

BCS: Northern Ireland Computing Education Committee

Minutes of meeting of the BCS: Northern Ireland Computing Education Committee held on **15th December 2021** at 3.30pm via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT

Michaela Black (MB), Eammon Brankin, Bill Connor, Andrew Douglas, Michael Gould, Tom Gray (TG), Philip Hanna (PH, Vice-Chair), Jonathan Heggarty, Siobhan Lyons (SL), Ian McChesney (IM, Chair), Anthony McCourt, Michael McEnery (MM), Grainne McGowan, Roisin Rice, Ian Somerville, Rachel Steenson (RS), Colin Turner, Jonathan Wallace, Nicola Ward, Graeme Wilkinson. In attendance: Julia Adamson (JA).

1. APOLOGIES

Irene Bell, David Cunningham, Ruth Foster, Alastair Irons (AI), Paul Moorhead.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (3rd September 2021)

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

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 From previous minutes, item 4 – take steps to improve the diversity of the committee. IM welcomed new members to this meeting and the committee noted the outstanding invitations awaiting reply. (Action: IM).

3.2 From previous minutes, item 7, IM and PH established the working groups.

3.3 From previous minutes, item 8, the Informatics For All consultation document was circulated to members of the committee and comments forwarded to AI.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

4.1 IM attended a meeting with members of the national School Curriculum and Assessment Committee, the Scottish Computing Education Committee and the proposed Welsh committee to advise on best practice for the Wales committee terms of reference and membership.

5. SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE – UPDATE

Julia Adamson, BCS Director of Education gave an overview of the work of the BCS Academy's School Curriculum and Assessment Committee (SCAC) and related initiatives. This included the Computing at School initiative and recent Barefoot developments in Northern Ireland.

Members of the committee were reminded of the SCAC Landscape Review document recently circulated and were invited to feedback any errors or omissions via the Chair as soon as possible.

The committee noted the work undertaken to map National Centre for Computing Education teacher resources to the Scottish curriculum and JA offered to make this mapping available. (Action: JA).

6. UPDATES FROM WORKING GROUPS

6.1 WG1 (Paper 2021-12-15-WG1)

The WG1 remit was to explore barriers to the uptake of computing in schools. RS updated the committee on key findings from existing data sources and a high level plan to tackle barriers.

Actions proposed were:

- to conduct a teacher survey with a focus on how to help teachers in teaching IT in NI.
- to scope a central hub of IT teaching resources.
- to develop a parent focused social media campaign to highlight computing career options for their children.

6.2 WG2 (Paper 2021-12-15-WG2)

The WG2 remit was to explore the student voice in computing education in NI. MB updated the committee on key findings from existing data sources and options for addressing these.

Actions proposed were:

- to establish a Young Persons' Ambassador Group (YPAG) to act in an advisory role to WG2 and this committee. (This is based on a model shared by the Scottish Computing Education Committee).
- to engage the YPAG to identify key issues for exploration, to design associated data gathering and to formulate recommendations.

As per the above paper, a draft letter of invitation to the YPAG and selection criteria were presented and members invited to submit any comments to the Chair by 20/12/21.

7. WORKING GROUPS – NEXT STEPS

Following the WG updates a series of questions and further discussion followed.

Key points included:

- the need to hear the teacher voice on what initiatives and resource types are

of most value to them.

- recognition that a number of actions required are long-term in nature and the value of distinguishing these from short-term “quick wins”.
- the value of (a) a parent-focused social media marketing campaign to help address the decline in numbers taking computing in school and (b) a young person focused film/video-based marketing resource focusing on career attractiveness.
- the role of the Scottish Digital Technology Education Charter and the value of a similar model for Northern Ireland.
- the potential role of CCEA in developing a central hub of IT teaching resource.
- the lack of investment in computing education across the primary sector and the impact this has on early pupil perception of the computing subject. The value of Barefoot, Digital Schoolhouse and the Sentinus primary sector programmes was also highlighted.

It was AGREED:

- 7.1 that WG1 should develop short-term proposals for taking forward a marketing campaign reflecting the above discussion. WG1 to liaise with TG to explore resourcing for a marketing campaign, including a library of short films to promote career attractiveness (Action: RS, TG).
- 7.2 that WG1 should progress the notion of a central hub of IT teaching resource including options for funding a mapping activity of NCCE resources to the NI curriculum in conjunction with CCEA (Action: RS, MM).
- 7.3 that WG2 progress and constitute the YPAG early 2022 (Action: MB).
- 7.4 that the next meeting of this committee be held sooner rather than later to focus on long term issues as discussed at this and the previous meeting, including a focus on relevant recommendations from the Software Skills For A 10X Economy report.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 BringITOn Student Survey – SL presented key points from the Career Attractiveness Project – Student Survey Findings ([available on Basecamp](#)). The survey received 845 responses and identified a number of key issues regarding student perception of computing in schools.

It was noted that results confirmed findings from the CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Report and this too would be made available to the committee (Action: MM).

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Mid February, to be confirmed, subject to school half-term dates.

Actions:

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| 3.1 | To follow up outstanding invitations to committee. | IM |
| 5 | To provide copy of the NCCE–Scottish curriculum mapping document. | JA |
| 7.1 | WG1 to develop short-term proposals for taking forward a marketing campaign. | RS,
TG |
| 7.2 | WG1 to progress the funding of a mapping activity of NCCE resources to NI curriculum. | RS,
MM |
| 7.3 | WG2 to progress and constitute the YPAG. | MB |
| 8.1 | To provide a copy of the CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Report. | MM |