

## **Online Delivery of OHTA Training Courses**



When the lockdown restrictions were imposed in many countries because of the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the inevitable consequences was that the running of face-to-face training courses had to stop. In order to remedy this challenging situation, the OHTA Board appointed David O'Malley to chair a Task Group, which was charged with overseeing the change from face-to-face teaching to online learning. In order to try to ensure that the training providers who wanted to be involved in this project were required to submit a completed OHTA Checklist document. Having rather naively expected just a handful of training providers to be interested, it was rather a pleasant surprise – but also a challenge for me personally – to receive a stream of completed Checklist documents from training providers. So, the demand from ATPs to get involved in online has been really good to witness. The list of OHTA approvals, as of March 2021, now totals 22 different ATPs, who are located in 14 different countries around the world. Some ATPs just offer one of the online OHTA courses, whilst others offer a whole suite of them – see Figure 1 below for details.

The transition to online teaching of OHTA courses has presented all of those involved with a number of interesting challenges:

- Development of the OHTA Checklist document to clarify how each training provider planned to organise their online courses.
- Review of each OHTA Checklist document and working with each training provider to develop an approach that is likely to be both practicable and effective. For the W500 series courses in particular, most ATPs have limited their online teaching to around 4 hours per day to avoid too much PC screen time for the students, and OHTA has imposed on all ATPs a limit of 10 students per online tutor on each course to ensure that tutors can monitor the understanding of the students by each student.
- Development of joint OHTA – BOHS guidance (ref. DH3) on how the mandatory practical exercises that are an important element of each W500 series course can be conducted satisfactorily using an online methodology. These practical exercises provide valuable hands-on training on how to use IH equipment. Where it is not feasible for the student to handle the IH equipment themselves because of lockdown restrictions, the online methodology is a proxy one that involves each student instructing a neutral assistant how to carry out a defined IH task, whilst the tutor marks the student's instructions.
- Development by each ATP of how to teach the courses online, generally using the features of software systems such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom etc., and combining that with a series of quizzes and/or overnight homework which is reviewed the following morning – with the aim of testing how well each student has understood the teaching material. Some ATPs have said that one-to-one tuition may be offered during the courses in certain cases.
- Development and rollout by BOHS of online exams for the OHTA courses to replace the paper exams. The ATPs now book each exam sitting online, and the system sends the exam paper securely to each candidate at the appointed time. The ATP is required to provide an invigilator to monitor by webcam what each candidate is doing for the duration of the exam. This is the online equivalent of an invigilator sitting in the exam room for a paper exam – the difference being that in the online exam, the invigilator and each of the candidates could all be physically located in a different place. BOHS limits each trained invigilator to monitoring 10 candidates at a time, so for any courses involving more than 10 students, separate exam sittings with a different invigilator have to be booked. Each candidate's answers to the short answer questions are logged by the exam system, and then sent electronically to one of the exam markers appointed by BOHS. The results are then put through a quality assurance checking process. In particular, the papers for all candidates where the first marker gets a mark that is within 5% of the pass mark are all sent to a second marker, who is not informed what result the first marker gave. After verification by the BOHS Chief Examiner, the results are generally issued to the ATP for distribution to each candidate.

Online Training - OHTA Approved Training Providers

Training Provider	Country where the ATP is based	Found'n Module	Intermediate Level Modules						Adv. Module	
		W201	W501	W502	W503	W504	W505	W506	W507	A1001
International Safety Systems Inc. [ISS]	USA [Head Office]	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Moloney & Associates	Ireland	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Nayati International Inc.	India	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Sedulitas CC	South Africa	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
IOM Singapore	Singapore	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Sustainable EHS	India	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Oxyl8	UK	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Diamond Environmental	UK	Not approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Dust2Noise	UK	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
OHMS	Australia	Not approved	1-off trial	Not approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Gully Howard Technical	UK	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
NZOHS	New Zealand	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
International Environmental Solutions, [IES]	Kuwait	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Kenbridge Industrial Consulting	Nigeria	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
IOM UK	UK	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
MIHA	Malaysia	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Apex Environmental	South Africa	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
WHWB	Canada	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
T. Harris Environmental Management Inc.	Canada	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved
Golder Associates Inc.	USA	Approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved	Approved	Approved	Approved	Not approved
Monitor Consulting Services	Australia	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Approved
AIOH	Australia	Approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved	Not approved

Key	
Approved	
Not approved	

**Figure 1. List of providers [Mar 2021] approved to run Online versions of OHTA courses**

Table 1 summarises the online OHTA courses that were delivered between April 2020 (when the first online course was run) and the end of the year :

**Table 1. Online OHTA courses run during 2020**

Course	Number of courses	Number of candidates	Pass rate for online exams
W201	10	36	86%
W501	15	75	96%
W502	8	55	91%
W503	14	100	63%
W504	9	19	89%
W505	13	59	83%
W506	11	65	60%
W507	8	49	100%
Totals	88	458	

It is worth pointing out that in the vast of cases, the relatively high pass rates on the online courses were comparable to those achieved historically on the equivalent face-to-face versions of the same courses. The ATPs should therefore be congratulated on quickly responding to the challenge of adapting their teaching methods to the additional challenges that online teaching poses. Table 1 represents objective data that the learning experiences of students on the online courses were indeed in the main comparable to those on the historical face-to-face courses. So, objective achieved!

Another notable feature of the online courses during 2020 is that the number of courses that were run in India has increased significantly. This highlights the fact that running courses online has a major benefit in that it eliminates one of the main constraints to the running of face-to-face courses, namely the inherent costs that result from the need to travel to the course venue. In many parts of the world the air fares and hotel costs involved in attending just one face-to-face course can be considered by employers to be pretty prohibitive. So, getting employer approval to do it 6 times for each of the W500 courses that lead towards the ICertOH qualification can be virtually impossible in a place like India, even if those 6 courses are spread out over a number of years. Being able to attend online courses instead of face-to-face ones has therefore made a huge and welcome change in such countries.

So, in the future should OHTA courses be taught face-to-face or online? In my personal opinion, that should be left to each ATP to decide for themselves. Some ATPs may well wish to revert back to face-to-face teaching, and there is no doubt that being taught face-to-face by an experienced and qualified IH is the preferred way to pass on the benefit of their IH experience to those starting out on their IH careers. On the other hand, we have now shown over the course of the last year that online courses can be taught just as effectively. Indeed, other ATPs are trialling the running of hybrid courses using a combination of face-to-face teaching and online teaching. In that sense, it is not necessarily an either-or choice in that respect. We should trust the ATPs to know their own local market for the courses best. OHTA should allow a variety of course delivery methods, whilst we monitor the effectiveness of the training using the objective method of keeping the exams performance data under review.

David O'Malley

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