

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR LETTERS TO SCOTT MACCALLUM,  
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## PREFER MIGRANTS TO POOR QUALITY BRITISH GRADUATES

Published in the Daily telegraph 31-12-07 (Your Vote)

“Labour’s drive to boost the number of people going to university has produced a generation of poor quality graduates who are being out classed by migrant, business leaders warned yesterday.

“More British students are gaining degrees but they still struggle with basic English and Maths, leaving employers more inclined to recruit people from Poland and central Europe, it was claimed. The Government policy to increase the number of degrees has been criticised in some quarters for encouraging the rise of “Mickey Mouse” qualifications such as Golf and Sports Turf Management.

“Richard Lambert, the director general of the CBI, said many bosses believed standards had fallen with the rapid in student numbers. In a speech to university vice-chancellors, he warned “If businesses can’t find the skills or work attitudes that they need in the national workplace, they can perfectly well recruit them from elsewhere” He went on “ I’ve lost count of the number of times that employers have told me depressing stories about how the skills and employability of their central European – often Polish recruits compare favorably with those of the domestic pool”.

“Bill Rammell, the minister for higher education, defended the rise in student numbers. He said “We are widening participation in higher education to overcome disadvantage and unlock the talent within our society, wherever it is to be found”.

In response to the above ‘Prefer migrants to poor quality British graduates’

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I don’t want to enter the debate about employers choosing migrant workers over British graduates, but what has really incensed me is that once again degrees in golf and sports turf management have been

criticised as “Mickey Mouse”. Well here we go again!

In 2005, Michael Howard, then leader of the opposition, tried the same tactic and criticised golf and sports turf management degree, among others, as being unsuitable subjects for higher academic study.

Having advanced my career through the Sports Turf Industry, from a practicing groundsman to lecturing, I can categorically state that “I wouldn’t be where I am today without my degree”. With respect, people like the CBI Director General, Richard Lambert, have lost the plot and obviously have no idea about the sports turf industry. Try telling anyone with a sports turf related degree such as a Masters, Bachelor of Science or Foundation Degree that they are Mickey Mouse!

The non-specialist media’s unjustified criticism of our highly skilled industry is only serving to feed the apathy that already exists towards our sector. I suggest that Mr. Lambert and Co should learn to value and respect sports turf professionals both for their qualifications and for their contribution to society.

With the Olympic Games only four years away and the government investing millions in the event, I am sure that all spectators will expect our sports facilities to be in first class condition for the world’s athletes/participants. Who will manage and maintain these facilities for the games and afterwards if not highly qualified, professional and experienced grounds staff?

The Minister for Higher Education Bill Rammell makes a valid point in your article when he says: “We are widening participation in education to overcome disadvantage and unlock the talent within our society”. At Reaseheath College we are able to offer exciting and valuable career options to school leavers, career changers and for those already in the industry who wish to pursue continued professional development.

In particular, the Foundation Degree in Golf and Sports Turf Management has proved a particularly successful vehicle by providing a balance of practical and academic work, therefore making graduates more employable. We have worked with employers to ensure that these higher qualifications have been specially tailored to deliver what the industry wants.

Practical experience in ‘real’ work situations, backed up by appropriate academic study and research, ensures that our graduates are in high demand in a growing global leisure market.

Yours faithfully

Gareth Phillips NDT  
Senior Turf Lecturer  
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P.S Now that the merger talks between the IOG and BIGGA have ceased. Recent publicity has suggested that both organisation’s will be working closely together on matters of interest. In the interest of our industry I urge both parties to seriously promote Golf and Sports Turf Maintenance issues at the highest level possible. If our leading industry representatives/membership organisations do not step up to the plate then we will always be looked on unfavorably and with increasing apathy from most quarters, our industry players a major role in most people’s lives and it should be recognised as such.