

9 students successfully graduate from MBAWC OHS Learnership Programme

Having started in March 2019, nine out of 11 students in the Master Builders' Association for the Western Cape (MBAWC) OHS Learnership Programme graduated in September this year.



Letitia van Rensburg, training officer at MBAWC

“The purpose of this programme was to take an individual with a passion for occupational health and safety (OHS) from a low knowledge base up to the required level in order to become a professional in a period of 18-24 months,” explained Letitia van Rensburg, training officer at MBAWC.

To take part in this programme, the entry-level requirement was for a learner to have a Grade 12 certificate, be medically fit to work on a site and to reside in the Cape Town area and surrounds, Van Rensburg added. “The programme also gave the learners the ability to earn and learn while gaining valuable experience in the profession and working towards a qualification.”

However, this year was an anomaly due to Covid-19, which most of the learners tackled head-on with positivity, optimism, and the resolve to complete the course and grow their careers, said Van Rensburg.

Learning curves during lockdown

One of the students, Cleopatra Mngqanqeni, said, “Not only was I afforded time in the hard lockdown to work on my portfolio and logbook, but I was also able to reflect on how the items fit together. Post-lockdown put us in a position where we had to assist Grinaker-LTA with new Covid-19 regulations. We had to work as a team on new implementation guidelines of unfamiliar content. We were also forced to use electronic platforms such as Zoom, which was a good learning curve.”

Deen Lewis agreed, pointing out that he had to put in a lot more hard work and effort while things were rough during the hard lockdown. “I refused to give up, because if I made it this far, I could make the programme and get through this period.”

“I found that I was able to push my own boundaries and that dedication, commitment and hard work pays off in the end,” said Engelina Gama. “I am now inspired to move from a candidate construction health and safety officer (CHO) to a full safety management role as a professional OHS manager. I would also like to mentor new people coming into this role.”



Global ambitions

Jadon Davids wants to become an OHS management expert and even be able to consult around the world. “On-site, the Covid-19 regulations made a new level of compliance a reality. We had to implement and manage new rules, and still practice all the other safety aspects on a site. Working in construction, I had already seen a need for safety, but this took it to a new level and was a great opportunity for me to learn and further my career.”

“The lockdown made it easier to just focus on the work that needed to be done, which made it easier to focus on the learning and not worry about much else,” said Khanyisiwe Futshane. “This was a small blessing in a way and now that I have completed the course, I can see the path for my future.”

“I simply decided that the programme was worth every sacrifice and dedicated my time to ensure that I achieve the desired outcome,” added Mischa Arendse. “I have now set myself up for the future, will make better earnings, have more training opportunities and be able to further my professional development.

Opportunity for personal and professional growth

Celine van Wyk said that meeting different people from various communities was a highlight for her. “The fact that I was exposed to a new world of diversity and learning was really pushing me to grow. I was very shy when I joined the programme and I am now able to express myself in my own voice. I want to remain in the construction industry as an OHS practitioner for the foreseeable future.”

This programme was a passion point for Rael Jacobs who said: “The opportunity aligned with a strong social need to eliminate risk and hazards in our environments. Construction OHS fits my passions. I am looking forward to registering with the South African Council for Project and Construction Management Professionals as an OHS practitioner with the goal of gaining working experience in other regions of the world too.”

Tjeka Training Matters was a training partner for the programme and really solidified the importance of mentorship, said Letitia van Rensburg. “The training company took a strong lead in having an appointed mentor for the student to refer to in their portfolio work, as well as during their time on-site.”

“However, you cannot yield success in a process like this without the learner’s own ability to be dedicated to the learning process. It is not always an easy path being a working person and learning, but these learners showed initiative and passion to get to CHO status,” she concluded.

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