

ON THE UP



David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, looks at the increase in student numbers for the academic qualifications which are available to the sector and explains how students really can access learning while earning...

I have been accused of favouring the vocational qualifications route to becoming qualified at the expense of promoting the more academic qualifications.

I am sorry if I have given this impression but to meet employers expectations we have, through the skills agenda, addressed the difficulties and barriers to learning.

We should all be pleased with how our sector has embraced the apprenticeship and vocational qualifications, as have our Approved Centres through their increasing flexibility with a variety of delivery options of courses - which are now available.

As some form of apology it must also be recognised that the Government is still allocating the majority of training funding support to their flagship apprenticeship scheme, to ensure they hit their skills agenda targets.

Readers will have noticed a huge marketing drive both nationally and locally, to encourage employers and learners to "buy into" training through various branded schemes such as 'Train to Gain' and the 'Apprenticeship Scheme', so don't let it be a "strain to gain" - to access these programmes contact your local GTC Approved Training Provider (see GTC website) as they have the contacts and courses to assist staff and business development.

Employers are more likely to invest in staff development if it is offered at a reasonable cost, free if possible, however the quality of the courses and relevance to staff and employment requirements are essential and this is where the GTC has a key role with Lantra Sector Skills Council, the Awarding Bodies and the Approved Centres.

Back to the more academic awards such as the Higher National Certificate, Diploma, the Foundation Degree and the Bachelor of Science and Master of Science Degrees - the GTC has been involved in the development, accreditation and the ongoing reviewing of these important qualifications.

What has changed in recent years is the fact that many people have thought you have to attend a College or University full time to gain the qualification, when, in fact, the successful Centres have listened to the industry and invested in staff development and technology, to allow those students seeking to continue to work and study to do so. The Centre with the most students registered on the Foundation Degree has the option to study on-line as well as the traditional part and full time study route. Full time Higher Education courses are still available with excellent placements available.

Progression to a Bachelor of Science, BSc is also very much part of the development and career path in which the GTC works, with a limited number of Approved Centres to ensure we can provide the sector with highly qualified Course Managers, Agronomists and Advisors.

As University fees increase it is likely that the online, distance learning options to study will increase.

There is a tremendous amount of commitment and discipline required to study from home and the support from the Centre is paramount. Students who have achieved the prodigious qualifications confirmed the flexibility they requested from tutors from time to time, especially as work commitments took priority, were accommodated for therefore allowing them to complete the course.

Higher education for many greenkeepers was never an option, especially having opted to gain employment on leaving school, but having discussed the modern delivery options now available please do not be put off. With scholarships and



bursaries available through Colleges, Universities and BIGGA, The R&A can often help with fees once your means have been accessed.

Several students have progressed and achieved a Master of Science Degree, MSc, through the Cranfield University and concern has been expressed on how this course has now been withdrawn as a taught programme and is only available through research.

In recent years the sports turf sector has benefited from those committed students who have successfully achieved the MSc. The GTC is currently involved in discussions to hopefully encourage a Centre in partnership with a University to ensure the sector has a progression route through academic study, similar to the one previously offered by the Cranfield MSc.

Please be in no doubt that the GTC is firmly committed to ensuring the sector has all avenues covered, in terms of education and training, to ensure golf club employers and today and tomorrow's greenkeepers are well catered for.

Starting with the schools there will be land-based Diplomas, which will lead interested students and learners to a greenkeeping apprenticeship scheme, with both vocational and academic courses Government approved qualifications, delivered by GTC Quality Assured Centres through a range of delivery methods.

More on the GTC Quality Assured Scheme next month!

Check out the GTC current network of Approved Training Providers via our website: www.the-gtc.co.uk

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