Act and later the UKs Quarries Regulations. Much of my learning on safety was on the three points covering ‘safe worker – safe equipment – safe place of work’ without any key involvement of Health and Safety specialists – we had to know our risks. Within that was understanding of silica dust, asbestos and radon – occupational hygiene issues - overall this was about understanding, mitigating and improving. After 15 years I embarked on my Masters in Safety Management and then to the world of IOSH.

I have felt for some time that it isn’t a single ‘profession’, but a family of professionals with common themes and passions working in different sectors and different risk profile. This therefore leads to the obvious question is are we talking about a single ‘profession’ and how does that impact on ‘competency’. Competency is a word used in multiple parts of UK legislation. Competence, by various definition includes four elements, knowledge, skills, experience and behaviour or attitude. The HSE in the UK (HSE 2013) suggest a definition of competence as “...the ability to undertake responsibilities and perform activities to a recognised standard on a regular basis. It combines practical and think skills, knowledge, and experience. This is a

generic phrase applying to all levels of work from drivers to lift engineers to safety professionals, with further more complex definitions available (Carpenter 2006).

There is an argument for competent safety professionals, able to adapt to changing workplace risks with knowledge through a blend of formal and informal learning. In the UK we have an additional element brought about through generations of civil law, the duty of care between each of us and that is the role of the risk owners, the Duty holders.

The Profession Element

A brief look at the literature has identified a number of opinions. Hudson (2001) suggests that a profession has a number of characteristics:

- Lengthy, high level; extensive training and education
- High degrees of autonomy and responsibility
- A professional body that sets down a code of practice that members are required to adopt
- High levels of integrity and honesty because of the degree of trust founded in members
- An identifiable culture that exists within the profession

Madsen et al (2019) who looked at a “Danish model”, that compromises between various health and safety stakeholders, with a lack of pure health and safety education led to the establishment of an occupational group of professionals characterized by heterogeneity (diversity) in backgrounds and multidisciplinary in approaches and methods.”; similar to my observations here in the UK.

Hudson and Ramsay (2019) paper looking at the USA have suggested a roadmap for Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) to follow to achieve occupation closure as an ultimate expression of professionalization” falling into 3 elements, Individual professional criteria, Collective professional criteria and External environmental criteria as follows

Individual professional criteria

1. *A defined role and career path as safety professionals*
2. *A defined knowledge and skill base owned by the profession and possessed by the professionals through their training and education, including defined boundaries to the profession*
3. *Specified disciplines forming part of the training, agreed models and methods for carrying out the role, with one or more levels of expertise linked to different levels of competence*
4. *Recognition of the influential nature of the knowledge and skills, reflected in the professionals’ status in their organisations and in society, and in the numbers practicing in the professional area*

Collective professional criteria

1. Development of one or more national professional organisations
2. Standards for entry to the profession: Defined and assessed by the External environmental criteria

1. Government or devolved legislation on OHS professionals and on
2. Absence of other competing professions (e.g., occupational hygiene,
3. Community or societal perception and recognition of the value and competence of safety professionals

A big challenge is what do we mean by ‘industry’. “Members have suggested the most important IOSH benefits are regulatory and industry updates”? If my interest/industry is extractive industries and waste management would I see direct relevance in nuclear or say the health sector. This paper supports my long standing view that people with existing industry experience complement benefit this most with a High Level Health and Safety Qualification ideally at MSc level (which is a management level qualification).

What do employers want

I have always been concerned that the demand for OSH professionals has been reactive, following an incident, or change of law or change of business. Those employing OSH professionals are often not competent or understand what they need and sometimes look to amalgamate with other compliance-based functions such as environmental or quality management. Lewis (2025) undertook a snapshot review in April 2025, Figure 1.

273 job descriptions were reviewed, from 8 recruitment agencies (all based out of the UK) covering 14 countries (where the roles were to be hired)

There are at least 20 variations of OSH roles that also cover Security to Quality and Environmental

Around 5% of the Position Descriptions (PDs) request some form of professional members as a pre-requisite

Around 10% of the PDs state that some form of professional membership would optional

Figure 1 – Snapshot Review of JDs, April 2024 (after Lewis 2025)

This confirms little progress since Hudson (2001) who suggested “Although health and safety personnel are to be found in most workplaces these days, there is a view that the role is downgraded because of the lack of higher qualifications of those fulfilling it, and that the function is not taken seriously by “the board” because it is non-strategic.

Based on a survey of IOSH members in march 2001, the paper suggests that the profession/discipline is stratified, roles such as technician, practitioner, professional,

creating higher role people creating innovation and change, the first paper to identify leadership criteria. As well as identifying traditional awards such as the NEBOSH Certificate and NEBOSH Diploma the need for higher qualifications for those in influential positions is needed; focusing on a case study of the study of the value of an MSc in Construction (Health and Safety) Management, including the role of a dissertation.

However, back to the present, 2025, when asking what does an H&S professional do with a traditional perception that includes of someone who wears many hats; the people ensuring that safety isn't just a checkbox but a core value. From assessing risks to educating teams, the role is pivotal in creating a safe working environment. This include being a (an):

- Risk Assessor: Identify potential hazards and implement measures to mitigate them.

- Compliance Officer: Ensure adherence to health and safety laws and regulations

- Coach, Mentor & Educator: Train and inform staff about safe practices and procedures.

- Safety Auditor: Regularly inspect workplaces to identify safety issues.

- Incident Investigator: The analyse accidents to prevent future occurrences.

Other activity includes:

- The Development of Policies: Creation of effective health and safety guidelines.

- Being an advocate for Safety: Promote a positive environment where safety is integral to every operation.

- Leading on Emergency Planning: Prepare and implement response strategies for emergencies.

- Monitoring Compliance: Ensure ongoing adherence to safety protocols.

- Driving Continuous Improvement: Seek ways to enhance safety measures continually.

- A general support function: Support working groups and teams with everything from risk assessments to change management.

Many employers do not understand and value the MSc award and what this level of study represents. One of the challenges is that IOSH is unable, due to royal charter, to accredit awards at Masters Level 7. Fortunately, some higher education institutions in the UK have identified this weakness and are now offering genuine Level 7 awards building on existing knowledge.

This is consistent with developments in the US and U K . In the USA Hudson and Ramsey (2013) summarised the ASSP Model OSH Curriculum, with a lexicon of leadership skills:

1) Evidenced Based. The OHS professional of the future will utilize research and evidence to drive problem-solving and integrate value-added practical solutions into organizational goals.

2) Communication. The OHS professional will interact effectively with stakeholders, colleagues and employees fostering mutual respect and shared decision making to enhance worker health & safety.

3) Risk Management. The OHS professional of the future will participate in and contribute to the process of conserving assets and earning powers of an organization by minimizing the effects of loss.

4) Business. The OHS professional will be able to develop, articulate, and execute a business case for protecting the company's internal & external assets, stakeholders, and the community.

5) Leadership. The ability to influence the behaviour of individuals, systems, and work groups in a way that will facilitate the achievement of shared goals

6) Informatics. The ability to gather and use credible information & technology to communicate, manage knowledge, mitigate risk and support decision-making. This leads us to Competency.

Competency

In the UK IOSH (2025) has created its Competency Framework, although under review at time of writing identifies a variety of skill sets. Used properly each of the different areas would require different competencies depending on your role and level. Some of the skills are generic and allow for progression and development into more senior roles that may have safety staff and other disciplines reporting in. Good Continual Professional Development (CPD) allows for, and correctly applied, encourages broader competency development – this has actually been embedded in IOSH competency Framework for the best part of 20 years.

With IOSH having 18 special interest groups (IOSH 2024) understanding specific sector risk profiles – this is simplistic as some groups can cover a multitude of activities the experience required and the experience professions can create challenges when seeking appropriate competency.

This does us lead into the question of competency in what. The former chair of the HSE, stated (IOSH 2016) who challenged the profession by asking "But Competent in What?.." "Am I going to say we don't need occupational hygienists? They will help you engineer out the health risks in your business but, if people don't even know they exist how is that going to happen? So we need to take a different approach to show people what the different pools of expertise are, rather than having this generalist occupational safety and health field and help people to be more discerning about what expertise they need to call on when." "I say I understand there is a case for segregating specialists such as fire consultants, ergonomists and hygienists, but what about small businesses who want a consultant to advise on the generality of

risk in their operations?....."My first preference would be for the business to deal with the risks themselves," she says. "If it's a small business the first question is why do they need a consultant at all. Most of what they need to do is common sense and if they engage with their employees they can put it in place themselves. And wouldn't it be better embedded if they did that rather than getting someone in to do it for them?"

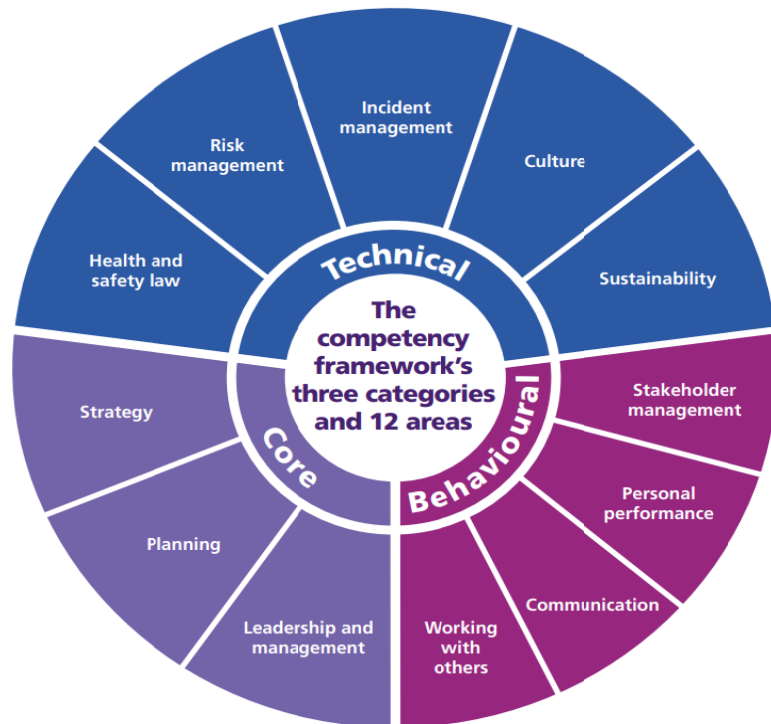


Figure 2 – IOSH Competency Framework (IOSH 2025)

This leads us to the role of the duty holders, the line management chain that goes from Chargehands, to Supervisors to management and then board level, where we consider being responsible for other peoples work. Is the day to day safety element really the role of the OSH person? In Scotland a supervisor's competency model for waste management supervisors was created (Switch 2016) – with similar skillsets as explainedby IOSH, with skills from communication, to risk management to interpersonal leadership skills.

Health and Safety Qualifications UK

Table 1 summarises and discusses differences in qualifications; in all cases its important to consider the role of practice at leach level. Key legislation doesn't change but how you apply it at different levels does hence the value for CPD can vary from person to perso.

Competence (knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours) is the ability to carry out the task in prescribed circumstances, safely and efficiently. **Figure 1** overleaf outlines the results of the consultation exercise completed by the working with the waste industry to identify the key knowledge, skills, attributes and behaviours that support good health and safety practices.

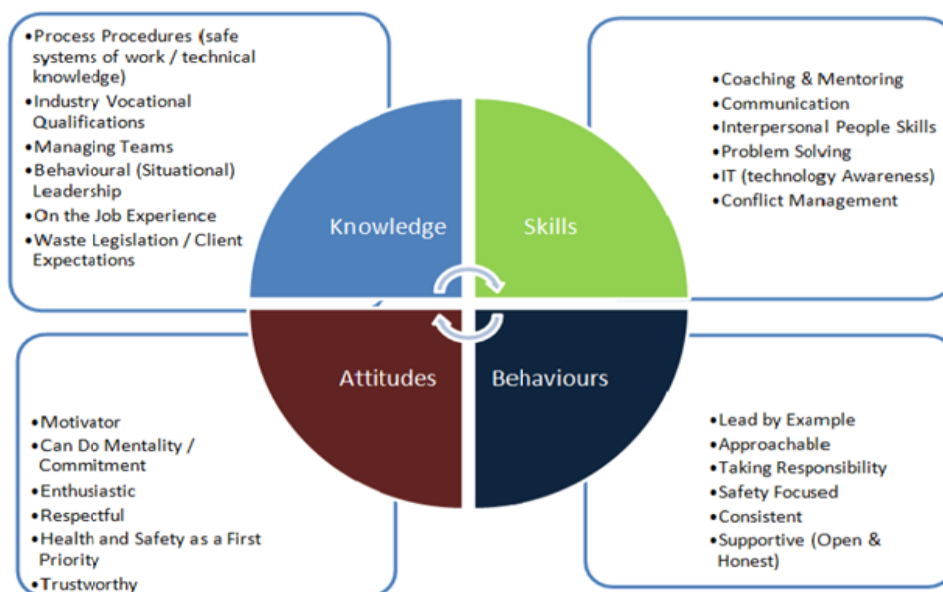


Figure 3 – Competency Model – Switch (undated)

Table 1 – Summary of H&S Qualifications Available

Award	Comment
NVQ Level 3 NEBOSH Certificate	Ideal for those starting in OSH, focusing on practical skills. NEBOSH Certificate provides a solid foundation in health and safety principles.
NEBOSH Diploma NVQ Level 6	NEBOSH Diploma: Comprehensive course for those aiming for chartered status. NVQ Level 6: Qualification emphasising management level knowledge
Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Occupational Safety and Health (Levels 4-6)	Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Occupational Safety and Health (Level 4-6): An academic degree offering in-depth knowledge of OSH principles, preparing graduates for various professional roles. Beware of ‘top up’ awards and ask about pre-study experience
Master of Science (MSc) (Level 7) – Safety and Health, Human Factors, Occupational Hygiene	Master of Science (MSc) – Advanced qualification for senior OSH roles, emphasising strategic management. Ask about the project and final grade achieved.
Industry-specific certifications	Link to CPD dependent on reflection

With the rise of nefarious use of AI students and employers need to consider how assessment is designed, is it a test of memory, is it about application of knowledge, is there a workplace project, reflection and is there differentiation in levels. Remember most case study style assessments can be ‘faked’ with concern from academics that assessment is about creation of knowledge through AI; this is something of concern to professional organisations.

So what is the difference between Level 6 and Level 7. I would say gravitas and focus of activity. Table 2 summarises the key differences in outputs at each level with regards expected activity (QA 2024).

Table 2 – Comparison of Activity at Levels 6 and 7 -UK- QAA (2024)

Level 6 BSc/BA (NEBOSH Diploma)	Level 7 MSc
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to: • apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects • critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem • communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to: • deal with complex issues - both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences • demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level • continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

Over the recent period there have been master’s level awards in effect ‘compressed bachelors’ awards allowing entry level applicants without experience; I would argue doesn’t meet the criteria above.

The Role of CPD

This takes us to the role of CPD, and considering the IOSH Competency Framework (IOSH 2025),

So what type of activity constitutes CPD; so Mentorship; participation, leading or just attending Online Communities/Webinars; Continuous Learning such as creating thought leadership articles such as this; engagement with Professional Networks; Collaboration activity; being part of or leading Project Teams;

management activity say with Finance or Technology; developing knowledge of business and decision making; attendance at Conferences and webinars; Reading and research; Volunteering and committees; doing/Reflection. No one becomes an expert in isolation. Building a support system through networks, mentors, and continuous learning is crucial. Collaboration is key to fostering a positive environment for safety.

Consider a different paradigm.... what would the world of work look like if managers considered an MSc in Occupational Safety and Health as a Management or Leadership Qualification - would this improve the world of work?

Global Differences

The one consistent theme is that the profession is different across the world, different economies, different maturity, different legal background with nations such as Malaysia and, Singapore (SGMOM 2025) , areas such as Hong Kong (HKSAR 2023) requiring special government accreditation, the USA and Japan where it is associated with Public Safety and Public Health. In nations such as China and Switzerland Occupational Safety is separate different to Occupational Health with different professional requirements.

This means there are different elements to what CPD will be, bespoke to the maturity of the regulatory and business environment. Figure 4 introduces the concept with additional factors such as job titles. To the right of the model we move from the basic level of support actually leading on the concept of OSH. This moves to a compliance / improvement aspect where management begin to own OSH. The challenge then is more leading improvement, changing compliance to care and becoming change makers. Once this happens we move to an audit/compliance model, but light touch – the phase where ‘we’ are in effect out of a full time role.



Figure 4 Conceptual Model – The OSH Role under different national maturity

Of course, traumatic events, war, politics, etc., can mean that a nation's regulatory culture change. In the USA the 2025 withdrawal of support from the Republican government with regards NIOSH means professionals are challenging values.

Conclusion

Competence isn't achieved overnight. It's a lifelong journey that combines knowledge, experience, and a commitment to ongoing development. Ongoing development is essential with a core element of education and learning about blending theory with practice. There are limitations relying on competence alone creating safer workplaces. The role of an OSH person's duties and skill set changes with adaptability key. The role is an integration of an understanding of Health and Safety Laws, knowledge of sector specific risks and, through leadership, creating change. CPD helps develop broader employability skills such as the ability to anticipate new OSH Risks, to react and learn about changing technologies, and different patterns of employment, to maintain technical competency and becoming a change maker not just a compliance officer. Understand the work in front of you... I will end with a final point, if you understand how the operation works and know how to make successful change and operational management understand safety and health management then does that mean we need to be agile in different ways?

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