



Education Director, David Golding, discusses work based training and the incredible pace that it has taken off at.

If you take a look at the job vacancies page in the magazine you will see how the vocational qualifications have become the industry benchmark to recruit for the majority of greenkeeping vacancies. Once again I have to make clear that the GTC is fully involved in the development, review and validation of the more academic qualifications such as the HNC Foundation Degree, B.Sc and M.Sc.

I will feature these awards in next month's GI and those readers who, when leaving school, never dreamt they would ever be at an Awards Ceremony wearing proudly a Cap and Gown then just maybe their dream could become a reality! Exciting times on the education front.

This month I have to again appeal to those Course Managers, Head Greenkeepers and enlightened Deputies who have staff registered at a Centre on either N/SVQ Level 2 or 3 Sportsturf. This appeal also extends to golf club employers who believe they are investing in greenkeeper training by "Sending their staff to college." The best analogy I can give you is that the pace work-based training has taken off in the greenkeeping sector is equivalent to a harrier jet leaving an aircraft carrier.

Sadly the same cannot be said of our colleagues in groundsmanhip, horticulture or landscaping, who have not taken the same 'ownership' of the vocational qualification as our sector has and they seem to have an increasing problem in implementing these Industry designed qualifications.

As regular readers know we at the GTC (see below for representative bodies) have always looked to embrace the concept of work-based training and use the existing traditional registration Centres, mainly the colleges throughout Britain. These have been supported by the GTC awarding Approved Status. Golf club employers and greenkeepers have been directed to these Centres as they have 'signed up' to a GTC criterion, which has been very closely linked to resources to deliver the specialist education our sector demands.

With the popularity of work-based training exceeding all expectations many colleges have seen a huge shift from full time greenkeeping students to the part time route, which in the main means that trainees learn both 'on and off the job' while earning a wage. Surely a win-win situation for the trainee?

Credit to several of our Approved Providers who have 'listened' to the industry and have developed more flexible delivery options just to suit our sector. They have the very difficult task to also deliver work-based qualifications to the aforementioned sector of the land base who have often stated N/SVQ's are not for their sector. The GTC believes that whatever the Government of the day chooses to call the qualifications, skilled staff is the bedrock of well maintained golf courses with the academic awards available for those seeking more knowledge on what is happening below the surface. I believe our sector has the best of both worlds in terms of the range of qualifications but this is where we must focus on the role of who is the most important person in the system of delivering work-based training?

Any Centre offering N/SVQ's will all agree that for the system to work efficiently and effectively the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper or Deputy must be involved in the training and assessment process. The role of the Centre is to support the trainee and supervisor by ensuring the knowledgeable learning materials, either by hard copy or online, is available and all parties agree the best method of learning. This coupled to the on-the-job practical training then requires the Centre staff to coordinate the knowledge and practical assessments into evidence, which meets the national standards. When it is left to the Centre to educate, train and assess the trainee it can lead to all sorts of problems, mainly 'fast tracking' the assessment process and this is when questions are asked of the VQ system.

We at the GTC are very aware of the work the Awarding Bodies' External Verifier team are carrying out to support and improve Centres, however we at the sharp end of work-based training know that the golf club must ensure a senior competent greenkeeper takes on the responsibility to monitor the trainees progress by attending all meetings when Centre staff visit the club.

It is at these meetings that training plans are reviewed and agreed to ensure both the trainee and his/her work-based supervisor are working to an agreed programme supported by the Centre staff.

Please do not get left behind, it is easy to climb on board as for many who have recently attended training sessions, to become qualified work-based assessors, have often commented that "We do that as part of our job role anyway." Help your own profession and your own professional development by getting involved in the 'system'.

Training days are now being planned for trainer and assessor awards and these will be held regionally. Also watch out for the BTME 2006 programme which will include trainer, assessor and an update course for those of you who achieved the 'old' D32/D33 award and feel you would benefit from an updating session.

To discuss any issues raised in this article or any matters relating to greenkeeper education, training and qualifications David may be contacted on email, david@the-gtc.co.uk, telephone 01347 838640 or visit the GTC website, www.the-gtc.co.uk.



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