

Why a modular approach might suit you...

Horticultural courses in the Teagasc College at the National Botanic Gardens Dublin

John Mulhern
College Principal

This year, we have seen a significant upsurge in demand for part-time courses in horticulture. Let me clarify what I mean by a full-time course and a part-time course – a full-time course is where a student attends a course completing all the modules and therefore attends full time. A part-time course is where a student elects to complete one or two modules within a course and therefore attends part time.

Currently, we have 50 students attending our full-time FETAC Level 5 and 6, while 110 students are completing part-time Level 5 and 6. This is a trend that is also evident in other institutions and other countries.

People are electing to do specific modules with us because they are working in that particular area or would like to in the future. A good example of this is where part-time students are completing two modules with us at Level 5 every Friday, namely fruit and veg production and plant protection. Both of these modules are popular with part-time applicants because they are complementary. They run every Friday for the full day through the academic year.

In the fruit and veg module, the learning involves explaining key factors affecting fruit and vegetable production, pollination, fruit and vegetable nutrition, common problems of fruit and vegetables and controls and also the range of skills involved in the production cycle.

In plant protection, the learning includes describing the characteristics of common plant pests and disease-causing agents, reviewing the effects, reproduction, spread and control of weeds, describing the range, formulations and uses of pesticides in horticulture, identifying a range of horticultural pests and diseases, pest and disease control measures and legislative control practices and, finally,



applying pesticides with a knapsack sprayer.

This module also covers the students' requirements for the sustainable use directive (SUD).

Direct entry into Level 5 is facilitated through a simple application process direct to the college. The full list of courses in the college is as follows:

Major awards list

- Level 5 Certificate in Horticulture
- Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture Sports turf
- Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture Nursery stock
- Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture Food Production
- Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Horticulture Landscape Design and Construction
- Level 7 WIT Degree in Horticulture

Minor awards (component module) list

- Level 5 Plant ID and Use
- Level 5 Fruit and Vegetable Production
- Level 5 Plant Propagation
- Level 5 Landscape Construction and Maintenance
- Level 5 Plant Protection
- Level 5 Hort Mechanisation
- Level 6 Sports turf Science and Maintenance
- Level 6 Nursery Stock Production
- Level 6 Food Production
- Level 6 Landscape Design and Construction
- Level 6 Ecology and the Environment
- Level 6 Tree and Shrub Management
- Level 6 Garden Centre Operations

So, depending on your interest, we can provide you with a wide variety of choices in either full-time or part-time mode.

Level 6 courses are geared towards people who are working in a specific

sector. Take sports turf science and maintenance as an example. This module runs over the winter months of November to March on one to two days per week, depending on site visits.

Staff from golf courses and other turf grass facilities are participating in this part-time module because it suits them time-wise. These are people who are refreshing their knowledge and upskilling themselves in the more technical areas of sports turf management.

For specific entry into a Level 6 module, we look for at least three years' employment in the relevant sector, an interview and a letter from the current employer. If a person has completed a full-time Level 5 in horticulture, they may be admitted to this route also.

Lots of people are working in the horticulture sector, but may not have recognised qualifications. We all need continuous learning to make us better as individuals and more efficient employees. All staff need knowledge to be refreshed from time to time and this is equally as important in the horticulture sector as anywhere else.

Now there is a model for getting this done in a way that gives a validated qualification. All interested members of the public should contact the college directly to enquire more about the different courses. Our next open day is on 9 March 2017.

Contact: John Mulhern, Principal, Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, D09 VY63. Office phone: 01-804 0205. Mobile phone: 087-961 3860. Email: john.mulhern@teagasc.ie. Website: www.teagasc.ie; www.facebook.com/teagascchortcollegeNBG; www.twitter.com/TeagascHortNBG