Introduction to BCS

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Important Note

This presentation is based on one originally supplied by BCS The Chartered Institute for IT and is being given partly on their behalf. The School of Computer Science takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information originating from BCS (which is generally in black text in this presentation).
Name Change

• The organisation I’m talking about was originally called the “British Computer Society” (BCS).

• To reflect its wider role and its growing international importance, it has recently switched to using the initials only, calling itself “BCS The Chartered Institute for IT”.

• In this presentation I use the abbreviation “BCS” (and will try to remember not to say “the BCS”).
Brief Overview

• Most professions have developed professional organisations or bodies that act in a regulatory fashion.
• For example, lawyers/solicitors have the Law Society, architects have the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), and IT professionals have BCS The Chartered Institute for IT (BCS).
• Some bodies have legal powers, while others are self-regulated. The IT profession is self-regulated (which considerably weakens BCS compared to, e.g., the Law Society).
• Professional Bodies usually:
  - establish a Code of Conduct
  - set standards of education, competence and experience (such standards are expressed in e.g. Chartered Status)
  - establish ways of sharing knowledge of good practice and new developments
  - advise governments about matters within their area of expertise.
What is BCS?

• BCS is the leading professional body for those working in CS/IT, with over 60,000 members in more than 100 countries [2010 data].
• As The Chartered Institute for IT, BCS is the body which awards Chartered IT Professional (CITP) status.
• BCS works with government, employers, academics, the media and other bodies to develop the status of IT professionals.
• BCS membership:
  – demonstrates your professional competence and gives you professional recognition
  – demonstrates your commitment to the IT profession and its development
  – gives you access to a wide range of member services and benefits.
BCS Membership

• **Student Membership** is for those following a course of study. BCS encourages all students to take up this grade of membership. Student membership currently costs **£30** for a year or **£50** for the duration of your degree (up to 4 years).

• **Professional Membership (MBCS)** There are various routes to this status, but a common one is to have a BCS-accredited degree + 2 years appropriate work experience.

• There are also Fellows of the BCS (**FBCS**): those who hold a senior position or or have an established reputation of eminence or authority in a field of IT (e.g. Prof. Ela Claridge in this School).
Chartered Status

• Just as professionals such as accountants and traditional engineers can have ‘chartered status’, so can people working in the IT industry.

• To become a **Chartered IT Professional** (CITP) you will have 5 or more years of IT work experience, and will need to be in a role that demonstrates:
  – significant influence and responsibility
  – a challenging range of complex work activities
  – full accountability
  – well-developed business skills.

• BCS is also licensed by the Engineering Council and the Science Council to offer **Chartered Engineer** (CEng) and Chartered Scientist (CSci) designations.
Accreditation

This is a very complex topic!

- BCS accredits degrees in computing and IT as meeting its educational requirements at different levels (e.g. for MBCS, CITP, or CEng).
- All the School’s Single Honours degrees are accredited as meeting the educational requirements for MBCS and CITP.
- The MEng in CS/SE (a 4 year degree) is also accredited as meeting the educational requirements for CEng.
- SH degrees are accredited as partially meeting the educational requirement for CEng. Further study (equivalent to an MSc) is needed for CEng status.
- The MEng in CS/SE is also accredited by the IET, so graduates can join the IET or obtain CEng status through this body.
- There’s some more information on the School website.
- Re-accreditation happens every 5 years or so; it’s happening this year (visit by BCS in February).
Benefits of BCS to Student Members

• There are many benefits you will receive by joining BCS as a student member, most of which will be of assistance to you while you are studying.

• Free information and research services  
  e.g. free access to electronic books via Books 24x7.

• Publications  
  e.g. ITNOW magazine (paper), eBCS (electronic) – helps you to understand and keep up with what’s happening in IT in commerce and industry.

• Networking opportunities and events  
  BCS has specialist groups, branches and international sections.

• Career development services  
  may be more valuable later!

• See BCS web site (“students and learners” bar at the top right)
Why join BCS?

• So, why would you want to join BCS? Well, in an increasingly competitive world, BCS gives you an important edge; it shows that you are committed to a professional career.

• By becoming a full member of BCS when you graduate, you will be identified as having competences that employers value and recognise. You will be able to enhance your professional status and show to future employers or clients that you have a strong commitment to your profession.

• If you are on an accredited course of study, and upgrade to MBCS after graduation, as a former Student Member, BCS will charge you a significantly reduced fee.

• The BCS range of services and benefits will help you to maintain this level of professionalism and will guide you in your continued professional development.
How to Join

So what do you need to do now to join?

• You can either join for one year for £30, or pay £50 which will give you membership right up until you graduate.

• The easiest way to join is online. Go to http://www.bcs.org Follow through the “Membership and Networking” tab to “Apply now / Student”.

• You can also download an application form, print it out, and return the application by post.

• Even if you’re not sure about joining BCS, do look at their website and be aware of what resources are available there.