

**This month Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, explains the many educational and training options that are available to the modern day greenkeeper**

# Education and Training update

The rush of correspondence, following the publication of Duncan McGilvray's article in the November edition of Greenkeeper International, has shown that there is still a lack of knowledge about the range of education and training available for golf greenkeepers. Moreover, many Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers seem to think that responsibility for training their staff rests with the GTC, BIGGA, Colleges, the Home Unions and/or the R&A.

Many Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers were educated and trained under the, now extinct City and Guilds Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4, which were phased out in 1995/96, following the introduction of Vocational Qualifications. Comparing the two qualifications is difficult, if not impossible as they are completely different ie. Vocational Qualifications are designed to show what someone can do, at work, on a number of different occasions, under a variety of conditions, together with the appropriate level of knowledge. Whereas, the, extinct, City and Guilds qualifications were college based and showed what someone knew.

Vocational Qualifications are open to all, no matter what level of skill, knowledge or experience. BIGGA strongly believes that all new recruits to the greenkeeping industry should be given the appropriate "on the job" training to enable them to do their job safely and correctly to a set standard. These standards have been set by Industry and reflect what a greenkeeper can do eg. switching, brushing, cutting, spreading, identifying grasses and other plants etc as well as what they know about this range of tasks and that they have a reasonable level of literacy, numeracy and IT skills.

The National Standard for basic greenkeeping skills in England and Wales are called National Vocational

Qualifications in Sportsturf Level 2 and in Scotland they are called Scottish Vocational Qualifications in Sportsturf Level 2. There are a number of ways in which new recruits may be trained. They may be given on the job training and assessment, they may be sent to college to learn their knowledge with practical skills being taught and assessed at work or they may be visited at work by travelling lecturer/assessors who teach and assess skills and knowledge at work on a number of occasions.

Once new recruits have achieved the Standards required for the award of a vocational qualification they are classed as qualified. However, training should not stop and newly qualified greenkeepers should be encouraged to continue to learn new skills and knowledge. These new skills can be taught at work, in college or on short courses such as those run by BIGGA and a range of colleges and other training providers.

The decisions on who gets trained, what training is needed and what is the appropriate training rests with the Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager, not with the College, nor with the GTC nor with BIGGA.

Devising an Education and Training Policy, arranging finance for training, selecting the most appropriate course of training and monitoring of training standards are basic management skills that must be mastered if Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers want to lead and not be led.

The options available to managers of greenkeepers are varied. Level 2 Vocational qualifications could be followed by Level 3. However, remember that vocational qualifications mean that the holder can do the job at work. This is not easy if the club do not get involved in training and allow all knowledge and skills to be taught in college and assessed by simulation

and/or a portfolio of evidence. If you decide that vocationals are the most appropriate for your staff, make sure that they are able to provide evidence of the ability to do the job, at work, on a number of occasions. Level 3 is a large step up from Level 2 and it may not be appropriate to allow staff to move up to the next Level until they have gained some experience. Level 4 is an even greater step and candidates for this qualification must be working as managers. Vocational qualifications are not the only qualifications available. Greenkeepers can attend Ordinary National Certificate and Ordinary National Diploma Courses and Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma Courses, which, in turn can lead to First and Higher Degree. Remember that these qualifications show what the holder knows and not necessarily what they can do.

Vocational qualifications are ideal for all new entrants to the greenkeeping industry. They show that the holder is qualified to perform a wide range of tasks and that their skills have been assessed at work. Whether all greenkeepers move on to the next Level of Vocational Qualification, on to a more academic course onto a range of short courses or continues with on the job training is a decision which must be made by managers which in greenkeeping means Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers.

## You've got mail!

If you've got an email account why not send an email to the education department, where we can place you into our exclusive education email address book. We can then keep you up-to-date with education news and events as they happen.

Send an email to:  
 education@bigga.co.uk  
 ken@bigga.co.uk  
 sami@bigga.co.uk



**Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund**

The Fund provides the key to the future for greenkeeper, golf club and game. Individuals and companies can join the Golden Key Circle and Silver Key Circle. For details, please contact Neil Thomas, Executive Director on 01347 833800 or via admin@bigga.co.uk

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