



David Golding explains the GTC's efforts to broaden both the skill and knowledge base in work-based training.

Many greenkeeper readers of this magazine will have arrived at this page having worked their way through back to front, having looked at the job pages first. Am I right?

Nothing wrong with that but did you notice that the majority of job adverts request a certain level of formal qualification?

Much of my Committee's work in recent years has been in educating the employers to recruit staff using the national framework of qualifications. So we must view the use of qualifications by employers in job advertisements as a positive step forward.

The Standing Committee for Greenkeeper Salaries has also included in its literature the importance of qualifications when, as an employee, you are looking for a fair salary review by your employer. Enhanced pay for staff, who have achieved the trainer/assessor awards, is an example of how the importance of having qualified work-based senior staff to assist with the development of the other greenkeeping team has finally been recognised by enlightened employers.

If you are an experienced greenkeeper who may be looking for a career move but feel that you can't, due to not having a formal qualification for your years of work on the golf course, please do not despair - the GTC can help!

It is all about showing that you can carry out a number of tasks in accordance with a nationally agreed set of standards and that you have the knowledge relating to the task. The content of each level of qualification has been agreed with employers and greenkeeping representatives and therefore relate to maintaining and managing a golf course.

The GTC's involvement in the development and implementation of the various qualifications is ongoing and at all times based on the best traditional principles for maintaining a British golf course.

The inclusion of some elements, such as the identification of five flowery plants, are not always popular however our working group are constantly looking to ensure that our industry does not get locked into a very narrow skill and knowledge base.

We have ensured, in recent years, that the range of turf qualifications are relevant to employment needs, while giving the learners at the various levels both the skill and the knowledge.

So what of the Training Providers? Mainly land based colleges have been the GTC's approved suppliers of education and training for many years and, as I have stated in previous articles, it really has been a very difficult period for college staff.

It has to be said that after nearly 10 years of the colleges trying - some trying harder than others - to implement the Government's programme of apprenticeships and vocational training many are still struggling with the system.

For vocational training to work the workplace has to be at the heart of the learner's programme and in our experience two major obstacles prevent VQ's from being implemented successfully.

The first obstacle is when the golf club expects the chosen training provider/college to carry out both parts of the qualification, i.e. the practical skills training and the delivery of the theory. The obvious answer to address this problem is to have a committed Course Manager who understands the vocational qualification system and this is usually recognised by them holding the trainer/assessor qualifications.

I do still hear stories from some college staff that an assessor holding the recognised qualification is too busy to "play his part" in the training and assessing of their learner.

On closer investigation it is more often that not that where the provider has not explained the role of the assessor properly and has not provided simple documentation that both the learner and their boss understands! The actual time involved in carrying out formal assessments is negligible, say 10 minutes a day maximum.

The second obstacle is when the provider is still trying to make the work-based system operate from the college base, with few if any workplace visits made.

With many of the colleges still struggling to implement the VQ's and sadly some college staff - paid to deliver the programmes - rubbishing work-based training, clearly the GTC has to address the various problems.

Please be assured that the GTC will be addressing this problem, as there are overwhelming reasons why vocational training should be adopted by our sector.

If you talk to those providers both in our sector and in others who have excellent success rates it is largely down to the learner's boss being involved and at the helm of the training programme.

Clearly we need several colleges approved to offer the more academic qualifications, such as the excellent HNC and Foundation Degree qualifications, but with all the changes in the land based colleges in recent years the GTC is currently seriously reviewing its approved trainer network.

A working group has been established and you can contribute to the current review by contacting the GTC with your views.

At all times the GTC will be working in the best interests of the industry and, although we have an excellent range of turf courses/qualifications, we will continue to work to improve the quality of both the content and delivery of the various programmes.

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