BCS School Curriculum and Assessment Committee: Terms of Reference

Responsible Body	Academy of Computing Board
Version Number	3.0
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Summary Of Revisions Made	Version	Date
Initial version	V1.0	8 May 2018
Removal of reference to interim chairing arrangements during the establishment of the Committee	V2.0	13 November 2019
Addition of working group establishment to include membership from within and outside of the committee membership (paragraphs 10/17)	V3.0	5 May 2021

Committee Purpose

1. The BCS Royal Charter states a core purpose of BCS is to 'establish and maintain appropriate standards of education and experience for persons engaged in the profession of Computing or entering upon courses of study in Computing and allied subjects; and to undertake, supervise or encourage the education and training in all matters relevant to the advancement of Computing.' The Royal Charter positions BCS with a mandate to consider all matters relevant to the advancement of computing education in schools.

2. As part of fulfilling this purpose BCS is establishing a School Curriculum and Assessment Committee to bring together a broad and inclusive range of expert stakeholders from across schools, universities, teacher organisations, industry, government, learned societies, professional bodies, and any other relevant organisations to provide authoritative, independent, evidence based guidance and advice on the content, qualifications, pedagogy, and assessment methods for computing education in schools.

3. The committee will provide advice and guidance with the explicit aim of advancing the subject discipline of computing, being composed of computer science, digital literacy and information technology, for all four countries of the UK and concerning students in primary or secondary education.

4. The committee will seek out, reflect on and share good practice in computing education.

5. The committee will publish regular Computing Education reports.

Role of the committee

6. The committee will keep the computing curriculum and its teaching, assessment and qualifications under review at all stages of school education.

7. The committee will ensure any recommendations they consider making are informed by wide ranging consultations across all relevant stakeholder communities, including but not limited to school leaders, classroom practitioners, awarding organisations, other professional bodies, The committee will proactively engage with the relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to teachers, university academics, industry practitioners, employers and policy makers, to ensure the committee is aware in a timely fashion of concerns and issues that may be developing that could have little impact or even adversely affect the quality of computing education in schools.

8. The committee will gather and synthesise evidence and expert opinion in order to produce advice and guidance on issues including, but not limited to,
    a. the subject content as set out in the various UK National Curricula and the extent to which they set out the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed for life, further study and employment
    b. the range, quality, and fitness for purpose of the qualifications in computing available to school children, including GCSEs, Technical Awards, and A levels, and the extent to which they meet the diverse needs of different groups of students, including the needs of girls and students from poorer backgrounds and ethnic minorities
    c. effective ways of assessing students' computing knowledge, skills and understanding and their use in qualifications
    d. teachers' confidence and competence to teach the computing curriculum, including identifying needs for CPD and support.

9. Ideally, the committee will have as Chair a nationally renowned figure, who will command the respect of the computing community, teachers, employers in general, policy makers across all four UK nations, learned societies, professional bodies and the wider public.

10. Establish working groups when appropriate to address specific topics of relevance to the committee. A working group should be dissolved once its work has been completed or it reaches the end of its fixed lifetime.

Membership

11. Members of the committee will be appointed based on their personal expertise and experience, and their commitment to advance computing. While they may have been nominated by an organisation they are not representative of the interests of that organisation.

12. The committee will normally be made up of approximately twenty unpaid members whose term will be 2, 3 or 4 years, which may be extended subject to the agreement of the chair of the committee for a further term of three years.

13. Constituencies within the committee
    a. A significant number of members should normally be drawn from schools and FE colleges: preferably including classroom teachers from primary schools, secondary schools, FE lecturers and headteachers.
    b. A number of members should be university academics, including from subject disciplines other than computing but where computing is essential to the advancement of that subject.
    c. There should be a range of members from a variety of employers: preferably including from a large IT company, a member who has a senior IT role in a company that is a major user of IT, and a member from a small company.

d. There should also be members drawn from organisations working with schools, such as from awarding bodies, CPD providers, and educational research bodies

14. The committee membership as a whole should include members from all 4 UK countries and will seek to reflect the diversity in the wider population.

15. The committee will invite observers as regular attendees from the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and the Institution for Engineering and Technology.

16. Observers from Ofqual, Ofsted and the DfE and their equivalents in the devolved nations will be invited to attend relevant meetings at the chair's discretion.

17. Working groups members may be committee members and/or co-opted from outside of the committee.

Accountability

18. The committee will report to the BCS Academy Board, which will commission the committee's work, which may in turn be in response to advice provided by the committee to the BCS Academy Board.

Meetings

19. Three meetings will be held each year at the BCS Offices in London. A meeting quorum will be a quarter of the membership of the committee. In addition, committee members may be consulted through ad hoc online meetings and discussions. All reasonable expenses incurred by members of the committee will be paid by BCS in line with BCS policy on expenses.

20. Meetings will be serviced by BCS staff, who will prepare and circulate papers and minutes and maintain records of the committee's work. Confidential material will be clearly marked and committee members will be required to agree to rules of confidentiality upon joining the committee.

21. Members of the committee must adhere to the BCS Code of Conduct.

Review, Amendment, Modification or Variation

22. The committee will review its ways of working annually and this Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation with the committee. The Terms of Reference are only valid once ratified by the BCS Academy of Computing Board, or by the BCS Board of Trustees.

Background

23. In its November 2017 report[1] 'After the reboot: computing education in UK schools', the Royal Society recommended that 'the learned societies in computing should establish a curriculum committee, to provide government with ongoing advice on the content, qualifications, pedagogy, and assessment methods for computing.'

24. The Computing At School group (CAS) has become the main UK grassroots organisation supporting teachers of computing through a community of practice. CAS however is not a legal entity, and as the partner organisation with a legal identity BCS has a responsibility to support the aims of CAS through it's governance structure.

25. A range of stakeholders, including policy makers, national academies, awarding bodies, and schools, amongst others, have expressed their general support for the establishment of an independent, inclusive, authoritative school curriculum review

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[1] https://royalsociety.org/~/media/policy/projects/computing-education/computing-education-report.pdf

committee hosted by BCS that speaks on behalf of the subject and for the benefit of the public, not to further the interests of any particular organisation or sector.

26. The 2017 Royal Society report made it very clear the subject of computing in schools is in a highly fragile state, and that it is urgent we all work collaboratively if computing is to succeed over the long term.

27. The committee is being established in light of this background as part of BCS's work to ensure all school students get the best computing education possible.

28. BCS have based the governance of the committee on current exemplar practice in other subject disciplines including IoP, RSC and RSB.