BCS: Northern Ireland Computing Education Committee

Minutes of meeting of the BCS: Northern Ireland Computing Education Committee held on **28th September 2022** at 3.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT

Irene Bell, Sam Dempster (SD), Andrew Douglas (AD), Ruth Foster, Tim Gamble, Michael Gould (MG), Philip Hanna (Vice-Chair), Ian McChesney (Chair, IM), Grainne McGowan, Gareth O'Hare (GO), Roisin Rice, Rachel Steenson (RS), Gerry Trainor, Jonathan Wallace, Nicola Ward, Graeme Wilkinson.

1. **APOLOGIES**

   Donna Bennett, Michaela Black (MB), Eamonn Brankin, Bill Connor, Pamela Cowan, Jonathan Heggarty, Alastair Irons, Anthony McCourt, Michael McEnery, Colin Turner.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (15th June 2022)**

   The minutes of the previous meeting (previously circulated) were approved.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

   3.1 Action: To consider publicity opportunities highlighting work of committee (RS, MB, IM). Ongoing, to be considered at the next meeting of each of the working groups. (Action: RS, MB, IM).

   3.2 Action: Assemble a set of key messages and hastags for use in promotion of the "Computer science can take you anywhere" video (RS). Completed.

   3.3 Action: Use promotional video as part of Sentinus/BringITOn workshop programme September-December 2022 (BC). Ongoing.

   The committee also noted on the ongoing Sentinus programmes for the primary (https://www.sentinus.co.uk/programmes/digital-skills-for-primary/) and post-primary sector (https://www.sentinus.co.uk/programmes/digital-makers/).

   3.4 Action: Update committee on outcomes of the Code Show NI initiative (GO). As reported under item 5 below.

4. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

   4.1 The BCS NCCE (National Centre for Computing Education) contract is nearing its end, extended to March 2023. BCS has submitted a bid for NCCE2.

4.2 Engagement numbers for the Computing Quality Framework continue to grow, with 1356 schools registered. 27 schools now hold the Computing Quality Mark, recognizing excellence in computing curriculum delivery. https://computingqualityframework.org

4.3 Barefoot – nationally, school engagement with Barefoot continues to strengthen. Resource download activity is 11.5% higher compared to last year.

4.4 A USA initiative CEOs for Computer Science, led by code.org – is lobbying State education authorities to update the K-12 curriculum, for every student in every school to have the opportunity to learn computer science. https://www.ceosforcs.com

The committee noted that the recently formed Software Alliance NI is lobbying the Department of Education for computing to be considered as an area of learning and that a departmental task group has been established to review the computing curriculum.

4.5 The UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) was outlined, with reference to possible scheme intervention in areas such as digital inclusion and promotion of STEM subjects for women/girls. It was noted that Queen's University Belfast and Ulster are coordinating a bid to the UKSPF NI programme.

5. CODE SHOW NI

GO reported and showed a presentational video on the fortnight of Code Show NI activities from 5th-16th September, sponsored by Allstate NI. Using computing artefacts from the 70s and 80s onwards and related hands-on activities to stimulate young people about the computing industry (https://thecodeshow.info), Code Show NI visited ten schools across four counties. It was experienced by approximately 5000 students. As evidenced from the presentation and pupil interviews, the programme of events was a great success and the committee congratulated Gareth on the achievement.

6. ENTRIES FOR DIGITAL QUALIFICATIONS – CCEA

6.1 AD reported findings from a June 2022 survey of Schools looking at topics such as coverage of Key Stage 3 computing and number of teachers who can teach programming. Compared to the previous survey in 2017, there were positive trends in the extent of digital technology education at Key Stage 3.

6.2 The number of candidates entered in 2022 for computing-related GCSE and GCE qualifications was reported. Overall, the decline in enrolments from 2019 was now levelling off, with an encouraging upturn in some qualifications. Unfortunately, the percentage of females entered on GCSE Digital Technology had declined from 2019.

7. UPDATES FROM WORKING GROUPS

7.1 WG1 - Barriers To Uptake Of Computing In Schools

RS reported that, during June/July, the number of channels and social-media accounts disseminating the "Computer Science can take you anywhere" video was disappointing. It was noted that now (September/October) is a good opportunity within the school year to distribute/redistribute the video.

It was AGREED that:

(a) all committee members and their respective organizations, where possible, disseminate the video (Action: All).

(b) RS and SD meet to consider dissemination of the video via c2k (Action: RS, SD).

7.2 WG2 - The Student Voice In Computing Education

IM reported on the current round of meetings of the Young Persons' Advisory Group (YPAG). The group is preparing questions for a survey to investigate attitudes of post-primary pupils in Northern Ireland to computing education and careers. YPAG met on 14th September. At that meeting the working group outlined a conceptual framework for the survey and invited YPAG members to suggests possible questions in advance of the next YPAG Meeting on 5th October 2022. The intention is to distribute the survey before the Christmas holidays.

It was AGREED that the survey would be submitted for approval to an Ulster University ethics committee before distribution (Action: MB, IM).

IM remined the committee that a small budget of £540 had been provided by BCS to facilitate an honorarium for YPAG members. It was AGREED that this would take the form of a £45 eVoucher for each YPAG member, to be issued at the end of the current school year (Action: MB, IM).

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MG reported that the NI Software Alliance is now set up as a legal entity and is currently recruiting member companies and associate members. One aspect of the Software Alliance's activity will be to coordinate and converge computing career attractiveness messaging to schools and the public.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was AGREED the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14th December 2022 at 3.30pm via MS Teams.

Actions:

3.1	Publicity opportunities to be considered at the next meeting of each of the working groups.	RS, MB, IM
7.1(a)	All committee members and their respective organizations, where possible, distribute or redistribute the video.	All
7.1(b)	Meeting to consider dissemination of the video via c2k.	RS, SD
7.2	Survey would be submitted for approval to an Ulster University ethics committee before distribution.	MB, IM
7.2	Issue eVouhcer to YPAG members at the end of the current school year.	MB, IM