

David Golding explains how the GTC's role in greenkeeper education and training influences the future of maintenance standards on British golf courses.

Let me start by posing a few questions:-
Who do you think is ultimately responsible for the development and review of qualifications in the greenkeeping sector?
How can you influence the content of the greenkeeping qualifications?
How can you help to ensure that the education and training programmes, on offer by training providers, are to the standards set by the industry working together with the Awarding Bodies?

The answer to the first question is the GTC and the answer to the second and third questions is through the GTC that relies on a wide consultation network, which could include you.

Whether you are a golf club employer, golf course manager or apprentice greenkeeper, the GTC welcomes your input to help maintain the standards of greenkeeper education, training and qualifications.

The Government has established a group of organisations called Sector Skills Councils (SSC) that have been commissioned to represent the various UK industries on a range of issues, including the provision of qualifications for their particular sector.

I intend to try and keep simple the explanation of how the GTC, representing a relatively small specialist sector, in terms of employers and employees, can influence the Government.

The Lantra SSC is licensed by the Government to represent the land-based sector. This sector is vast and includes agriculture, horticulture and landscaping. Sportsturf (i.e. greenkeeping) is part of the landscaping group.

The GTC is represented on the standard setting group at Lantra and this is where it makes its presence felt when it comes to ensuring that qualifications and apprenticeship schemes are relevant for both employers and for greenkeepers in the UK.

Let me also give you a quick reminder as to why we have to work with the Government. For many years the greenkeeping sector has accepted the national framework of qualifications, as they attract a substantial amount of government subsidies. This makes formal training very cost effective to employers. The traditional City & Guilds pass/fail Phases, were replaced by the vocational (work-based) qualifications in the early nineties.

Whether you personally favoured the old system or not, the GTC has adopted and taken "ownership" of the VQ's as they have been designed to

include the skills required by employers. The apprenticeship schemes – which lead to N/SVQ's - have all been developed to meet employers' needs.

I get very upset when I hear criticism of the work-based system by people who owe so much to the way they were trained informally on the job by their Head Greenkeeper, as today's qualifications are only a more formal style of that tried and tested system. The GTC does acknowledge there is a need for more academic qualifications, hence the options of National Awards, Diploma's and Degrees.

The GTC has an excellent relationship with the Lantra SSC and it is invited to contribute to all matters relating to qualifications and training schemes.

A Sports Turf Review Group, which includes Course Managers, Training Provider representatives and specialist advisors helps to set standards for the greenkeeping sector.

This is where you can contribute and influence the content of the various qualifications and schemes. Whether you have just completed an N/SVQ Level 2 Sportsturf, an HNC or a Degree, the GTC really values your comments, whether you think changes could or should not be considered to improve the awards. Please let the GTC know your ideas.

Once qualifications have been developed, Lantra submits them to the accreditation bodies, and the Awarding Bodies e.g. City & Guilds and the Scottish Qualifications Authority take over.

The Awarding Bodies then appoint centres, often colleges, which offer the various qualifications. It is also the AB's role to "police" the Centres and again this is where the GTC has an excellent relationship with both the AB's and the Centres.

You too can help the GTC to help others by informing us of your experience on a particular course or how a centre is performing. This is all part of the GTC's role to help monitor education provision.

I will discuss the various learning options and training methods for greenkeepers in next months' article but for now I hope that you have a better understanding of one of the most important roles of the GTC.

In summary, if you feel that the content of a particular qualification could be improved

or that training provision at a particular Centre is either excellent or not up to standard and needs checking then let the GTC know!

The GTC can be contacted on Tel 01347 838640 or E-mail golf@the-gtc.co.uk

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