BCS Schools and Colleges Committee: Terms of Reference

Responsible Body	Academy of Computing Board
Version Number	4.3
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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
Change of name to Schools and Colleges Committee. Connection to Computing Education Stakeholder Panels. Inclusion of FE colleges.	V4.1	31 August 2023
Minor amendments	V4.2	19 Feb 2024
Addition to item 14	V4.3	24 June 2024

Committee Purpose

1. The BCS Royal Charter states that 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 has established a Schools and Colleges Committee to bring together the views of a broad and inclusive range of expert stakeholders from across the UK encompassing schools and FE colleges, and other relevant organisations to provide authoritative, independent, evidence-based guidance and advice to BCS on the content, qualifications, pedagogy, and assessment methods for computing education in schools and colleges.

3. The committee will provide advice and guidance to BCS, with the explicit aim of advancing the subject discipline of computing in all four countries of the UK and concerning students in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

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

5. BCS will publish regular computing education insights and reports, on which the committee will be consulted.

Role of the committee

6. The committee will keep the UK computing curricula and associated teaching, assessment and qualifications under review at all stages of school and college education.

7. The committee will ensure any recommendations it considers making to BCS 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.

8. The committee will proactively engage with relevant stakeholders and seek input and advice from four nation-specific computing education stakeholder panels and direct inputs from a wide range of sources 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 adversely affect the quality of computing education in schools.

9. 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 provide a basis for schools and colleges to develop teaching programmes that develop 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 children and young people, and the extent to which they meet the diverse needs of different groups of students, including the needs of girls and students from lower income backgrounds and ethnic minorities
   c. the latest evidence-based pedagogy for teaching computing
   d. effective ways of assessing students' computing knowledge, skills and understanding and their use in qualifications
   e. teachers' and lecturers' confidence and competence to teach computing curricular, including identifying needs for CPD and support.
   f. the supply of teachers and lecturers to meet the growing number of students choosing computing qualifications and pathways.
   g. the curriculum in practice and how this manifests in different parts of the education journey for different groups.

10. The committee may establish task and finish groups when appropriate to address specific topics of relevance to its work. A task and finish 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, and any potential conflicts of interest will be registered.

12. The committee will normally be made up of approximately 12 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:
    - The chairs (or their representatives) of each of the 4 computing education stakeholder panels
    - 4 members should be active within the schools or FE sector
    - 2 members should be from employers, preferably representing an SME and a large company
    - 2 members should be 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. The committee will include the current Chair of CAS.

15. 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. Expert witnesses may be invited to present on specific topics as necessary.

16. Task and finish groups members may be committee members and/or co-opted from outside of the committee.

Accountability

17. 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

18. Three meetings will be held each year, the meetings will take place remotely online, with one taking place at 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.

19. 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.

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

Review, Amendment, Modification or Variation

21. 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

22. 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.'

23. 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.

24. 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 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.

25. 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.

26. 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.

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

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