

CIRCULATION CHECKLIST Secretary Chairman of Green/Green Convenor Course Manager Others

Standards, what standards?

The experience of the GTC in greenkeeper education and training has been acknowledged through an R&A research questionnaire distributed to European Golf Federations.

Following the circulation of a greenkeeping questionnaire to all European Golf Associations by the R&A in 2004, it was clear through the analysis that many countries have no greenkeeper education and training systems in place.

Obviously, in countries where the game is very much in its infancy, employers rely on importing qualified staff to manage the course and often local labour is used to maintain the course.

This could also be said to be the case with British golf club employers.

While the GTC is assisting golf developing countries to establish standards of greenkeeper education it will still continue to ensure the British golf clubs and greenkeepers have access to the best possible education and training system.

A pan-European advisory group has been established to investigate the possibility of introducing a system of greenkeeper education and training which countries could support and see the benefits of improving the playing standards of golf courses on behalf of the employers and greenkeepers they represent.

This will rely on support from the countries' golf Union or Federation and the greenkeeping association who from the outset will be encouraged to work together as happens here in Britain.

The British Home Unions and BIGGA are all Board members of the GTC and with support from the R&A



A pan-European advisory group has been established

(also Board members) and the PGA European Tour there is a clear commitment to work together for arguably the most important aspect of the sport, the playing surfaces!

The current great debate, the sustainable golf course, instigated mainly by the R&A will only be adopted and implemented if golf clubs have a management "team" who are fully aware of the current issues facing the business.

I do not intend to go into all the details of the current issues as we all know the general topics, water, chemical use, preferred grass species etc etc. However I do encourage golf club senior officials and obviously course managers to register on www.bestcourseforgolf.org where there is so much information including links to specific subject materials.

The most pleasing aspect of the first meeting of the advisory group is that many

of the issues facing the game are at least pan-European if not world wide and there is a tremendous will to address them collectively.

Golf Unions, Federations and Greenkeeping Associations have all "subscribed" to this R&A website and as registrations are reaching 2000 the golf community is finally looking to support each other and this is what the pan-European greenkeeping advisory group intends to do.

There is still work to do on the proposal and when the standards are agreed it will be for each country to deliver programmes of education and training to meet the pan-European standards in a manner to suit the country.

The group recommended three levels for the occupational standards:
 ■ Golf Course Greenkeeper
 ■ Golf Course Supervisor
 ■ Golf Course Manager.

A list of skills with the

related knowledge will now be developed for each level and the group will circulate these as a minimum standard for consultation.

It is also suggested that a certificate be issued when a student has met the European standards through their country's system of qualifications.

A rigorous quality assurance system would be established to maintain and monitor the Certification Scheme.

The advisory group suggests that there are many benefits for the greenkeeping sector to have pan-European standards not least that employers throughout Europe would know exactly what skills and knowledge any applicant for employment would have when presenting a certificate achieved through the system.

The benefits to greenkeepers would include

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New colleges on the list

The GTC has added two new colleges to its list of centres which work with the sector and within the awarding bodies' criterion to deliver sports turf qualifications.

Duchy College in Cornwall and Kingston Maurward College in Dorset have been added to the list. The GTC's Education Director, David Golding, said: "Both centres are providing specialist turf programmes on a local basis for clubs and greenkeeping candidates and have established industry liaison committees to monitor the delivery.

"A major part of our work is to monitor the quality standards of sports turf education and training in association with the awarding bodies."

"Our team of staff are absolutely delighted that they have recently been provisionally approved as a GTC centre," said Duchy College operations manager (work based learning) Chris Shepherd. "The status means a great deal to all training providers and is a hard-earned and fiercely guarded prize."

The college looks after about 450 apprentices or work based learners in the land based sector across all of the vocational areas associated with a land based college. "Within this number we cater for around 30 greenkeepers at any one time across Devon and Cornwall," he said. "Our association with the industry started in autumn 2000 and since then around 150 greenkeepers of all ages have taken part in



A current NVQ2 Sportsturf candidate enjoying his on this job training supported by KMC.

NVQ training programmes.

"As relative newcomers, what has been striking is the level of support that we have received from the industry. Many other vocational areas in the land based sector could learn a great deal from the way in which the greenkeeping industry has organised itself and promoted work based learning opportunities.

"I have experienced first hand the extremely effective case put by the GTC to Lantra when it comes to designing apprenticeship frameworks and NVQ content. The GTC learning materials (NVQ L2 and L3) are a superb source of information to all learning their profession," said Chris.

"The support from the Devon and Cornwall

greenkeepers has been amazing and it feels as if we could access both the physical and human resource across all of the clubs with whom we work. Our regular assessor update sessions are very effective in keeping contact with the industry and communicating with the many qualified assessors out there. "We look forward to developing our partnership with the industry and value greatly the constructive advice and guidance given so openly."

Kingston Maurward College is a specialist land-based college located in beautiful countryside in rural Dorset. It, like most other land-based colleges, provides a range of educational provision in various disciplines including turf management. The college has long provided training opportunities through the work-based learning route for many golf courses within the County. Staff have worked hard with employers to develop a good reputation and were therefore delighted recently to receive accreditation from the GTC. Head of horticulture, Steve Maros

said: "It is a great privilege to receive accreditation as it is the stamp of approval that providers seek and it will help us to encourage many more youngsters into the profession.

"We are looking forward to using many of the GTC's excellent training materials in developing our work with schools. In addition, we look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with the GTC and the continuing development of the college as a centre of excellence for greenkeeping and turf culture.

"Our thanks also go to all the employers who have given us their wholehearted support." The college has a dynamic Industrial Liaison Committee which meets regularly and has a wide range of sports turf employer representation including golf courses, council sports playing fields and private school playing fields. It has a good reputation for providing high quality education as was confirmed in the recent OFSTED/ALI inspection when it was awarded grade 2s across the board with the exception of IT which was awarded a grade 1.

New addition: View of Duchy College in Cornwall.



Message from the new chairman

As the new Chairman of the GTC Technical Committee my first action must be to pay tribute to the work of my predecessor, Dr Mike Canaway. He will be a hard act to follow says Nick Bisset.

The Training Committee has been pro-active in promoting the value of training opportunities for greenkeeping staff at golf clubs and the result of their work to date and that of BIGGA, has been a substantial improvement of professional standards resulting in more recognition by golf clubs.

There are a great many changes going on in education and training and there are more in the pipeline. The GTC rightly decided to follow the government guidelines and buy in to the N/SVQ system. This is not likely to change substantially in the future but there is considerable tinkering going on around the fringes. As everyone is aware the N/SVQ system involves both on-the-job training and a knowledge element which may be undertaken both on- and off-the job as well as job specific qualifications and key skills for apprentices.

The system involves a partnership between the employer, training provider (whether private or college) and the trainee. This is the most obvious part of the system. Behind that lies QCA (Quality Curriculum Authority) which approves qualifications, Awarding Bodies which



*New chairman:
Nick Bisset.*

develop and administer qualifications according to rules and requirements laid down by QCA, and the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) which provides funding for approved qualifications. Also involved is the SSC (Sector Skills Council) which, for land-based industries, is Lantra. The whole lot is obviously (or perhaps not) overseen from a policy point of view by the DfES (Department for Education and Skills).

The following section is personal opinion, not necessarily that of the GTC. The N/SVQ system is designed basically for large organisations operating at one or more large sites where supervision and training can be done by specialists on site with large numbers of staff. How is that reconciled with

golf courses where there are few members of staff, all at different skill levels? The GTC has been pro-active by training assessors within the industry. Awarding bodies require that assessors have to undergo up-dating and observation by Internal Verifiers at least annually. Does every assessor have a learner every year? The GTC has organised up-dating sessions at Harrogate in January for the past two years. The LSC in England decided that there would be much reduced funding for apprentices over the age of 25. There are many in the golf industry who have been working for years who have no qualification so where do government policies for 'Learning for Life' and a fully qualified workforce stand?

It costs clubs to provide for this older group both financially and in time.

It would appear at times that the bodies listed above do not converse and there is little joined up thinking. So it will be clear that the GTC has a great deal to do to fight our corner in the labyrinthine corridors of the bodies listed above. It is extremely important the qualifications obtained by greenkeepers match those, at whatever level, in other industries, otherwise it would just be a special qualification with no currency value.

Another aspect which the GTC must continue to do is to encourage employers (represented on the GTC by the British Home Golf Unions) and especially individual clubs to recognise the role they have to play continuing to improve the quality of greenkeeping standards and therefore the maintenance and management of golf courses for the future.

In my role as Chairman, I will support David Golding in all the discussions he has with all the bodies mentioned above to ensure that the best possible result for golf is obtained. Remember that the work already done by the GTC in providing learning materials, manuals and qualified assessors on the ground is held up in the land-based industry as a model to follow. Your continued support is vital.

Standards, what standards?

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the opportunity to move within the European greenkeeping community with certificates which are respected and understood by employers.

It is hoped that all the Golf Unions and Federations will support this initiative and with the Greenkeeping

Associations, BIGGA and FEGGA already fully supporting the advisory group's work there is a great opportunity through education and training to unite even more closely the greenkeeping profession.

The R&A, the European Golf Association and the PGA

European Tour are being kept fully informed of the advisory group's work as their support and endorsement for this initiative will be vital to its implementation.

Updates on this project will be posted on the GTC, BIGGA and FEGGA websites as work progresses.



David F Golding
GTC
Education
Director

Note for employers

The GTC believes that the first priority of any golf club is to ensure the "customer" is happy with the facilities on offer.

While many factors contribute to keeping the customer satisfied, staff have a huge contribution to make and, more importantly, competent staff.

Involving all the staff in the business of customer satisfaction is crucial and often this depends on communication from the owner or employer through the ranks of the staff.

But the GTC has clear evidence that employers who have regular contact with the "grass roots" staff really do benefit from better productivity once staff feel there is a team spirit within the facility.

Hands up all those golf club employers and golf club managers who truly know what skills all their staff have and regularly manage performance and development of staff.

Full credit to those employers who support their course manager's recommendations for greenstaff development but there are many clubs where training is either not undertaken due to cost or that the staff are happy with their current level of skill.

Updating in areas such as health and safety is a legislative requirement, but I don't want readers to feel threatened by this aspect of staff training.

The GTC has seen a tremendous investment in "on the job" training by golf clubs supporting their senior greenkeeping staff to be trained as trainer/assessors, which in turn raises the awareness of the formal vocational qualifications system.

This area of senior staff development is a short cut to a successful business as all the rest of the staff have a person in a senior

position directly involved in the day to day staff training, assessment and development.

Staff appraisals become an ongoing process rather than an annual activity and performance monitoring by the employer using national standards becomes the norm.

Please be aware of the modern course manager who can now often be seen training staff not just in the practical aspects of the job but also the "when and why" aspects.

The standard learning materials used by the training providers are now available for assessors and learners to buy and, as the skills of course managers are being widened through their development as on the job mentors, it is important they can both access the learning materials and that employers encourage this relatively new concept of delivering the knowledge at the workplace.

This can be carried out during inclement weather, in the winter months or at a dedicated time - say one afternoon a week.

Colleges are now accepting that the course manager, or in some cases the deputy, has a vital role in the vocational system and it is the GTC's role to support both sides of the qualification delivery system.

Some work-based assessors complain they do not have time to train or assess and while we fully accept the difficult task they can often have due to the demand for improved standards and climate change we still believe time has to be made to train and assess staff.

The assessment process, while being critical to the whole credibility of vocational qualifications, need not be time consuming!

Assessors do not have to stand by the learners with clipboards - they can often be working alongside the candidate.

The key to a successful assessment is for the assessor and the candidate

"Assessors do not have to stand by the learners with clipboards - they can often be working alongside the candidate."



to be aware of the standards required to enable a "signing off" decision to be made.

Both the training and assessment must be geared to the national standards and, once a competent assessor gets to grips with just how their role can be part of their normal daily job, everybody suddenly benefits.

The candidate is better motivated because they know their learning plan is being monitored and managed on a daily basis and the course manager and employer are increasing the competencies of their staff.

Centres (training providers) are available to support the employer, course manager (assessor) and of course the learner who is registered with them.

If you do not have an assessor on site the whole assessment process is brought into question.

Some providers send staff out to golf courses to assess candidates who they have never worked alongside and at best they only see a snap shot of their skill. It must be better for the candidate

when their supervisor is involved in the training and assessment process.

Please do not settle for "second-class" assessments; encourage your senior greenkeeping staff to become more formally involved in the training and assessment of staff.

There are training courses available through the GTC to help them achieve the necessary qualifications, which again only formalise what many of them have been doing for years - that is training and assessing staff!

You as the employer can also benefit by working closely with your chosen centre as often colleges and the private training providers complain that the learner's progress is being delayed by the reluctance of the course manager to be involved in staff training and assessment.

Thankfully, this is becoming less of a problem as more and more course managers and employers understand the whole concept of work-based qualifications.

David F Golding
GTC Education Director.