



## BITE SIZE LEARNING

*As we move into the height of the growing season David Golding, GTC's Education Director, looks at the trend in training and asks if you do get a break from the hectic schedule of course presentation in the "busy season" to consider these options...*

**The GTC believes, after years of trying to get golf club employers and greenkeepers themselves to invest in education and training for its entire staff, it has now convinced the funding bodies, through its involvement with the Lantra Sector Skills Council (SSC) that funding should not be confined to full qualifications!**

In trying to achieve its targets - showing more people are taking to skills training and HE programmes, the Government for many years has instructed its funding bodies to direct funding support to FULL qualifications e.g. N/SVQ Level 2, 3 - NC, HNC/D Foundation Degrees.

Having set the funding bodies targets to improve the statistics of people achieving full qualifications, it clearly hasn't listened to industries such as the land base sector. Many Government initiatives have come and gone and sadly, in the main, targets have not been met! So what do we have? A new report commissioned! The reports seem to be annual with the latest issued in 2007. The Leitch report once again looks at the Skills Agenda and how the UK can compete with other countries and bridge the skills gap - shortage. Simple Sir, listen to industries such as the small but perfectly formed Sports Turf sector!

While on this subject I hear there are calls for an umbrella organisation for Sports Turf. There may be many reasons for this but one thing is for sure, all qualifications certainly since my time with BIGGA and the GTC from 1993, have all been developed and reviewed under the banner of SPORTS TURF.

So where is this leading? Credit to golf club employers over the years who, in the main, have supported the formal qualifications offered by our network of GTC Approved Training Providers - while other sectors of sports turf decided to abandon their own tried and tested qualifications but then did not provide or support an alternative option.

Despite the best efforts of many dedicated individuals working within Approved Centres to promote the courses and qualifications both to Golf and the other sporting employers and staff, it has been the golf sector which has dominated the formal courses leading to the Government qualifications. Credit has to be given to those greenkeepers and grounds men/women who have grasped every opportunity to further their own education and fortunately the profile has been given a boost through regular references through the popular media, especially the presentation of courses and pitches.

I am pleased to say that finally at meetings within the Lantra SSC, when qualifications are on the agenda, Sports Turf is now very well represented and this will result in a far stronger lobby with results already starting to show. The latest Government plan is to develop a Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which, in simple terms, is one National Database of UNITS, which can then be, grouped together into industry specific qualifications e.g. Golf Greenkeeper, Golf Course Manager, Grounds Manager etc and with Awarding Body approval these could be branded and promoted accordingly.

Equal in importance is that the funding bodies should channel funding towards the QCF and this does not just mean FULL qualifications.

The GTC, on behalf of the employers and greenkeepers it represents, has repeatedly sought to promote short courses or to use the buzz words 'Continual Professional Development' (CDP) or 'bite size learning' as not every employer requires staff to achieve say N/SVQ Level 3 or 4. Indeed not every greenkeeper or grounds person wants to be registered on a full level of qualification however, the majority are more than willing to attend short courses to develop their knowledge and skill base. So when in that quiet moment think about staff and the business development, with the introduction of the credit frameworks Unit or clusters of Units into short courses by all of the Providers there should be no shortage of options to learn.

Approved Training Providers, professional bodies including BIGGA, will be looking to extend their provision to take account of the latest review of qualifications.

Finally, at a recent Pan-European Advisory Group meeting, all the work to create agreed standards for greenkeeping throughout the European member states revolved around Units which would be best suited to fit into the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and would receive International recognition based on Industry Skills Sets at the previously agreed three levels Greenkeeper, Golf Course Supervisor and Golf Course Manager.

Exciting times are ahead, and one thing is for sure, while golf course new builds might have slowed down in the UK in recent times many countries, relatively new to the game of golf, are expanding and this will create a need for a more mobile greenkeeping workforce. The agreed Industry Skill Sets are available on the GTC website and coming soon will be the agreed Standards (Units) for adoption by EU countries. Training Providers, not only in the UK will then, in partnership with the Golf Federations and Greenkeeping Associations, develop courses and qualifications to match those standards through a variety of delivery methods.

To discuss any matters relating to greenkeeper education, training and qualifications David may be contacted at the GTC on: Tel: 01347 838640 or Email david@the-gtc.co.uk

Have you registered for the new GTC Email alerts service? Visit the GTC website [www.the-gtc.co.uk](http://www.the-gtc.co.uk) to register and be kept up to date with all the news both from within the GTC and beyond!

Coming next month - a look at the developments in on-line learning for the sports turf sector.

**GTC is supported by:**

