5.   What is a Member Group?

A Member Group enables members of the Institute (and others) to share and advance their common interests in Information Technology. Member Groups are integral to BCS and are bound by the Institute's Royal Charter and rules.

The responsibility of every Member Group is 'to promote the study and practice of Computing and to advance knowledge and education therein for the benefit of the public ' within its chosen area.

A Member Group can be a Branch, a Specialist Group, International Section or any other properly constituted (see Creating a Member Group) grouping approved by the Membership Board on behalf of the Institute. Members of the Institute are encouraged to join and become active in Member Groups.

Branches and International Sections are geographic clusters of members; upon joining the Institute each member will be given the option of joining one or more Branches, the default is the Branch or International Section nearest to their home address. Specialist Groups are formed by a number of people with a common interest in some aspect of Information Technology, its application, or impact.

The Institute supports Member Groups, both financially and with other resources (details of which follow later). The Membership Board provides a link into the Institute's decision-making process and the Membership Group team of staff based at BCS Swindon is there to give practical assistance.

Every Member Group has an administrator in BCS Swindon who is there to support the Member Group http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/mg-administrators.pdf

5.1 What does a Member Group do?

Each group has aims and objectives and, to achieve them, it arranges events such as presentations, conferences, seminars, workshops and social gatherings and facilitates networking. Each Member Group will typically hold four or more events a year, open to all members of the group.

Member Groups may also establish partnerships with other bodies in order to pursue joint initiatives, see the section on "Links with other organisations" http://www.bcs.org/content/ConWebDoc/37600 for more information.

5.2 Who can join a Member Group?

Anyone can participate in a Member Group, although as explained in more detail elsewhere, only Institute members can vote at meetings. The mechanisms for joining a Member Group include using the web site www.bcs.org or contacting Customer Services.

A Member Group can apply conditions of entry to the group, e.g. a group for young professionals might have an age limit. In general, conditions should be seen as reasonable and necessary for the group to be credible (e.g. BCS Women or ELITE) without discouraging those who wish to learn from those with more knowledge and experience.

5.3 Who can come to Member Group events?

Everyone is welcome to attend Member Group events unless the Member Group chooses to restrict attendance.

Where a meeting fee is charged, this should normally be lower for Institute members. The same applies, where practicable, to conferences and publications

5.4 International Sections

Each year the Section Committee shall appoint a member of the Section Committee to serve as Liaison officer. This person must be prepared to work with the appropriate national computer society (or societies) of the country (or countries) in which the Section is located.

A Section should be established as a separate legal entity and be covered by combined liability insurance or as required locally. It should comply with local requirements in relation to any registration requirements. At no time will the Institute accept financial responsibility for the Section's activities other than by resolution of Trustee Board. The registered address of the Section (where needed under local Law) will be decided by the Section committee.

6.   Life of a Member Group:
6.1. Setting up a Member Group

Institute members are encouraged to form new Member Groups where there is proof of unmet demand and no conflict with existing Member Groups, e.g. geographic or subject matter overlap.

Proposals for new member groups are dealt with by the Policy Committee, with the administration of the process being undertaken by the Member Groups Team in BCS HQ. The process consists of four stages: stage one requires an initial proposal that outlines the case for the formation of the new group; stage two consists of a meeting of all interested parties to discuss the proposal and test the interest in the proposed group; stage three requires an expansion of the initial proposal to include operational details and stage four is approval by finance committee. The full process is available on the volunteer portal at http://volunteer.bcs.org/Proposing_a_new_member_group This process for starting a new member group is owned by MBPC and all enquiries regarding this process should be routed to the Chair of MBPC (chair.mbpolicy@bcs.org).

A Member Group can set up a subgroup which also is subject to Member Group rules. A subgroup can be set up and is managed by the parent group. It is often helpful to establish a subgroup and then, if it is successful, to float it off as an independent group. Subgroups share the budget of the parent group.

6.2. Changing a Member Group

Changes to name, scope, geographic boundaries (where applicable), aims and objectives need to be approved by the Policy Committee. The process is at http://volunteer.bcs.org/Proposing_a_new_member_group: the extent of the change will determine how rigorously the process will be followed.

Member Groups that overlap in scope or geographic boundaries should consider merging. If members of a Member Group feel that the overlap is causing confusion they can ask the Policy Committee to investigate and facilitate a resolution.

6.3. Closing a Member Group

Where the Member Group is not operating, has come to the end of its planned life or is in conflict with the Institute's aims and objectives it may be suspended or closed down by decision of the Membership Board. Any action will be preceded by consultation with members of the Member Group.

7.   Member Group governance meetings

Annual General Meetings (AGM)

Member Groups must organise an Annual General Meeting (AGM) once a year, where the committee reports to the membership on the previous year's activities and committee members are elected. The AGM should be called as soon as practicable after the close of the Institute's financial year (31 August).

At least fourteen days written notice (it may be via email) of the date, time and place of the AGM shall be given to Member Group members and to the Member Groups Team (groups@hq.bcs.org.uk). The calling notice should include, where appropriate, an agenda, a call for nominations to committee and explain where the minutes to be discussed can be found. The committee can choose to use virtual technologies in addition to, or instead of, holding a physical meeting.

The agenda should include:
- Welcome and Introductions
- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of the previous AGM (and if appropriate EGM)
- Matters arising from the minutes
- A report from the Chair on the year's activities
- A report from the Treasurer, including a review of income and expenditure against the budget agreed with BCS HQ for the past year and an explanation of next year's budget request.
- Election of Chair, Treasurer and committee members
- Any other business

Notification of items wishing to be raised at the AGM under "Any other business" should be sent to the Chair not less than three days in advance. Admission of items not so notified at the AGM will be at the discretion of the Chair.

Following the AGM, an electronic copy of the minutes and the Chair's report must be sent to the Member Groups Team (groups@hq.bcs.org.uk) within one month after the AGM.

Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM)

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) shall be convened, if requested, by ten or more Institute members of the Member Group or by resolution of the Committee. The notice calling the meeting shall state the purpose of the

meeting, which shall be convened on a date within five weeks of receipt of the request or the Committee resolution.

8. Member Group Committees

Member Groups are managed by a committee elected by the members of the group at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). The committee has the power to set up subcommittees.

Responsibilities

Member Group Committees are responsible for welcoming new members to their group, both by email when they join and in person when they first come to an event, guidance is available at http://www.volunteer.bcs.org/sites/default/files/Sending_welcome_emails_to_new_Member_Group_members.doc.

Members of Committee

The committee must have at least three professional BCS members, with two of them filling the roles of Chair and Treasurer. In addition, committee members may take on a range of other roles, for more details about the roles please follow the hyperlink http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/roles-committeemembers.pdf. Non Institute members must abide by the BCS code of conduct and rules, the penalty for serious breaches is removal from the committee.

Election of Committee Members

Committee Members are elected by members of the Institute either at the Member Group Annual General Meeting (AGM) or in an election using remote voting. The committee may appoint replacements for committee members (including the Chair and Treasurer) that resign mid-year. As the Chair and Treasurer are essential for the effective running of a group they are specifically elected to their roles. A majority of the committee must be Institute members.

Where the Committee wishes to use remote voting they need to:

- Talk to their contact on the BCS Member Group Team to check that resources will available to run the vote and to obtain templates for use in the following steps.
- Ask Member Group members for nominations, which can include additional information to assist Member Group members to vote.
- When asking for nominations the Committee must give at least two weeks before the deadline for nominations to be submitted.
- Use the group's website to make information about all candidates available to all those qualified to vote at least two weeks before the deadline for voting ends
- BCS HQ will then operate an electronic vote on the Member Group's behalf.
- The Chair and Treasurer will get the result of the vote, and can ask for a list of those who have voted if they wish to accept additional votes on the night.

Co-opting Members to Committee

The committee can co-opt members to the committee as long as a majority of the committee (including co-opted members) are Institute members and the number of co-opted members does not exceed elected members.

Term of Office

This is determined for each post by the committee, subject to a maximum of three years before re-election. One year is the norm, with all members of committee standing down and, where they wish, putting themselves up for reelection.

Removing Committee Members

Committee members can be removed by a majority vote of the committee. There is a right of appeal to the Membership Board Policy Committee.

Member Group Committee meetings

The Committee should meet regularly (either physically or electronically). Notice of committee meetings must be given to all members of the committee. The chair is expected to approve the minutes and an electronic copy of the minutes must be sent to the Member Groups Team
mailto:groups@hq.bcs.org.uk

- The following documents: Conduct of business in BCS Boards and Committees http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/conduct-of-business.pdf,
- Conduct of electronic meetings www.bcs.org/conduct/emeetings, and
- Responsibilities of BCS officers www.bcs.org/responsibilities/officers provide further information on how best to conduct committee meetings.

Quorum

33% of the membership of the committee, with a minimum of the Chair or Treasurer plus two other members of the committee constitute a quorum. If there are fewer members present (in person, by phone or electronically) the meeting cannot make binding decisions.

Voting

A simple majority of elected committee members present is sufficient to decide a disputed decision. If there is a tied vote, the chair will have an additional deciding vote.

Public statements

What Member Group committee members say and publish (including on social media) should be appropriate for a representative of a professional body. Communicating on behalf of any part of the Institute (including a Member Group) should only be done with appropriate authority. Criticism of the Institute should be kept out of public forums.

Behaviour

BCS staff and Member Group Committee members are expected to respect each other and behave in a positive, cooperative and professional manner. If a BCS member has a concern about the behaviour of another member or member of staff they should discuss it with the Chair of the Membership Board. Ultimately the Code of Conduct is applicable. There is guidance on what is meant by acceptable behaviour at http://volunteer.bcs.org/Rules_acceptable_behaviour.

Training

Each Member Group Committee will be responsible for ensuring that all its members receive appropriate training as prescribed by Trustee Board from time to time. The Membership Board may cancel or suspend an individual's membership of a Member Group Committee where a member's actions have, in the opinion of the Membership Board, been detrimental to the work of the Committee.

8.1 Support for Member Groups

Support (including administration) is available from BCS Swindon. It is not charged for but needs to be requested and reserved. View the Events organisation document

http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/event-organisation.pdf to see the full range of help available. A template for making applications is available at [http://volunteer.bcs.org/sites/default/files/Application_Template_for_additional_resour ces_staff.doc](http://volunteer.bcs.org/sites/default/files/Application_Template_for_additional_resources_staff.doc)

Support services should be used responsibly. Where support services (e.g. booking a room) are reserved, but repeatedly not used, the Member Group may be prevented from reserving that resource for a period of time (likely to be six months).

To avoid legal liabilities as an employer, personnel must not be directly employed by a Member Group. Instead of employing people, BCS Swindon should be requested to contract for local support on a Member Group's behalf. A template for doing so will soon be made available. Funds to pay for any local support must be included in the group's budget.

8.2 Use of data about members

Member Groups' membership details are kept on BCS's central database and Member Groups can arrange for mailings to their members.

All member data must be handled in strict accordance with the BCS Information Security Policy Statement [http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/information-security-policystatement.pdf.](http://www.bcs.org/upload/pdf/information-security-policystatement.pdf) Committee members who are professional members (MBCS/FBCS) of BCS may have access to BCS membership data, subject to:
- An explanation of why access is necessary that is acceptable to the Member Group committee (i.e. no one has vetoed it)
- Confirmation that the person requesting access understands the Data Protection Act.
- Requests to use membership details should be sent to the Member Groups Team mailto:groups@hq.bcs.org.uk

Where personal data about attendees is collected at, or for, an event it should not be passed on without the attendee's approval. For example, if the speaker wishes to follow up with those attending they should get permission from those attending for them to do so.

Additional guidance on the treatment of Personal Data from members and attendees at events.

When collecting, using and securing items of personal data from members and/or event attendees/enquirers, two overriding principles must be applied:
- the data must be used only for the purpose(s) that were declared prior to its collection/elicitation;
- it is BCS policy that all data collected through an event booking/registration system (manual or electronic, central or local) shall be regarded as protected personal data unless otherwise declared to attendees/enquirers in advance (and effective opt-outs provided if necessary).

Particular care needs to be taken in circumstances when any of the attendees' data may need to be shared with third parties, including: joint meetings;, sponsored events (especially if hosted on the sponsor's premises); if it is intend to publish a delegates

list; if it is intended to use the data to advertise other events or promotions; or for a speaker/sponsor to supply supplementary information.

8.3 Pictures of children

The Information Commissioners Office has a helpful Good Practice Guidance Note at http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/practical_application/taking_photos.pdf (version 4, June 2010). The Note distinguishes photographs taken
- for personal use (e.g. by relatives and friends) to which the Data Protection Act does not apply
- for institutional use by the school (or by extension BCS) where the advice is that this will be personal data but will not breach the Act as long as the children and/or their guardians are aware this is happening and the context in which the photo will be used.
- by the media in which case as long as the school (or BCS) has agreed to this, and the children and/or their guardians are aware that photographs of those attending may appear in the media, this will not breach the Act.
The Note repeatedly uses the term "the children and/or their guardians are aware" without any implication that written permission is required or even advisable. Advance notices of the event should advise attendees that photos may be taken by BCS and/ or media (as appropriate).

8.4 Conflicts of interest

All Member Group committee members must declare any conflict of interest that may arise and inform all other committee members who will consider whether any action needs to be taken. The BCS Code of Conduct, which is available at http://www.bcs.org/category/6030 will be used if a potential conflict of interest comes to light. Non-members of the Institute are liable to sanctions including having their committee membership terminated.