THE R&A GREENKEEPING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME
foreword

The R&A invests proceeds generated by The Open Championship into global golf development projects. Alongside our efforts to grow participation in the sport, we are also increasingly turning our attention towards the provision of affordable facilities on which to play. The current climate of growing economic and environmental challenges demands that golf courses be developed and managed in a sustainable manner. For this to happen, the industry needs well qualified greenkeepers which, in turn, is dependent on continued investment in education and training. The R&A has operated its Greenkeeping Scholarship Programme since 2004, during which time we have supported over 180 scholars from 20 different countries. We continue to be both impressed and delighted with the calibre of individuals coming through the programme and, furthermore, we believe that the standard of employment being secured by R&A greenkeeping scholars is testament to the value of our ongoing support.

Peter Dawson
Chief Executive, The R&A
THE R&A GREENKEEPING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2004 TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PROFESSIONAL TURF MANAGEMENT QUALIFICATIONS.

Through close co-operation with selected educational establishments and via a rigorous selection process, The R&A has been able to continually identify the most deserving students to receive scholarships each year.

Beyond the direct financial assistance which is available to appointed scholars, candidates also gain access to a number of exclusive networking and continuing professional development opportunities which further enhance industry exposure and employability.

Since the programme’s inception, 182 scholars from 20 different countries have been supported, equating to an investment by The R&A of over £0.6 million.
Receiving an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship helped enormously with the cost of studying overseas and also provided tremendous opportunities for professional networking.

Upon deciding on a career in turf management, I moved from South Africa to Scotland in 2009 and enrolled in a course at Elmwood College. Receiving an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship early into my programme of study helped enormously with the cost of studying overseas and also provided tremendous opportunities for professional networking.

I made the decision to return to South Africa in 2011 and was appointed as the Assistant Greenkeeper at the Gary Player Country Club in Sun City, a role in which I helped with the preparation for the Nedbank Golf Challenge in both 2011 and 2012.

I was subsequently appointed as Course Manager of the Lost City Golf Course, at the end of 2012. During this time, I have been delighted to continue my education, and my R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship, through the online Foundation Degree in Sportsturf at Myerscough College, England. I was thrilled to recently return to The Gary Player Country Club, taking up the position of Golf Course Superintendent.

The opportunity given to me by The R&A over the past 4 years has really meant a lot, enabling me to network globally with specialists in the industry while also helping me to successfully secure my current position at one of South Africa’s best golf courses. Being an R&A greenkeeping scholar has made it possible for me to live my dream of becoming a well-known golf turf specialist in South Africa.”
"I wouldn’t be in this position without the The R&A."

"Before beginning to study for a qualification in golf course management, the college told me about the The R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship Programme and I applied immediately. As I only had about 6 months experience in turf management at the time, I didn’t think I stood a chance. Being successfully selected just went to show that the programme really is open to anyone and that there are no barriers if you are motivated to achieve. I now work for the Golf Environment Organization, helping clubs all over the world bring sustainability to their daily management and become recognised as positive environmental and community assets. I wouldn’t be in this position without the help of The R&A."

CURRENT POSITION: SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER, GOLF ENVIRONMENT ORGANIZATION, SCOTLAND

"The opportunities and networking available from being an R&A scholar and the confidence this instils is completely invaluable. It’s something you can lean on for the rest of your career and wherever you may end up in the world there will probably be another R&A scholar somewhere close by."

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WHAT DOES A GREENKEEPING SCHOLARSHIP OFFER?

Upon successfully being awarded with an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship, candidates become eligible to receive a number of unique benefits including:

- A direct financial contribution towards education fees
- The chance to take part in a special study visit to Askernish Golf Club on the Isle of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland
- The opportunity to assist the greenkeeping team in the run up to, and during, The Open Championship
- A behind the scenes tour on-site at The Open Championship
- The opportunity to assist the greenkeeping teams at various European Tour events
- An annual professional networking event at BTME Harrogate
- Access to dedicated digital communications platforms shared by current and past R&A greenkeeping scholars around the globe
Quite unlike anything I’ve ever experienced before!

ASKERNISH STUDY VISIT

Each year a group of R&A Greenkeeping Scholars are selected to take part in a week-long study visit to Askernish where industry experts lead focus sessions on greenkeeping, course architecture and environmental management.

Located on the south west coast of the Isle of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, and originally designed by Old Tom Morris in 1891, Askernish golf course has a past steeped in history and tradition. Situated within one of Europe’s rarest and most sensitive types of natural habitat known as ‘machair’, the golf course is a living example of how golf and the environment can exist in harmony with one another.

As a unique opportunity to experience golf course management in its purest and original form, many past scholars have noted how influential the visit has been on shaping their own attitudes and ideas about their work.
The support from The R&A was crucial in allowing me to continue my studies.

In 2002 I spent a week during the summer helping the greenkeeping staff at my local golf course and by the end of it I was hooked! A few weeks later I was a full-time member of the greenstaff about to start an NVQ Level 2 at Myerscough College. I subsequently enrolled on the online Foundation Degree and after three years achieved a BSc Honours Degree in turfgrass science.

I was very fortunate to gain an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship in 2006 and the support which this provided was crucial in allowing me to continue my studies. On becoming a full-time student I had every intention of returning to greenkeeping but I remained in education as a college lecturer at Myerscough College.

My role within Myerscough College has developed over the last 7 years and I am now an Assistant Head for a range of Level 3 courses including SportsTurf. I am also Course Tutor for the three years of the online SportsTurf Foundation Degree.

Without a doubt if I hadn’t pursued my education within SportsTurf I wouldn’t be working where I am today, having a positive influence on the potential career of young men and women. I owe a big thank you to The R&A for its support and guidance and the opportunities provided to me throughout my time as an R&A scholar.
I received an R&A scholarship for my BSc, which helped me to focus completely on my studies without some of the external pressures faced by other students.

“I left school at 16 with very little focus on what I wanted out of a career. I took the National Diploma at Myrescough College, more out of love for cricket and golf rather than a passion for turf, and enjoyed work placements in Ireland and Cambridge. This led me on to the Foundation Degree course at Myrescough College, where a subsequent placement took me to work in America through The Ohio Programme. There I spent 14 months working on a golf course and 4 months studying at The Ohio State University, a role which has already given me a wide variety of experiences including working on pitch delivery for Euro 2012, assisting with preparation for The Open Championship and establishing and maintaining a cross country equestrian track for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The scholarship network continues to be of benefit.”
AS GOLF’S OLDEST MAJOR, THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP IS THE R&A’S FLAGSHIP EVENT WHICH draws THE BEST PLAYERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO COMPETE FOR GOLF’S MOST COVETED PRIZE: THE CLARET JUG.

Watched by millions of fans around the world and recognised as the truest test of links golf, the courses which host the Championship are always prepared and presented by adhering rigorously to the principles of best practice management. This is made possible through the continued commitment and professionalism of the greenkeeping team at each year’s Open venue.

A small group of R&A greenkeeping scholars are provided with the unique opportunity to work with the greenkeeping team in both the run up to and throughout the Championship, in what many have called a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Many past scholars have also subsequently noted the interest from employers that has been generated from having this involvement with The Open Championship on their CV.

“A true once-in-a-lifetime experience.”
THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH THE EUROPEAN TOUR, A SELECT NUMBER OF R&A GREENKEEPING SCHOLARS ARE ALSO OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AT VARIOUS EVENTS, INCLUDING:

- The BMW PGA Championship, Wentworth Club, England
- The Alstom Open de France, Le Golf National, Paris, France
- The Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Open, Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, Scotland
- The Seniors Open, Royal Porthcawl, Porthcawl, Wales
- The KLM Open, Kennemer G&CC, Zandvoort, The Netherlands

With the greenkeeping industry increasingly expanding across a global market, past scholars have emphasised the enormous value that can be derived from gaining work experience overseas. Being able to combine foreign travel with some of the highest profile events in the competition calendar adds further excitement to the opportunities available to scholars.
The support given by The R&A has enabled me to gain invaluable international experience which I fall back on almost every day at work.

“...I decided to start an education in greenkeeping at Elmwood College after having achieved a degree in landscape architecture at the University of Munich. Initially I intended to only do the NC but I was inspired by the subject material and continued studying to HND level. During my three years at college, I had the opportunity to work on golf courses in both Canada and Scotland which really gave me an international insight into the industry. After completing my formal college education, I went back to work as a greenkeeper in Switzerland before finally returning to Germany where I am now the Assistant Greenkeeper at Golfclub Olichting, Munich.

I was delighted when I was selected to receive an R&A scholarship because I knew it would help not only with the costs of studying abroad but would also provide great opportunities through global networking. The support given by The R&A has enabled me to gain invaluable international experience which I fall back on almost every day at work.”
AS THE GLOBAL GOVERNING BODY FOR GOLF OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO, THE R&A IS AN ORGANISATION WHICH HOLDS A VERY SPECIAL POSITION IN THE GAME, BEING ABLE TO TRACE BACK OVER 250 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS HISTORY.

Being awarded an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship is a special privilege which marks the recipient as an ambassador of The R&A and an exemplar of what the scholarship programme represents. The selection process for the programme is rigorous and is targeted at identifying those students with a strong commitment to academic excellence. This must be coupled with a passion for learning and a desire to develop both personally and professionally through the opportunities which being a scholar provides.

As the golf course management industry faces growing global challenges, being able to identify and support the next generation of greenkeeping professionals who have both the capability and enthusiasm to drive positive future change remains a priority for The R&A.
The Selection Process for the Programme takes place annually, consisting of a staggered process of application, interview and candidate feedback. The decision to award a scholarship is based on a number of criteria including:

- Academic performance
- Career aspirations
- Extra-curricular industry involvement
- Individual situation
- Tutor recommendation and support

There are various levels of support available depending upon individual circumstances. To enquire about your eligibility to apply for an R&A Greenkeeping Scholarship, please contact gkscholars@randa.org.