



How to address OHSAS 18001 faster, better, and smarter

With increasingly strict legislation and heightened community awareness, organisations are more than ever looking to achieve and demonstrate sound OHS (Occupational Health & Safety) performance and risk management. The accepted way of doing that is to develop and maintain a management system based on a recognised standard, and subject it to verification – such as by internal audit and perhaps to an independent certification audit.

What is an OHS management system?

An OHSMS (Occupational Health & Safety Management System) is most often a formal documented system that includes the following elements:

1. A safety policy
2. A programme for training and ensuring competency
3. A framework for involving employees in the management of OHS
4. The collection, analysis and reporting of safety performance data
5. The identification of hazards in the workplace
6. The assessment of the risk they pose to people
7. The elimination or control of those risks
8. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the control measures
9. Arrangements for emergency preparations and response
10. Systems for monitoring the effectiveness of OHS arrangements
11. Systems for monitoring the health of workers
12. Systems for the reporting and investigation of accidents / incident
13. Controls over documents and records
14. A programme of internal audits and management review to ensure that the system continues to meet objectives and requirements

An OHSMS should address the legislation and standards applicable in the organization's legal jurisdiction. Many jurisdictions specify the actual method of consultation, training, incident reporting, emergency responses, health surveillance, health monitoring and risk management.

What is the OHSAS 18001 standard

OHSAS 18001 is a standard or specification for an occupational health and safety management system. The standard resulted from a collaboration of many of the worlds leading national standards bodies, certification agencies, and consultancies. One of the main aims was to provide a common, internationally certifiable OH&S specification. Worldwide, it is becoming the standard of choice – and was updated in 2007 to more closely align with other standards such as ISO 14001 for environmental management. OHSAS 18001 may be used by any organisation to establish and maintain an OHSMS to control risks to personnel and others associated with its activities. Its requirements are stated in a series of clauses that refer to various aspects of an OHSMS, including: Hazard identification, risk assessment, planning controls, training and awareness, consultation and communication, operational control, emergency preparation and response, incident investigation, corrective and preventive action, control of documents, control of records, internal audits, and management review.

Developing your OHS management system

Developing your OHS management system can be quite a major project. Like any such project, it may at first appear to be too complex to get a firm grip on. However, it can be more easily managed by being divided into bite-sized pieces. The following is an example of how that can be done. Initially the project is divided into 5 stages:

Step 1 - Understanding Requirements

Organisations have traditionally developed OHS control measures to meet applicable legal, regulatory and contractual requirements. There is a trend towards greater 'systemisation' and basing those systems on standards such as OHSAS 18001. If your organisation chooses to do likewise, this does not mean that you no longer need to meet those legal, regulatory and contractual requirements. That is far from the case! The intention of a standards-based system is to provide a solid base on which your organisation can better comply with those requirements - for now and into the future.

Step 2 - Planning the System

There are a number of development options available to you, and each has its own particular advantages. The development option that you choose will affect your method of system development. Consultants and other sources of external help will have their own standard methodologies. The options include:

- Working on your own
- Using a consultant
- Attending workshops / training courses
- Using a software package
- A combination of the above

A Gap Analysis and Project Plan may be prepared to guide and record progress.

Step 3 - Documentation

The documentation stage may include preparing:

- An overall policy statement
- Various documented procedures
- OHS plans
- Forms
- Standard letters
- and other documents

Documenting a system from scratch can take up a great deal of time – particularly if it's a task that you are not used to. However, remember that the documentation should be appropriate to the nature of your organisations' activities and the risks associated with its operations. There are sources of document templates and examples available on the market to help you.

Step 4 - Implementation

Of course, documents only form a part of an OHSMS. They are a means to an end - not an end in themselves. People, their commitment, and the training / resources / methods they are provided with are vitally important.

Implementation may include tasks such as risk assessments being performed, and physical risk control measures such as signs and notices, and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).



Fig.1 Floor Signs warn people of a slippery floor



Fig.2 Foam ear plugs are a simple form of PPE



Fig.3 Posts and chain barrier to help separate people from a hazard

To be of maximum true value, your system needs the broad support of people within your organisation. This is often best achieved with a softly, softly approach - consultation, communication, then participation by introducing changes gradually. An overnight 'All change' approach can be very risky and likely to encounter strong resistance. Of course, there may be a need to implement some changes quickly - particularly when legal and regulatory requirements dictate. The following guidance may be useful:

One senior person should have overall authority and responsibility for managing the system

This person is typically referred to as the OHS Manager. In larger organisations, a team of 'co-ordinators' can assist them

Consult and communicate with employees

Apart from being a requirement of the standard, this can help to allay any fears and suspicions that people may have about the reasons for process and/or organisational change

Participation should be encouraged

All employees have a role to play. Workload can be shared and a range of ideas can come from people with different perspectives.

**Step 5 -
Verification**

Results should be monitored, and the system fine-tuned as you go.

Following the principle of Dr. Demings' PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, having planned our system and put it into practice, we need to check or verify that it is working effectively.

All control systems need feedback mechanisms to help their controllers keep the system on track. Management systems are no exception, and internal audits are their key feedback mechanism. To illustrate the importance of internal audits, they are a **mandatory** requirement of the OHSAS 18001 standard. They audits offer a very beneficial and low-cost method to help your organisation maintain compliance, and achieve its objectives. There are also other aspects of verification, including measurement and monitoring, employee surveys, and periodic review by top management.

For a new system, or one that has had a major upgrade, it would be good practice to audit the system thoroughly after quite a brief period of implementation. It is quite likely that a little bit of fine-tuning to your system will be necessary. After that, your audit schedule may be on a risk basis - with those processes that are most important or that have had problems in the past being audited more regularly than others. You may also choose to have an external audit of your system (against a standard such as OHSAS 18001) by a Certification body or Registrar.

Results of audits and other verification techniques should be fed back to the management Review process, for top management to consider progress, and plan any remedial action or perhaps set new objectives.

How to address OHSAS 18001 faster, better, and smarter

There are many different ways to develop and maintain an OHSMS based on OHSAS 18001. The trick is to do it in a cost-effective and user-friendly manner. Organisations have many competing calls on their resources – and personnel in particular. So the system needs to be low-impact in terms of the time needed to develop and maintain it. Many a well-intentioned system has fallen by the wayside because its design meant it was too burdensome to keep going. So, as competing demands for resources took precedence, the system gradually fell into disuse. The days of administration people updating multiple hard-copy manuals is now - or should be - long gone.

The next generation of systems based on an intranet offered some improvement. However, they too have limitations. There is still a considerable gap between what such systems deliver and what is expected or needed. A large proportion of information on intranets is poorly indexed or not indexed at all – leading to what is known as the ‘Invisible Intranet’. If it can’t be found it can’t be used, and the time taken to create the information is wasted. Research by international marketing company IDC indicates that 35-50% of available information is not indexed. Even when it is, many of the documents, schedules and records that form part of an OHSMS are usually kept in separate folder locations – wasting time and sometimes causing difficulty in accessing them. The manual maintenance of indexes in Excel spreadsheets and similar means extra work and double-handling.

What is needed to overcome these issues is purpose-designed software that makes the OHSMS quicker to develop, easier to use and access data, with automatic indexing and email notifications / reminders. In essence, something that is faster, better and smarter.

Enter **Qudos 3** - a modern, task-based software solution – with modules designed around tasks that are common in all management system standards. These include:

- Planning Objectives
- Managing Documents
- Scheduling and recording Audits
- Recording Incidents (including Injuries) and Nonconformances
- Planning and recording Corrective and Preventive action
- Maintaining Training records
- Risk assessments
- Performance measurement/assessment
- Minuting or recording Management Reviews

This means that your management system can be better *integrated* to address OHS alongside other concerns such as quality, environmental and economic objectives. It also includes **Safety Manager** - a comprehensive toolkit for developing an OHS management system based on the requirements of AS/NZS 4801 and OHSAS 18001. The **Safety Manager** component alone provides a great kickstart to developing or updating an OHSMS with:

- An introduction to the subject of OHS management systems
- A commentary on the requirements of the standards
- Case studies that illustrate possible methods to comply with those requirements
- Tools to help you plan the development of your own system - based on the standard
- A large quantity of sample documents such as policies, procedures, forms and letters. Just use your familiar word processor to customise those selected for your organisation
- Alternative MS Excel workbooks for planning and recording tasks
- Alternative MS PowerPoint presentations for employee training
- A powerful database for performing risk assessments - one of the key activities in OHS management

Independent research has confirmed that **Qudos 3** offers the most comprehensive suite of tools to help you address OHSAS 18001 and other standards faster, better, and smarter. **The following chart illustrates how.**

Qudos 3 modules

Standard Requirements	Qudos 3 modules										Notes
	Objective	Documents	Audits	Actions	Meetings	People	Training	Risk	Benchmark	Safety Manager	
Clause 4.1 General requirements											
										✓	Overview
Clause 4.2 OHS Policy											
OHS Policy										✓	Explanation of requirements and sample policy statements
		✓									Policy statement maintained and accessed via Master Document List
Clause 4.3 Planning											
Hazard ID, Risk Assessment, Determining controls										✓	Explanation of requirements, concepts and methods, sample procedures and forms, and training materials
			✓								Using the Action Form, any user may log a hazard identified in the work environment, and email to relevant OHS personnel
							✓				Risk Assessment form provides matrix-based framework (Likelihood x Consequence = Risk Level), text entry fields to list controls required/in place, and facility to attach external data such as reports, statistics and photographs
			✓								Link to one or more Action forms to assign responsibility for controls
Legal and other requirements										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure, web links to legal and regulatory information
Objectives and programmes										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure / other documents / tools
	✓										Recorded in Objective Form. Each objective may be assigned to a responsible person, quantified for priority against up to 4 user-definable drivers, assessed for progress, and include attached documents
			✓								Each Objective may generate up to 100 separately tracked Action plans
		✓									Procedures and other important documents maintained and made available via Master Document List
Clause 4.4 Implementation and operation											
Resources, roles responsibility etc.										✓	Sample Organisation chart, Table of Authorities, and Job descriptions
Competence, training and awareness										✓	Explanation of requirements, sample procedures, induction checklists, and other documents
							✓				Training records are created for each person in the organisation. These are maintained in the Training Schedule, and may be queried for planning /

Qudos 3 modules

Standard Requirements	Objective	Documents	Audits	Actions	Meetings	People	Training	Risk	Benchmark	Safety Manager	Notes
											review purposes
						✓					Individual Development Plans may be created for each person in the organisation. This provides a tool for planning their development path and assessing progress against defined standards. Password-controlled sign-off by individual and 2 levels of management
Communication, participation and consultation										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure, form, and many standard letters
					✓						Dedicated meeting module to schedule and record minutes of meetings, create custom agendas for meeting types such as consultative committee meetings, merge email agenda or minutes
				✓							Assign action points (progress on each may be individually tracked). Actions List includes a category for "Raised by Meeting" - enabling the list to be filtered and queried to provide custom reports
Documentation										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example documents
Control of documents										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example Document control procedures
		✓									Master Document List to provide easy and controlled access to important documents – such as policies and procedures used throughout the OHSMS. Revision History recording for each individual document. Automated archiving facility to look after superseded versions of documents. Global lists of revisions, deletions and distribution
			✓								Automated scheduling of document reviews and email reminders
Operational Controls										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure and various checklists
		✓									Master Document List to provide easy and controlled access to important documents
Emergency preparedness and response										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure and various checklists
				✓							Action Form used to record incidents and accidents – with link to generate multiple Injury Forms to record injury

Qudos 3 modules

Standard Requirements	Objective	Documents	Audits	Actions	Meetings	People	Training	Risk	Benchmark	Safety Manager	Notes
											details. Other sections of the Action form used to record Action Planned and Action Taken,
		✓									Master Document List to provide easy and controlled access to important documents.
Clause 4.5 Checking											
Performance monitoring and measurement										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedure and various checklists
									✓		Benchmark module includes a form to record a score-based assessment of any aspect of the OHSMS that you need to measure. All assessments in any category may be compared with each other in a summary report
Evaluation of compliance			✓								Maintain a range of compliance checklists as Audit Records
Incident investigation, nonconformity, corrective and preventive action										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example procedures
				✓							Action Form used to record nonconformances, investigations, corrective/preventive action, root cause analysis etc. Each may be separately assigned, and emailed to a responsible person with attachment if required. Actions List may be queried in numerous combinations to generate custom reports.
Control of records										✓	Explanation of requirements, case study, activity plan, example records management procedures
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Records for all modules maintained in centralised, robust SQL server database
Internal audit										✓	Explanation of requirements and sample procedures
			✓								Audit Schedule and individual audit records. Facilities to replicate checklists + Audits training presentation
				✓							Each item in an Audit Record may generate up to 100 separately tracked Action plans. Actions List may be queried by those raised at audits to provide custom reports
							✓				Auditor training records planned and maintained in Training Schedule and course records. Optional, certified on-site training facilities available
Clause 4.6 Management review											
Management review									✓	✓	Explanation of requirements and sample procedure

Qudos 3 modules

Standard Requirements	Objective	Documents	Audits	Actions	Meetings	People	Training	Risk	Benchmark	Safety Manager	Notes
					✓						Management reviews scheduled and recorded in Meeting Minutes. Default agenda provided. This may be customised as required. Agenda / minutes may be emailed to all attendees. A training presentation on meeting management is included
				✓							Each Discussion item may generate up to 100 separately tracked Action plans. Actions List may be queried to provide custom reports

Integration

With its modular design, high level of user-configuration, Microsoft SQL database and .net web technology, **Qudos 3** offers the power of integration of:

- Your key activities for addressing the standard
- Similar activities for other compliance issues (Quality / Environment / Food Safety etc.)
- Activities relating to one or many sites

The technology is available right now to help you make an immediate start on developing, or improving your organisations' OHS management system. **Qudos 3** is available in Self-hosted or hosted/leased options.

Qudos can supplement the Qudos 3 software with coaching, training and system development services.

Qudos regularly offers **internal auditor training** sessions at our Head Office in Brisbane CBD, and facilities in other Australian capital cities. If you have 6 or more attendees, we can also arrange for a training session to be held at your own premises - saving time and money, and enabling the practical aspects of the training to incorporate real audits of your own management system. This training has a unique format of pre-course material on CD, and 1-day training session. It will help you take a risk-based approach to get better outcomes from your internal audits, and make smarter use of your resources.



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Images in Figures 1-3 are courtesy of Seton Australia.