BACKGROUND

The South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP) Position Paper on Construction Health and Safety presents and justifies the role and mandate of the SACPCMP in registering Construction Health and Safety (CHS) practitioners. This is due to the current situation where CHS practitioners are not regulated and certified with the result that there are currently unacceptably high levels of accidents such as injuries, fatalities and deaths in the South Africa construction industry. It is estimated that cost of accidents in South Africa are between R2.6 – R3.5 billion per year and estimated to increase from the R845 billion planned infrastructure spending from the South African government.

The Council has made progress in opening three registration categories of Construction Health and Safety Practitioners, namely the Construction Health and Safety Agent, Construction Health and Safety Manager, Construction Health and Safety Officer as a policy response to the current state of health and safety in the construction industry.

1. MANDATE OF THE SACPCMP

The SACPCMP is a statutory body established in terms of section 2 of the Project and Construction Management Act No. 48 of 2000. It has been established to advance project and construction management education, provide for statutory certification and regulation of the project and construction management professions to primarily protect the public interest and to also contribute towards the promotion of the built environment alongside the other six (6) councils.

Under section 18 (1) (c) of the Act, the council is also empowered to open-up registration for specified categories as maybe prescribed by council from time to time. It is in this vein that council has since undertaken to be the custodian for the registration and regulation of the Construction Health and Safety Practitioners.

2. IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING AND PROFESSIONALISING CONSTRUCTION HEALTH AND SAFETY

Management of Construction Health and Safety (CHS) is concerned with protecting the health and safety of people engaged in work or employment, our natural environment and those who may be affected by the construction activities hence its primary focus is to foster a safe working environment. Good management of Construction Health and Safety on site is crucial to the successful delivery of a construction project. This allows for the management of Construction Health and Safety to be incorporated into the wider management of project delivery. Thus, this can be viewed as sound or good business practice as well as being helpful for health and safety purposes.

It is for this reasons that the SACPCMP has embarked on the process of professional registration of the the CHS practitioners. The primary motivation as noted by the CBE(2012) is the fact that it has the advantages of legitimising the CHS occupation’s practice;
augmenting its body of knowledge; improving its standards and ethical conduct; reducing the risks in its service provision; refining its certification processes; and enhancing its reputation for credibility, efficiency and authority.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF THE CONSTRUCTION HEALTH AND SAFETY ENVIRONMENT

Various reports by reputable impartial bodies such as the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) and Council for the Built Environment (CBE) have highlighted the significant number of accidents, fatalities and other injuries that are prevalent in the construction industry. The CBE (2012) noted that construction accidents have risen by 158% between 2004/5 and 2007/8 with fatalities rising by a staggering 200% in the same period. In 2008, the Cost of Accidents amounted to R2.6 billion while in 2009 the CIDB reported that the total direct and indirect cost of accidents are estimated at R3.5 billion per year.

Costs of accidents in South Africa are estimated at 5% of the value of a completed construction project which are then passed to clients. The South African government has budgeted R846 billion to the 2012/13 Medium Term Economic Framework budget cycle and this infrastructure investment programme will stimulate the growth of the construction industry. It is disturbing to note that the costs of accidents are also expected to rise as a result of this investment.

The CBE (2012) (Policy Position Paper on the Recognition of the New Professions in the Built Environment) found that high accidents have the following negative affects;

- They have high opportunity costs through diverting public and private resources to ameliorate the effects of construction accidents.
- They further reinforce the negative stereotypes of the industry as a ‘dirty’ and ‘dangerous’ industry and thereby hampering the skills supply into the industry, especially females.
- The high fatality rates might also result in unacceptably high socio-economic costs through the opportunity cost of disrupted infrastructure and building projects given the planned R846 billion infrastructure investment programme of government to amongst others increase Gross Fixed Capital Formation and economic infrastructure as a basis for a competitive and labour absorbing economy.

High accidents have been attributed to the high-level of non-compliance of the legislative requirements of construction health and safety professionals. More importantly, this signifies lack of effective management and supervision of health and safety on construction sites. It is also evident that there is lack of sufficiently skilled, experienced and knowledgeable professionals to manage health and safety on construction sites.

Therefore there is a need to reverse the trend of the number of incidents that occur on construction sites. It is for this same reason that the SACPCMP has since strategically positioned itself to be the sole host of the Construction Health and Safety Professions. This carries the endorsement of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE). The aim is be to ensure that there are adequate controls, evaluation and constant monitoring of the levels of compliance to Construction Health and Safety issues. These are generally associated with the activities performed by persons at construction sites.

The Council is strategically positioned to championing the course of registering and regulating the Construction Health and Safety Professions as a policy response to the current state of Construction Health and Safety in SA. However, there are other sectors that cut arguments on Health and Safety such like mining which emanate from the influences of the Mine Safety Act of 1996. The position of Council is to only register the Construction
Health and Safety Practitioners as they fall within the area of the operations of the registered professionals and the Council’s mandate.

The CBE (2012) recently established that there are no standard construction academic qualifications in relation to Construction Health and Safety. The Council has noted that some institutions such as the Cape Peninsula University of Technology offer a BTech in Construction Management Health and Safety, with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University offering a Master’s degree in Construction Health and Safety. The SACPCMP is currently in a process of accrediting this Programmes and also ensure that there is a set standard of Construction Health and Safety education in all Project and Construction Management related Programmes offered in institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa.

Council is currently conducting research on the nature and structure of training CHS practitioners by private institutions with a view of accrediting this courses and developing the necessary approach to engage them as part of Continuing Professional Development.

4. SACPCMP APPROACH TO OPENING-UP OF REGISTRATION CATEGORIES

Council has established a Task Team to provide with the technical advice required for the purpose of creating the Construction Health and Safety Practitioners registration categories and this has been achieved. This evolved into the formation of a dedicated task team comprising of a representative body of government departments/agencies, organised labour, associations of health and safety practitioners, voluntary associations, CBE, insurance companies etc. The total number of organisations that are represented in the task team including SACPCMP is thirteen (13).

The task team involvement includes active participation and attendance of meetings, workshops, being provided with reports and discussion papers to comment on and offer their inputs. In addition other two sub-structures were formed namely the CHS Forum and CHS working committee to ease in the development of proposals on policies and guidelines and underpin the eventual registration of CHS Professions.

OBJECTIVES

- Establishment of the Registration Categories
- Identification of Key Competencies
- Evolving the Desired Scope of Services
- Formulation of the Registration Criteria
- Formulation of an Applicable Tariffs
- Devising mechanisms for facilitating ease of Programme Accreditation
- Identification of existing gaps and devising strategies for meeting registration criteria.

5. PROGRESS MADE TO- DATE

Significant progress has been made to-date which has culminated in broad based agreement for the Registration of CHS practitioners. Since Construction Health and Safety (CHS) practitioners are currently not recognised as full professionals, the SACPCMP is currently developing the Registration Categories of the CHS practitioners as listed below:

i. Construction Health and Safety Agent (CHS Agent)
ii. Construction Health and Safety Manager (CHS Manager)
iii. Construction Health and Safety Officer (CHS Officer)
iv. Candidate Category if applicant does not meet assessment criteria on each category
In addition, the desired Key Competencies and the Scope of Services for (i) and (iii) above have been developed with that of (ii) currently being reviewed. There are still outstanding activities such as IDOW for the identified registration categories, ratification of Policy by Council, Registration Criteria and Routes to Registration, formulation of applicable tariffs etc. which are in the process of being devised by the Working Committee.

6. CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION AS A CONSTRUCTION HEALTH AND SAFETY AGENT, MANAGER AND OFFICER

The SACPCMP will register Construction Health and Safety Agents, Managers and Officers based on their construction experience, knowledge and capabilities, as demonstrated in the registration process. A person will be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Agent, Manager and Officer if she/he satisfies the Council that she/he complies with the registration criteria, identified below.

Each applicant will be assessed in line with the requirements for registration with regard to Construction Health and Safety expertise, knowledge and capabilities. Under no circumstances will the SACPCMP register an applicant in a category if she/he does not comply with all of the requirements for that category.

6.1 General requirements for registration as a Construction Health and Safety Agent

Applicant may be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Agent should they:

1. Be able to demonstrate that they have a NQF level 6 certificate, plus one other recognised technical qualification in the Construction Health and Safety environment; and

2. Be able to demonstrate that they have at least five years’ experience in the construction industry in respect to Construction Health and Safety implementation; and

3. Be able to demonstrate their Construction Health and Safety knowledge, skills and experience to the SACPCMP by means of completing the requisite testing; and

4. Undergo an interview with the SACPCMP Construction Health and Safety Registration Committee.

6.2 General requirements for registration as a Construction Health and Safety Manager.

Applicant may be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Manager should they:

1. Be able to demonstrate that they have a NQF level 5 certificate, plus one other recognised technical qualification in the Construction Health and Safety environment; and

2. Be able to demonstrate that they have at least 5 years’ experience in the construction industry in respect to Construction Health and Safety implementation; and

3. Be able to demonstrate their Construction Health and Safety knowledge, skills and experience to the SACPCMP by means of completing the requisite testing; and

4. Undergo an interview with the SACPCMP Construction Health and Safety Registration Committee.
6.3 General requirements for registration as a Construction Health and Safety Officer.
Applicant may be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Officer should they:

1. Be able to demonstrate that they have a NQF level 4 certificate, plus one other recognised technical qualification in the Construction Health and Safety environment; and
2. Be able to demonstrate that they have at least 2 years' experience in the construction industry in respect to Construction Health and Safety implementation; and
3. Be able to demonstrate their Construction Health and Safety knowledge, skills and experience to the SACPCMP by means of completing the requisite testing; and
4. Undergo an interview with the SACPCMP Construction Health and Safety Registration Committee.

6.4 General requirements for registration as a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Agent
An applicant will be registered as a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Agent if he does not meet all the requirements for registration as a Construction Health and Safety Agent.

6.5 General requirements for registration as a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Manager
Applicant may be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Manager should they:

1. Be able to demonstrate that they have a NQF level 4 certificate,
2. Be able to demonstrate that they have at least 2 years' experience in the construction industry as Construction Health and Safety Officer; and
3. Be able to demonstrate their Construction Health and Safety knowledge, skills and experience to the SACPCMP by means of completing the requisite testing; and
4. Undergo an interview with the SACPCMP Construction Health and Safety Registration Committee.

6.5.1 Requirement to upgrade to Construction Health and Safety Manager
Applicant may be registered as a Construction Health and Safety Manager should they:

1. Be able to demonstrate that they have a NQF level 4 certificate,
2. Be able to demonstrate that they have at least 5 years' experience in the construction industry with 2 years as Construction Health and Safety Officer and 3 years as Construction H & S Manager
3. Be able to demonstrate their Construction Health and Safety knowledge, skills and experience to the SACPCMP by means of completing the requisite testing; and

4. Undergo an interview with the SACPCMP Construction Health and Safety Registration Committee.

6.6 General requirements for registration as a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Officer

An applicant will be registered as a Candidate Construction Health and Safety Officer if he / she does not meet all the requirements for registration as a Construction Health and Safety Officer.

Upon registration as a Construction Health and Safety practitioner in the registration category applied for, the applicant will be required to sign and adhere to the SACPCMP Code of Conduct, and undertake to submit the SACPCMP annual declarations of the Construction Health and Safety services that they have provided including undergoing Continuing Professional Development.

7. OTHER ROUTES TO REGISTRATION

7.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Section 19(4) of the Act No. 48 of 2000, defines Prior Learning as the previous learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification and the acceptance for the purpose of qualification of that which meets those requirements.

RPL applies to applicants who do not have the relevant formal qualification but have substantial knowledge and experience in the field of Construction Health and Safety. In a case where a person does not possess a qualification and has more than 6 years’ relevant practical experience, the recognition of prior learning route is recommended.

7.2 Academic Route

This applies to applicants in the academic environment involved in teaching accredited courses and carrying out research activities that are relevant to the construction health and safety environment with four (4) years’ experience

The following are required:

I. A 3000 word report that documents the relevance of the research in the construction health and safety profession and how it has been applied

II. The applicants are required to submit four (4) peer reviewed research papers in the field of Construction Health and Safety of which at least one (1) should be published in a Journal

III. Pass a professional interview
8. PROJECT PLAN

A Project plan has been developed and the process to be followed going forward would entail development of scope of services, drafting of registration criteria and procedure, finalisation of registration policy documents and the preparation for implementation. It should be noted that after implementation the other processes that have to be looked at are CPD programmes, tariffs and accreditation of programmes. It should be noted that after finalisation of the draft registration policy documents, the Committee is going to embark on a stakeholder engagement process before finalisation of the policy document which are scheduled to start from the 31st of August and end on the 19th of October 2012.

It is envisaged that this process will be done through provincial stakeholder engagement programmes, funds allowing. After the consultative process, the inputs will be consolidated and the policy document will be gazetted for comments. After consideration of comments, it will then be gazetted for implementation, before the actual registration process takes place which is scheduled to start on the 1st of February 2013.

9. WAY FORWARD

The Council continues to demonstrate its abilities to play a pivotal and a leading role in Construction Health and Safety industry. Admittedly, the bringing into being of the eventual registration will continue to be a process that will evolve with time. Nonetheless, Council continues to be optimistic and confident that this would come to fruition in the not too distant future.

It is envisaged that the end-result would ensure significant benefits for making it obligatory for the Registration of the Construction Health and Safety Practitioners to perform their functions. This is supported by the Department of Labour participation in the Construction Health and Safety Roadshows and to amending the current Construction Regulations of 2003 to make it compulsory for people who provide CHS services to be registered and certified by the SACPCMP. Some of the more tangible benefits that are likely to accrue would amongst others be:

- Adequately qualified Construction Health and Safety Professionals Improvement in health and safety in the construction workplace
- Increased employee and public confidence in the employers Construction Health and Safety Programmes
- Enhanced quality of life through reduction of construction accidents, illnesses, missed time from work, workmen's compensation claims etc

REFERENCES
