FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER

ASSIGNMENT 1

2ND SEMESTER 2017

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
[OSH420S]
Dear Students

Please allow me to give some feedback to your First Assignment for OCH420S. The purpose of this feedback letter is, *inter alia*, to make certain observation regarding your answers to the questions as contained in the aforesaid assignment in an attempt to guide you to find the most appropriate answers and/or solutions.

Firstly, you were expected to prepare a Power point presentation to your students to give them an overview of Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace. The Power Point presentation must have an introduction and conclusion.

When you do a presentation, please make sure that your letter font is big and clear enough. Do not put too much information on the slide. PowerPoint can be seen as the modern Over Head Projector (OHP) – a tool for supporting a lesson and at its simplest level allows one to easily make and edit slides, bring in colour and text, and use bullet points and reveal methods. It is a very effective tool or learning aid to use to enhance the learning process if used correctly.

There are important guidelines to remember when designing a PowerPoint Presentation:
It is important to design presentations to attract attention and to use them effectively in a classroom.

The following guidelines were taken and amended from the Study Guide, ETP410S. The guidelines are to be followed when you design a PowerPoint presentation:

- One main point per slide – Slide one should contain the Introduction. The introduction could be to define Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace.
- Slide 2 should contain the objectives of the Assignment
- Slide 3 and 4 should explain in detail the roles and responsibilities of Occupational Health and Safety Inspectors. Here you had to make of relevant examples in your occupational area/trade environment.
- Slide 5 and 6 should be about the hazards as identified by the Occupational Health and Safety Division in Namibia relevant to your trade. Give reasons why they are applicable to your trade.
- The last two slides should be the conclusion and references. The conclusion brings closure to the topic and sums up your overall ideas while providing a final perspective on your topic. Your conclusion should consist of three to five strong sentences. Simply review the main objectives of the Assignment and provide reinforcement of the discussion. Referencing is about citing your
sources. APA style is an author-date style. There must be in-text author-date citation at an appropriate place within the text of the document e.g. (Du Preez, 2015) and the detailed reference list at the end of the assignment.

- Use space effectively
- Maximum of 8 lines per slide
- Headings, 24pt minimum
- Text, 18pt minimum
- Lower case rather than upper case
- Keep it simple in terms of colour effectiveness

Source (Reece & Walker, 2006)

Secondly, as always use the Rubric to answer your questions. The Rubric is used to determine the type and amount of information you need to include in your answers. In the Rubric, marks were allocated to the Introduction, objectives of the Assignment and the References. The majority of you failed to comply with this requirement. You therefore lost marks unnecessarily.

The notes below are to inform you about Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace. Please read these notes. As always, I would like to emphasise the importance of reading. Consult other sources when doing assignments. Your Study Guide is only a Guide and not sufficient to take you through the learning objectives and to be declared competent.
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

Workers in Namibia are protected by Regulation 156, Regulations relating to the health and safety of employees. Anyone who is working full-time or part-time, or has a permanent, temporary or casual job, is covered. The legislation is designed to protect people by establishing safe systems of work to eliminate or minimize the risks to health, safety and welfare. Employers, employees and others, such as manufacturers and suppliers of machinery or substances used at work, all have an important role to play.

The Health and Safety Legislation in Namibia is made up of two parts. These are:

- The Labour Act of 2007 And Regulation 156
- Regulations relating to the health and safety of employees

INTRODUCTION TO OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN NAMIBIA

LEGISLATION

The Labour Act of 2007 And Regulation 156, Regulations relating to the health and safety of employees

- Regulation 156 sets out the general requirements for protecting health and safety in the workplace. It is important that you have a copy of this Regulation.

- Regulation 156 makes it clear that everyone who may affect health or safety at work has a part to play in protecting it. This includes employers, employees and their representatives.

- Regulation 156 aims to bring employers, employees and their representatives together to resolve health and safety issues at work. Giving workers the right to elect Safety Representatives and to participate on health and safety committees in the workplace encourages employee involvement.

- Regulation 156 also gives powers to inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to inspect workplaces and investigate health and safety issues. Inspectors can initiate prosecutions, which can result in penalties.

I therefore would like to encourage you to get a copy of this Legislation so that you read in order to broaden your subject knowledge about Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace in Namibia.
Additionally, please note that Occupational Health and Safety covers many aspects that have not been included in your Study Guide. Please do research on the topic. The following sources can be consulted to read more about the topic:


What is Occupational Health and Safety?

NEF definition – “concerned with protecting the safety, health and welfare of people engaged in work or employment to foster a safe work environment”

Definition is a primary goal

Secondary goal is to “protect co-workers, family members, employers, suppliers, nearby communities and other members of the public who are influenced by the workplace environment (NUST-COLL 2013).

NEF is the largest and oldest employers’ organisation in Namibia. As such it is recognized by Government as the most representative employers’ organisation in accordance with ILO regulations. Membership is open to any employer, large or small, the only criteria being compliance with Namibian Labour and other Legislation.

Occupational health and safety is a discipline with a broad scope involving many specialized fields. In its broadest sense, it should aim at:

- the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations;
- the prevention among workers of adverse effects on health caused by their working conditions;
- the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health;
- the placing and maintenance of workers in an occupational environment adapted to physical and mental needs;
- The adaptation of work to humans.

In other words, occupational health and safety encompasses the social, mental and physical well-being of workers that is the “whole person”.

Successful occupational health and safety practice requires the collaboration and participation of both employers and workers in health and safety programmes, and involves the consideration of issues relating to occupational medicine, industrial hygiene, toxicology, education, engineering safety, ergonomics, psychology, etc.
Occupational health issues are often given less attention than occupational safety issues because the former are generally more difficult to confront. However, when health is addressed, so is safety, because a healthy workplace is by definition also a safe workplace. The converse, though, may not be true - a so-called safe workplace is not necessarily also a healthy workplace. The important point is that issues of both health and safety must be addressed in every workplace. By and large, the definition of occupational health and safety given above encompasses both health and safety in their broadest contexts.

Poor working conditions affect worker health and safety

- Poor working conditions of any type have the potential to affect a worker's health and safety.
- Unhealthy or unsafe working conditions are not limited to factories — they can be found anywhere, whether the workplace is indoors or outdoors. For many workers, such as agricultural workers or miners, the workplace is “outdoors” and can pose many health and safety hazards.
- Poor working conditions can also affect the environment workers live in, since the working and living environments are the same for many workers. This means that occupational hazards can have harmful effects on workers, their families, and other people in the community, as well as on the physical environment around the workplace. A classic example is the use of pesticides in agricultural work. Workers can be exposed to toxic chemicals in a number of ways when spraying pesticides: they can inhale the chemicals during and after spraying, the chemicals can be absorbed through the skin, and the workers can ingest the chemicals if they eat, drink, or smoke without first washing their hands, or if drinking water has become contaminated with the chemicals. The workers' families can also be exposed in a number of ways: they can inhale the pesticides which may linger in the air, they can drink contaminated water, or they can be exposed to residues which may be on the worker's clothes. Other people in the community can all be exposed in the same ways as well. When the chemicals get absorbed into the soil or leach into groundwater supplies, the adverse effects on the natural environment can be permanent.

Overall, efforts in occupational health and safety must aim to prevent industrial accidents and diseases, and at the same time recognize the connection between worker health and safety, the workplace, and the environment outside the workplace.

Why is occupational health and safety important?
Work plays a central role in people's lives, since most workers spend at least eight hours a day in the workplace, whether it is on a plantation, in an office, factory, etc. Therefore, work environments should be safe and healthy. Yet this is not the case for many workers. Every day workers all over the world are faced with a multitude of health hazards, such as:

- dusts;
- gases;
- noise;
- vibration;
- extreme temperatures.

Unfortunately, some employers assume little responsibility for the protection of workers' health and safety. In fact, some employers do not even know that they have the moral and often legal responsibility to protect workers. Because of the hazards and a lack of attention given to health and safety, work-related accidents and diseases are common in all parts of the world.

**Health and safety programmes**

For all of the reasons given above, it is crucial that employers, workers and unions are committed to health and safety and that:

- workplace hazards are controlled - at the source whenever possible;
- records of any exposure are maintained for many years;
- both workers and employers are informed about health and safety risks in the workplace;
- there is an active and effective health and safety committee that includes both workers and management;
- worker health and safety efforts are ongoing.

Effective workplace health and safety programmes can help to save the lives of workers by reducing hazards and their consequences. Health and safety programmes also have positive effects on both worker morale and productivity, which are important benefits. At the same time, effective programmes can save employers a great deal of money.

**Why do you think workers' health enhances productivity?**

**Costs of occupational injury/disease**

*How much does an occupational disease or accident cost?*

Work-related accidents or diseases are very costly and can have many serious direct and indirect effects on the lives of workers and their families. For workers some of the direct costs of an injury or illness are:

- the pain and suffering of the injury or illness;
- the loss of income;
- the possible loss of a job;
- Health-care costs.
It has been estimated that the **indirect costs** of an accident or illness can be four to ten times greater than the direct costs, or even more. An occupational illness or accident can have so many indirect costs to workers that it is often difficult to measure them. One of the most obvious indirect costs is the human suffering caused to workers' families, which cannot be compensated with money.

The costs to **employers** of occupational accidents or illnesses are also estimated to be enormous. For a small business, the cost of even one accident can be a financial disaster. For employers, some of the **direct costs** are:

- payment for work not performed;
- medical and compensation payments;
- repair or replacement of damaged machinery and equipment;
- reduction or a temporary halt in production;
- increased training expenses and administration costs;
- possible reduction in the quality of work;
- negative effect on morale in other workers.

Some of the **indirect costs** for employers are:

- the injured/ill worker has to be replaced;
- a new worker has to be trained and given time to adjust;
- it takes time before the new worker is producing at the rate of the original worker;
- time must be devoted to obligatory investigations, to the writing of reports and filling out of forms;
- accidents often arouse the concern of fellow workers and influence labour relations in a negative way;
- poor health and safety conditions in the workplace can also result in poor public relations.

Overall, the costs of most work-related accidents or illnesses to workers and their families and to employers are very high.

On a national scale, the estimated costs of occupational accidents and illnesses can be as high as three to four per cent of a country’s gross national product. In reality, no one really knows the total costs of work-related accidents or diseases because there are a multitude of indirect costs which are difficult to measure besides the more obvious direct costs.

### Points to remember

1. Occupational health and safety encompasses the social, mental and physical well-being of workers in all occupations.
2. Poor working conditions have the potential to affect a worker’s health and safety.
3. Unhealthy or unsafe working conditions can be found anywhere, whether the workplace is indoors or outdoors.
4. Poor working conditions can affect the environment workers live in. This means that workers, their families, other people in the community, and the physical environment around the workplace, can all be at risk from exposure to workplace hazards.

5. Employers have a moral and often legal responsibility to protect workers.

6. Work-related accidents and diseases are common in all parts of the world and often have many direct and indirect negative consequences for workers and their families. A single accident or illness can mean enormous financial loss to both workers and employers.

7. Effective workplace health and safety programmes can help to save the lives of workers by reducing hazards and their consequences. Effective programmes can also have positive effects on both worker morale and productivity, and can save employers a great deal of money.

What rules must be adhered to?

Good Health Standards must be maintained.

They are:

- Cleanliness
- Adequate sanitary facilities
- Protection against dangerous substances
- Education & Training of both workers and management

Identify possible danger areas and take preventative steps to be SAFE (FREE FROM DANGER)
Role of the health and safety representative

Health and safety representative

As health and safety representative your role is to work proactively (this means taking action before hazards become a problem) to prevent workers from being exposed to occupational hazards. You can do this by making sure management eliminates hazards or keeps them under control when they cannot be eliminated.

Steps to help you reach your goals are:

1. Be well informed about the various hazards in your workplace and the possible solutions for controlling those hazards.

2. Work together with your union and the employer to identify and control hazards.

3. You may occasionally need to share some of this information with your supervisors and employer in the process of working towards a safe and healthy workplace.

Being a health and safety representative is not always easy, but helping to protect the lives of your fellow workers is worth all the time and effort you put into the job.
Use a variety of sources for information about potential or existing hazards in your workplace.

Summary

Workers in every occupation can be faced with a multitude of hazards in the workplace. Occupational health and safety addresses the broad range of workplace hazards from accident prevention to the more insidious hazards including toxic fumes, dust, noise, heat, stress, etc. Preventing work-related diseases and accidents must be the goal of occupational health and safety programmes, rather than attempting to solve problems after they have already developed.

Hazards in the workplace can be found in a variety of forms, including chemical, physical, biological, psychological, non-application of ergonomic principles, etc. Because of the multitude of hazards in most workplaces and the overall lack of attention given to health and safety by many employers, work-related accidents and diseases continue to be serious problems in all parts of the world. Therefore, trade unions must insist that employers control hazards at the source and not force workers to adapt to unsafe conditions.
Management commitment to health and safety and strong worker participation are two essential elements of any successful workplace health and safety programme. The most effective accident and disease prevention begins when work processes are still in the design stage.

**Role of the health and safety inspector**

Occupational health and Safety Inspectors are appointed in terms of the regulations relating to Health and Safety of employees at work. Their main duty is to administer and enforce the regulations that govern the health and safety of employees at work, as stipulated in the Labour Act, 1992.

You may find their functions and activities in your Study Guide on page 12.

**Hazards that may be associated with the different trades**

**Welder:** A welder can be burnt from the sparks and there is always the danger of the work process starting a fire. There is the problem of the intense light which can cause permanent eye damage as well as the fumes given off by the process which can damage the lungs.

**Mechanic:** Depending on the precise nature of a mechanic's duties, there may be safety problems from cuts and falls, etc., and exposure to chemical hazards: oils, solvents, asbestos and exhaust fumes. Mechanics can also have back and other musculoskeletal problems from lifting heavy parts or bending for long periods.

**Textile worker** - The textile worker faces a variety of problems. First, there is the problem of safety with many machines around that are often unguarded, as well as the risk of fire with so much combustible
material in the workplace. Then there are the hazards of noise and vibration. There is also exposure to dust from the material which can seriously affect the lungs. Exposure to cotton dust can lead to the occupational disease known as byssinosis.

**Tractor driver:** One of the most serious problems with tractors is that they often overturn and, if they have no safety cab, the driver can easily be crushed. Other problems include noise, vibration and exposure to chemical herbicides and pesticides when being sprayed by tractor.

**Agricultural worker:** When spraying crops the worker may be exposed to hazardous chemicals contained in the spray. Many pesticides and herbicides that have been banned in some countries because of their toxic effects are still used in many developing countries. If spraying takes place on a windy day, the spray can be breathed into the lungs and blown on to the skin where it can cause damage. It can also be absorbed into the body through the skin.

**Office worker:** Many people may think that office workers have no health and safety problems; this is far from true. Stress is one of the most common complaints, as well as exposure to chemical hazards from office machines such as photocopiers. Poor lighting, noise and poorly designed chairs and stools can also present problems.
**Construction worker (bricklayer):** Construction workers face a variety of hazards, particularly safety problems such as falls, slips, trips, cuts, and being hit by falling objects. There are also dangers from working high up, often without adequate safety equipment, musculoskeletal problems from lifting heavy objects, as well as the hazards associated with exposure to noisy machinery.

**Miner:** The hazards of mining are well known and include the ever present danger of dusts, fire, explosion and electrocution, as well as the hazards associated with vibration, extreme temperatures, noise, slips, falls, cuts, etc.


Hope you enjoyed the subject matter in this Tutorial letter. On this note, I wish you all the best with your future assignments and remember to ask for help if you need it.

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