



SAIW and SAIW Certification

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SAIW Certification Governing Board

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With the reduction of lockdown restrictions to Alert Level 1 in recent weeks, I have been more able to visit SAIW members, which I believe is vital if we are to continue to be a successful association that offers directly useful services to our members and to the welding industry at large.

As well as informing members of the benefits of membership and the products and services we are able to offer, my visits have also given me deeper insight into the state of our industry and to the different needs of members.

Ultimately, we want to be in partnerships with our members, clearly offering useful, value-for-money services based on a win-win approach. At the moment, many businesses are in survival mode, but I know that as we recover from the recession this approach will make recruitment much easier.

In talking to SAIW members, a few pointers have emerged into how SAIW products and services can be improved to make them easier to access.

With retrenchments, many companies have been left with fewer people to do the remaining work, so they cannot afford to release employees from the workplace. So after-hours courses, even if paid by the employer, become more viable. We are looking to emulate MBA-type hours with two days during the week from, say, 5.30 pm to 9.30 pm and full days on Saturdays for practicals, demos or tutorials.

We are also looking at modularising our training courses, to allow them to be completed, over two years, for example. This improves affordability because employers or candidates only need pay for one module at a time, rather than for the whole course. Also, this gives the employer flexibility with respect to releasing employees for training – if they miss an upcoming module, they can book for the next one.

Several days of a particular course can also be delivered virtually. This cuts costs for out of towners and even Gautengers, who no longer need to find funding for travel, accommodation and living allowances for these days. An employer can opt to have the candidate attend the course from work to allow for 'emergency' availability.

Another potential need I became aware of was for short courses of one or two days that can be delivered at a member's premises. We already offer courses such as Welding Symbols and AWS D1.1, but we could easily offer others, such as Performance Qualification; Procedure Qualification; Materials and Welding; ASME IX, qualifying welding procedures according to ISO 15614; and welding imperfection levels in ISO 5817, which are all currently embedded in other longer courses but can be extracted to meet a company's immediate needs as they arise.

Also, I have discovered, there is very little awareness of our Laboratory and Technical Services amongst our members and prospective members, so my visits have been useful in communicating these. Of course, member visits are also useful to identify possible new offerings that members require, such as new courses, new personnel or company certification opportunities.

I am particularly pleased to report on some of the results of our student surveys. Student satisfaction with SAIW practical welding courses is in the top quartile of SurveyMonkey's global benchmarking and we have received some very nice testimonials. We have also seen a big improvement from our Welding Technology students, with close to 90% reporting high levels of satisfaction with respect to course value.

There is no doubt that change is needed, for the SAIW and for the country as whole. We are determined to change the SAIW for the better. If there is any positive outcome from the recent COVID crisis, it is the loud and clear wake-up call it has produced.

The SAIW has woken up with renewed determination to do things differently in future.

John Tarboton