



David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, looks to raise the awareness of Certificates of Competence within the sector.

The word 'competence' has become increasingly important across all industries, especially as Health & Safety legislation has been taken more seriously by both employers and employees. Many working in the sector initially saw the legislation as needs must rather than best practise. My experience tells me that the Health & Safety legislation has improved greenkeepers working conditions greatly during the last ten years.

The GTC and BIGGA has supported the greenkeeping sector by producing recording documentation ranging from a wall-chart to the more detailed documentation of the Machinery and Work Equipment training and assessment manual.

In addition the training manual used by N/SVQ Level 2 candidates has a section within each task for recording the learner's competence including the date of assessment. It is now nine years since the GTC in association with the Health & Safety Executive produced a Golf Course Management Guidelines booklet that is currently being updated.

All of these documents are available through BIGGA and the GTC offices. The initial establishment of a recording system may take a few hours to implement but the maintenance of staff records, while an on-going task, it is not time consuming.

The formal certificates, which cover many of the maintenance tasks carried out on the golf course, are the National Proficiency Test Council's (NPTC) Certificates of Competence (CoC's). The independently assessed CoC's are offered through many of the GTC Approved Training Providers and many Centres offer them in conjunction with N/SVQ Level 2 Sports Turf.

Employers are encouraged to use the CoC's as the formal recognition of staff competence in such areas as the Safe Use of Pesticides, Manual Handling, Tractor Driving and the Safe Use of Mowers. Any golf club with a qualified work-based assessor has a real advantage over clubs that have as yet not ensured their senior Greenkeeper has yet achieved the qualification authorising the assessment of staff to the national standards.

While the NPTC has a network of Centres offering the CoC's and only their own assessors can assess CoC's any N/SVQ assessor should be well up to speed on recording staff competencies at their own workplace. Hopefully your golf club never has to receive an official visit from Health & Safety representatives following an accident or incident but be prepared for visits by the local inspectorate.

Specialist H&S advisors are also available within the sector should the club require support for a particular issue. As formal on the job training is now the norm good record keeping also should be the norm and the Course Manager in association with the employer can access support to ensure there is a safe working environment supported by current staff records of competence.

Informal training often linked to the formal qualifications such as N/SVQ's, HNC/D, Foundation Degree and the CoC's can be an excellent experience for some learners.

The excellent management tutors, Brin Bendon and Frank Newberry, have through recent years, assisted literally hundreds of greenkeepers to become better supervisors and managers through their understanding of the employer's needs as well as the learners.

Every effort is made through close consultation with the Home Unions, BIGGA and the R & A (all members of the GTC), to ensure that only recognised consultants/tutors are engaged in the delivery of quality education. I believe this objective has been consistently met over the years as the greenkeeping sector is admired by the rest of the land-base sector for its united approach to quality education and training provision.

Not forgetting our "friends" in the GTC Approved Training Providers who also often have the resources at hand to be best placed to offer both formal and informal education and training programmes and the range of qualifications and CoC's.

First Aid courses are readily available in all parts of the country through specialist private training providers as well as the Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance and not forgetting that this type of training is also included within the Greenkeeping Apprenticeship framework.

The Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), have for many years offered excellent short courses, which are still available. More recently, the Institute, in association with BIGGA and the Scottish Golf Union organised a series of short seminars for Green Convenors/Course Managers. They were held at three venues throughout Scotland and proved to be very successful.

Hopefully you will see from this that whilst the GTC encourages employers and greenkeepers to use the formal qualifications to recruit and develop staff development plans it is also very aware of the importance and benefits of short courses.

Short courses which can be informal "fun" learning sessions or legislative formal certificates can often be stepping stones to vocational or the more academic qualifications.

If you require specific advice on any of the above please do not hesitate to contact the GTC on 01347 838640 and/or BIGGA on 01347 833800.

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