

GBCSA launches new online learning system

The Green Building Council South Africa (GBCSA) has announced the launch of a new online learning system which will play host to a number of new programmes and upgraded existing courses to increase the availability and delivery of necessary green building education in South Africa.



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The GBCSA will also be doing an online re-launch of a number of their existing courses which have been upgraded, reworked and repackaged, one of which is the Green Star SA Accredited Professional Programme for New Buildings. This AP Programme is the Council's core educational offering and teaches the background, theory and detail of the application of the Green Star SA Design and As Built rating system for new buildings and major refurbishments.

Updated courses

Other courses to be launched online include two more specialised programmes, namely the upgraded Project Certification Workshop and the Simulations and the Submissions Course. "Apart from updates and major upgrades to the course material, the major change is the shift away from the presentation of the courses as 'live' hosted, single day courses presented for 50 delegates at a time in the three major urban centres in South Africa to an accredited professional syllabus or set of parts that together make up the GSSA Accredited Professional Programme for New Buildings," explains Donne Putter, Education and Training manager for the GBCSA.

"This new AP programme will be made up of a comprehensive, in-depth course hosted online in 13 distinct modules that cover the theory aspects of the tool followed by a live, in-person interactive workshop hosted in an actual Green Star SA building, where learners are able to experience the building, interact with their peers and apply their learning from the first part of the course. This would then be followed by an online exam, as is currently offered, to attain the GSSA AP qualification."

Quality engagement

Putter says that the decision to offer online training in combination with face to face classroom style learning was taken as teaching time can be moved online and done independently by attendees, and face to face time can be used for quality engagement and learning with experts and faculty members.

"The online format allows us to test competencies ensuring a higher level of understanding of the material presented. Reduced travel time for participants and our lecturers are also benefits - this has a positive effect on all of our carbon footprints - and we are now also able to reach participants in all geographical locations of South Africa. This is just the tip of the iceberg, we believe the possibilities are endless," Putter continues.

In addition to the re-launch of the existing courses, including the AP programme mentioned above, the GBCSA will also be launching the brand new Accredited Professional Programme for the Interiors Tool and the Accredited Professional Programme for the Existing Building Performance Tool. These are offered in parallel with the pre-existing qualification and teach the application of two new Green Star SA tools, one for Interiors and one for Existing Buildings Performance.

Additional qualifications

According to Putter these programmes will consist of three parts; online courses followed by in person workshops and finally an online exam, and will offer learners the opportunity to attain two additional AP qualifications. "In July 2014, we will launch the live components of the two new AP programmes as well as a new course for green communities."

In addition to the new online courses offerings the GBCSA will also be offering two new "in person" courses, one which introduces Green Star for Contractors and another which explains the drawing up of a green lease between tenant and landlord.

Impact of rating system

The half day Green Star for Contractors course was developed for the GBCSA by Saint Gobain in response to, and recognition of, the need for contractors to better understand the impact of the application of the Green Star SA rating system on their construction projects. The course covers all the key areas of the tool that would impact on tenders and subsequently site management of a project aiming for a rating and empowers contractors to play a key role in obtaining the highest possible rating on time and within budget.

The Economics of Green Building course will continue to be offered as a live in person programme. This course sets out to demonstrate the financial motivation for green building and explores the discussions and debate around the perceived costs of green building. It covers the benefits and obligations of property stakeholders, as well as the property value proposition and the financial case for green building.

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