



STUDENT LIFE: CAREER PROGRESSION

Starting a student-based series of articles, Melissa Toombs gives a flavour of the courses currently available to Sports Turf students

Now, opting to further your education and widen your horizons can be viewed in two ways - All night parties, copious amounts of alcohol, long lie-ins and a piece of paper at the end of it all telling you you're qualified - OR - A serious lack of funds, having to work part-time, debts, copious amounts of stress and late night study sessions to meet assignment deadlines.

Obviously I'm demonstrating two extremes here, but what with inflation rising quite significantly over the past year and house prices on the increase previous, money can prove to be a huge worry – Even for the laid back potential student.

More and more people are opting to further their education through day-release study, apprenticeships and work-based learning because in these scenarios, with a little bit of hard work, you can actually have your cake and eat it.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work Based Learning at Writtle College currently has around 100 young people who are enrolled on apprenticeship schemes with employers throughout the Eastern Counties.

The College can help you find a suitable workplace and arrange your day release training. They will also arrange for a specialist member of staff to visit your workplace to offer guidance and support, as you work your way through your portfolio of evidence.

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship schemes are designed for school leavers but in some cases it is possible to start at the age of 19. The aim of the apprenticeship is to successfully complete NVQ Level 2, plus Key Skills qualifications, gain work experience and earn a wage.

There are no formal entry requirements but upon application you will need to take a basic skills test. You must be employed and work for a minimum of 30 hours per week. Attendance is usually on a day release basis but because the scheme is based on work circumstances and the

requirements of employers, attendance at College may be as little as one day a month. Every eight to 10 weeks a member of staff will visit you to assess and review your progress. (The successful completion of an Apprenticeship is equivalent to three GCSEs at Grade C.)

You may then choose to return to full-time education and start a National Certificate or National Diploma or continue on to the NVQ Level 3 should your work circumstances allow.

ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP

The Advanced Apprenticeship is designed for you if you are working towards supervisory or management level at your workplace. The aim of the scheme is to complete an NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and technical certificate. As with the Level 2 apprenticeship certain industries require candidates to complete work-related short courses. Although there are no formal entry qualifications, an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualification is recommended. You must also be in full time employment.

College attendance and work place reviews will be the same as a standard apprenticeship.

By successfully completing an Advanced Apprenticeship you will have achieved a standard of training equivalent to three A levels at Grade C or above. This can open the door to Higher Education qualifications such as a Foundation Degree or Degree.

THE INDUSTRY

The Sports Turf industry is a far reaching area for study; much work has already been undertaken by the industry bodies to support students in their studies.

Sports Turf study begins at level 2 for those who wish to develop their skills and knowledge at craft level. Students can choose either the NVQ Level 2 which is for those with at least one years industry experience or the National Certificate. The NVQ is a part time one year course while the National Certificate is two year part time.

CONTENT

Areas of study include: preparation, maintenance and repair; identification of weeds, pests and diseases; machinery/tractor operation and maintenance; improving work practices and relationships; health and safety and the establishment of new turf surfaces and plantings. The National Certificate includes the study of plant and soil science.

SPECIAL FEATURES

All practical tasks are based on current industry practice and techniques. NVQ assessment will be through observation in the work place and the compilation of a portfolio of evidence. National Certificate is college based modular assessment culminating with an on-line (GOLA) test at the end of the course.



WHAT NEXT?

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be well placed to take the next step in your career progression in moving onto the NVQ Level 3 Sports Turf Maintenance.

NVQ LEVEL 3

This course is at supervisory level and is best suited to those students employed as 1st Assistant Head Greenkeeper/Groundsmen or working towards this position.

CONTENT

The course deals with: resource acquisition; planning projects; developing and using information systems; developing skills and understanding of staff management; IPM (Integrated Pest Management) systems; creating grassed and planted areas; management and design of irrigation and drainage systems; managing maintenance programmes of turf and planted areas and managing health and safety of staff and clients.



SPECIAL FEATURES

Students enrolled on this course at Writtle College have, in recent years, been involved with large construction projects undertaking the building of three golf greens and surrounding plantings to enhance the area. Development and use of presentation skills to improve speaking abilities is a topic enjoyed by students allowing them to develop their public speaking skills in a safe environment. Discussion on new innovations in the industry is also fundamental to the structure of the course.



WHAT NEXT?

After completion of the Level 3 students are adequately prepared for under-graduate study in the HE sector. Here the student can broaden their understanding and developing their opportunities in the turf industry, getting to grips with the deeper issues of turf culture. The courses available at present are the Foundation Degree in Sports Turf Management, leading to the BSc in Sports Turf Science and Management or a BSc Green Space Management.

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS

If you would like to employ an apprentice, please read the following checklist.

- 1 Can you provide a full range of work experience in your occupational area including some formal 'on the job' training?
- 2 Do you need to train a young person to fill a gap in your workforce or for future expansion of your organisation?
- 3 Does your workplace comply with all current Health and Safety regulations? (Advice can be offered in this area.)
- 4 Do you have current Employers Liability Insurance in place?
- 5 Would you be prepared to let your apprentice attend college and support them in their gathering of evidence?

For further information or to apply for an apprenticeship scheme contact Work Based Learning at Writtle College on 01245 421612.