

ON COURSE

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PAGE 2-3 ONLINE STUDY

PAGE 4 DAVID JONES' CAREER CHANGE

GTC is supported by:



Writing on the wall...

There is a general requirement under Regulation 9 of The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) "that all persons who use work equipment have received adequate training for the purposes of health and safety, including methods which may be adopted when using the work equipment, any risks which such use may entail and precautions to be taken."

THERE ARE ALSO SITUATIONS where there is a statutory requirement to users to have a Certificate of Competence, for example application of pesticides, use of chainsaws and use of fork lift trucks.

At the same time the GTC produced the wallchart, BIGGA produced a Machinery and Work Equipment Manual, designed to complement the wallchart, and both were sent to every golf club in Britain.

Good management practice would be to have clear records of any training that has taken place. Whether it is carried out in-house or outsourced this should include:

- who attended the training
- who provided the training
- when the training took place
- what was covered on the course – the course outline
- outcomes of the course, results of any in-course assessment or report from the trainer, recommendations for further training

- records of assessments from independent sources LANTRA or NPTC

This list gives the information required to support the GTC Work Equipment Wall Chart.

In addition to the visit from the local authority health and safety inspector there are several other situations where you could reasonably be asked to provide information and records about the training and competence of your staff. These are:

- during a health and safety audit or annual visit from a company health and safety officer, insurance assessor or health and safety consultant
- to prove that a member of staff is competent following an accident. An inspector investigating the accident could legitimately ask whether the person using the machine was trained and competent

to carry out the work. And again, can you provide the evidence?

If you were asked these questions could you provide the information required?

The wall chart is available from the GTC
Tel: 01347 838640 Email: fiona@the-gtc.co.uk

The Machinery and Work Equipment Manual is available from BIGGA
Tel: 01347 833810 Email: sami@bigga.co.uk



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Flexible learning

On Course... Gre

For many greenkeepers entering the profession, the thought of gaining a degree would not cross their minds.

BUT SINCE THE GTC has been involved with the development of a Foundation Degree with several of its approved providers, the degree in sports turf science can be achieved while still working!

The GTC's Education Director, David Golding, explains why the "D" word should not frighten off greenkeepers or employers as the delivery of the course is both flexible and rewarding.

As it uses the most recent mode of delivery, on-line learning, the GTC hopes that more greenkeepers will consider the higher education programmes.

"Employers seem to be willing to invest in training when they see commitment from their staff who have sought to find the most suitable course or qualification to not only benefit their own personal development but also the business," said David.

While the Foundation Degree is only available in England and Wales, Scotland has the tried and tested HNC/D qualification which is also now available through the on-line learning route.

Myerscough College, near Preston, and Elmwood College near, St. Andrew's, are two GTC approved providers who have committed resources to ensure higher education qualifications are accessible to greenkeepers across the globe through the world wide web.

Here, two students and a Head of Curriculum share their experiences of on-line learning.

■ More information about the course is available by e-mailing enquiries@myerscough.ac.uk

"It uses the most recent mode of delivery, on-line learning, the GTC hopes that more greenkeepers will consider the higher education programmes."



John Dempsey

On-line studying proved a lifeline for Course Superintendent John Dempsey, allowing him to develop his career whilst keeping up with work and family commitments.

With greenkeeping very much in the family – John's father-in-law was a greenkeeper and his son is also qualified and working as first assistant on a nearby course – he always aimed to take his study to degree standard.

"Over the past 20 years, I have studied on a number of courses," said John, who has been greenkeeping for 23 years and has been course superintendent of the Curragh Golf Club in Ireland, for 14 years.

"These have been very beneficial and educational but at the end of the day they were basic certification and I always felt the need to delve deeper into the technical details of such an interesting profession as ours," he said.

"The progression to degree standard in sportsturf or turfgrass science was always my aim but unfortunately this was not possible as there were no courses available locally," said John.

The available courses in the UK and then in Dublin did not fit in with John's work and family commitments. "But then I heard about the online degree from Myerscough at a trade seminar and was immediately attracted to the possibility," he said.

"The format suited me perfectly – it allows me to study at home, working around the numerous other commitments I have. All the information I need is delivered on line from the college and all assessment – the numerous assignments and projects – can be carried out at home or in work on the golf course."

John – who is now in year three of his online FdSc Sportsturf Science – said the delivery of the modules is excellent with easy-to-follow but very good technical detail. "And like a normal college, the course tutors are available almost instantly through email

or phone if there are any problems," he said.

"And while the information made available through the college is very good, to progress well you need to fall back on the old fashioned methods of books and publications, all of which are listed within the online booklets.

"So while the delivery of the sessions or lectures is online, there is still a lot of time needed at home for study and project preparation."

One aspect John thought might be lacking online was contact with other students. "On other courses this was an extremely important part, but with the use of discussion boards and email there is still a very good sense of being in a class."

John had started the course himself and paid the first year's subscription.

"But my employers were delighted with the availability of the course and were pleased to pay most of the costs as they could obviously see the long term benefits of this level of education.

"There have been so many benefits already – my understanding of areas such as construction, drainage, nutrition and turfgrass physiology for example has increased dramatically and with it the change of management techniques have already shown improvement on the golf course."

John said it would have been impossible to take part in a degree programme had it not been for online delivery. "There would have been no way I could attend college – even part time – because of the various work and family commitments I have.

"The Myerscough online course suited me perfectly, allowing me to study at home, in my own time, and still achieve the required results."



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Greenkeeper's online study



John Dempsey

Abigail Crosswood

Year one online FdSc Sportsturf student Abigail Crosswood also appreciates the flexibility of this way of studying.

"The online degree fits in quite well around work although my social life has suffered a little bit!" she said.

"I am very pleased with the course so far – I think that all aspects are being covered well and if I have come across anything I have not understood then it has been quite easy and quick to get help from one of the tutors."

"Myerscough has pioneered many courses and training initiatives in sportsturf during its long history," said Team Leader, Sportsturf and Mechanisation, Stewart Brown.

"The online foundation degree is a unique course and is rapidly expanding as demand continues to grow from students within the UK and increasingly for students in the USA and Europe.

"The foundation degree in sportsturf (online) is designed to enable students to achieve a vocational higher education qualification through part-time study away from the host educational establishment, helping to overcome the barriers of access and participation," he said.

Wayne Roberts

Elmwood College in Fife has taken the lead on developing distance learning courses in greenkeeping and horticulture with the introduction of paper based and online learning packages covering the VQ CPD and HNC/D courses in Golf Course Practice and Management.

Head of Curriculum for Greenkeeping and Horticulture, Wayne Roberts, welcomes the development of different learning approaches within the industry.

"The industry is changing and land-based colleges have to embrace the changes to help facilitate learning opportunities for everyone," he said. "Here at Elmwood, we can now support learners throughout Scotland, the UK and internationally.

"There are differences between the English and Scottish systems but both still have the same common objective – a highly skilled and developed workforce within our industries."

Elmwood's HNC/D courses in Golf Course Management not only recognise the cultural practices and skills of greenkeepers but also the achievements and potential to move forward and manage golf course complexes by providing relevant learning packages and embedded units.

Other courses run at Foundation Degree level and BSc in England, complement the science aspects of the industry. "We often support learners from one course to the other, if their careers require it," said Wayne.

He added that distance learning helps to maximise the potential of the learner to build on their significant industry knowledge with supported and graduated learning packages.

"Often, what a distance learning student employed in the industry learns on the Thursday can be put into practice on the Friday," said Wayne. "This produces an industry that has current knowledge supported by up-to-the-minute experience – surely an asset to any organisation!"

Distance learning and online courses may not suit everyone, but as more learners have ICT skills, their approach to this style of delivery is effective and is being adopted more and more.

But learning is only one side of it – support and guidance has to be identified. Here,

the greenkeeping industry and land-based colleges pioneering this approach are identified as national leaders and looked on from other Sector Skills Councils for support.

Peer support and guidance through meetings, email and discussion boards, backed up by learning opportunities at Harrogate and industry seminars, help ensure that learners don't feel that they are on their own and missing out on the classroom experience.

The development of online learning and accessibility to the internet with broadband now ensures that learners here in Scotland – often isolated by distance and geography – can access learning materials and converse with the work-based assessor from the college before the next visit.

But what of the future? Learners don't always want to commit to a full three-year online learning programme.

Elmwood supported by the GTC and BIGGA, have developed a range of online learning programmes that support CPD programmes within the industry. These allow learners, individuals or organisations to take part in courses that are awarded on their own merits but are also recognised as part of the HE programme.

Therefore learners can signpost their achievements and often, after committing to one package at the start, still find that three years later they still have the same commitment, drive and enthusiasm when completing the full course.

These have been successful in engaging individuals and organisations in Europe and after a successful launch in the USA, should help to develop the global arena.

Elmwood has been working with students from Europe, China and many other countries for several years now and have developed a good understanding of the global needs of the industry.

The global classroom for a global industry. Greenkeepers have proved that they are upwardly mobile in their ability to move from one club to the next, one country to another, helping to develop their own experiences and careers. Isn't it nice to know that wherever you are, you can log on, log in and learn.

Greenkeeping gear change

After two decades in the high pressure world of motor sports, welder and fabricator David Jones has changed gear to a career in greenkeeping.

AND 42-YEAR-OLD David is continuing to use his engineering skills while learning new ones in his dream job at Tadmarton Heath Golf Club near Oxford.

"I had wanted to be a greenkeeper for quite some time but had to wait until the time was right in my life," said David, who spent 20 years working with touring car and formula one teams.

"It was a very volatile industry which revolved around sponsorship and other people's money and I had been made redundant several times. I also had a seven year old daughter and I wanted to spend more time with her and not work weekends and all the hours God sends."

However, David is fully aware that greenkeeping is far from a 9-5 job!

Having made the decision to change careers – and with the support of his wife Jayne, an NHS ward manager – David's next steps were to try and get a job.

"This was quite difficult as my CV was very motor orientated but then someone suggested that I go to college and get some qualifications," he said.

David went to Moreton Morrell College where he gained the pesticide application PA1 and PA6 certificates.

"Eventually I was offered a job at Brailes golf course in June last year," he said.

"The club registered me with the Warwickshire College on the NVQ Level 2 sports turf qualification and I was then contacted by Tadmarton Golf Club asking me if I was still interested in working there."

As that had been somewhere David wanted to work initially, he jumped at the chance. "It is a private golf club and is very supportive of staff training and health and safety," said David. "It is over 80 years old so has some history and is also closer to home for me."

Tadmarton encouraged David to carry on working towards his NVQ and the college



David Jones

"He's a brave man to have changed careers like he has but it just shows that, in greenkeeping, it doesn't matter what age you are!"

recognised his commitment and awarded him the Derek Sharman trophy in the process. "To get this trophy at 42 years of age was quite an achievement," he said.

Now happily working at Tadmarton, David said: "I love the job – it's absolutely fantastic. I like working outside, the hours are good and I enjoy a much better quality of life."

A normal working day is from 7am until 3pm and David is able to pick up his daughter Emma from school every day.

"A lot of fathers aren't able to do that so I feel very lucky," he said.

"And I don't mind getting up early so the hours suit me really well."

"Being a greenkeeper means I can work outside and also use my engineering skills. Really, I am "engineering" the right grasses to grow and I am involved in all aspects of the maintenance including of course, the machinery!

"I also use my welding and fabrication experience in repairing machinery – I am using all my old skills while

continuing to learn new ones."

David is supported by course manager, Brian Owen. "I'm sure he thinks I am a pain as I am always asking questions," he said. "He's a very knowledgeable course manager but if he doesn't know the answer he will always find out."

Hoping to register with the college on the NVQ Level 3 sports turf, David found support from the college combined with work experience an interesting and a very flexible way to learn.

"Andy Turnbull, the turf tutor at the Warwickshire College, was very helpful – the avenues are all there if you want to learn," he said. "Doing a job while learning at the same time is great and I am very lucky to have the support to do this."

Working alongside and learning from colleagues is a key way of gaining new skills, according to David's course manager Brian Owen. "David is very good and his enthusiasm is excellent," said Brian, who has been in the industry for 32 years.