



## David Golding, GTC's Education Director, explains why he firmly believes the future condition of golf courses is in the hands of the Professionals.

Having attended the R&A's seminar during the Harrogate Week to debate the Sustainable Management of Golf Courses and also having received feedback from the assessors who attended an updating workshop hosted by Plan-it Training one thing is for certain Golf Course Managers have never been in a more influential position to ensure the future maintenance of courses is carried out by skilled staff and to an agreed policy.

The Board of the GTC has representatives from the R&A, EGU, SGU, WGU and BIGGA and whilst they regularly discuss how do we engage the employers in key matters such as greenkeeper training, we also continue to identify the Course Manager as the real professional person who should be advising the employer on all of the key issues relating to training, maintenance and course management policies.

The Home Unions, BIGGA and the R&A all support the development of a Course Policy Document and that is surely the best way of ensuring continuity for any golf club?

The GTC ensures that within the range of greenkeeping qualifications and training courses there is the skill of communication including development maintenance plans for consideration by the employer. Golf course managers must be allowed to manage and surely this is why employers at interview look for a person with both agronomic knowledge and excellent communication skills.

A professional golf course manager should have a major input to the policy document explaining all aspects of the way forward for the course based on the best principles and practices.

In the world of training there has been much written and debate relating to the current role of colleges in relation to the modern and most popular qualifications which are the work-based (vocational) based awards.

I have stated many times in this column the GTC on behalf of the golf clubs and greenkeepers it represents continue to be involved with all the Government bodies who determine the standards for the sports turf sector and our credibility in this area has many admirers, why?

For over 10 years the GTC has encouraged both the employer and the most senior member of staff on the golf course to become more involved with the training of the greenkeeping staff.

As a result of this campaign there are qualified coaches and assessors at many of the golf courses in Britain and this has seen far more skilled workers which has to be good for the sectors employers.

Having established this network of coaches and assessors we must ensure the Centres where trainees are registered such as colleges actually engage formerly these skills. On the job training, a little like the fescue/fescue bent/annual meadow grass debate is not new to the sector in fact in this part of the world it has been the norm for decades!

What the GTC is now actively campaigning for is that the Centres use the work-based assessor more formally that at best an expert witness or at worst someone who can tick boxes within the trainees manual/portfolio! The Centres now have staff on the road and this is where the GTC sees the partnership between Centre staff and the work-based assessor as the most important factor in ensuring only competent staff achieve the qualification.

It is the quality of the assessment that is the controlling factor in vocational qualifications and we all must put this at the heart of all on the job training.

As those greenkeepers who have attended an assessor training session all the system is asking for is that as an assessor you are constantly aware of opportunities to assess during natural working operations and at all times using the national standards. Just plan the training with the trainee and if they are registered with a Centre agree the training and assessment plan with the co-coordinator/verifier and you are then at the heart of the system! Quality training and assessment is then in your professional control.

The Centres will be encouraged to engage qualified assessors and we must not accept this drop in/one off type of assessment as the norm. Course Managers and many deputies are the obvious coaches and assessors and it will be these professional people who will ensure trainees develop with the support of the chosen Centre and the main benefactor will be the employer who will have a skilled workforce.

Please don't think that the Professional at the golf club is the person who has the skills to coach and play the game it is the terms of the dictionary "having or showing the skill of a professional; competent.

*If you wish to discuss becoming a work-based coach/assessor please contact David direct at the GTC on Tel: 01347 838640 or email: david@the-gtc.co.uk.*

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