



# Report on the monitoring of **BCS The Chartered Institute of IT**

**MAY 2019**

# BCS The Chartered Institute of IT

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## About this report

CCEA Regulation acts on behalf of the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy (DfE) to regulate the qualifications offered to learners in Northern Ireland (NI). These functions are enabled by the Education (NI) Order 1998. The scope of CCEA Regulation was extended to cover all qualifications in Northern Ireland from May 2016.

CCEA Regulation undertakes a range of assurance activities to ascertain compliance, or otherwise, with CCEA General Conditions of Recognition (GCoR). These activities are proportionate to the level of risk perceived to be associated with any awarding organisation, an individual qualification or a group of qualifications.

This report is the outcome of monitoring activity on BCS The Chartered Institute of IT that CCEA Regulation carried out between January and March 2019. Monitoring activities included:

- desktop review of documentation already held by CCEA Regulation, the BCS website and documentation provided by BCS on request;
- desktop review of a sample of qualification specific material (specifications, syllabi, example tests);
- a visit to BCS' Swindon offices to conduct interviews with BCS staff and to view IT applications in operation; and
- visits to two centres in Northern Ireland offering BCS qualifications.

The report draws together CCEA Regulation's findings against the following

CCEA General Conditions of Recognition 2017:

- C1 Arrangements with third parties
- C2 Arrangements with centres
- E3 Publication of a qualification specification
- G1 Setting the assessment
- G4 Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials, including the conduct of specified training events
- G8 Completion of the assessment under the required conditions
- G9 Delivering the assessment
- H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a centre

Instances of non-compliance and observations arising are specified at the end of each section of this report. BCS is required to produce an action plan with timelines to show how they will deal with any non-compliances identified. CCEA Regulation will agree and monitor the resulting action plan.

## About BCS, The Chartered Institute of IT

ASDAN is an education charity and awarding organisation. Developed and managed by practitioners, ASDAN grew out of research work at the University of the West of England in the 1980s and was formally established as an educational charity in 1991. ASDAN was recognised by Ofqual in April 2010 and currently has 36 qualifications available to learners in Northern Ireland.



## C

### Findings GCoR Section C: Third Parties

#### Condition C1 Arrangements with Third Parties

- BCS has arrangements in place with centres, developers and suppliers.
- BCS has been the national operator for the ECDL qualifications (underpinned by the ECDL Foundation) since 1997.
- There is regular communication between BCS and ECDL. BCS has input to the development and review of ECDL modules.
- There has been a reduction in the number of centres offering ECDL qualifications recently due to the change in designation of ECDL qualifications by the Department for Education (England).
- BCS has an arrangement with PSI to provide the Atlas Cloud platform used for automated testing.
- BCS has worked with a consultant to complete development of a customised, comprehensive CRM database within Salesforce.

#### Condition C2 Arrangements with Centres

- There is a robust centre accreditation process (outlined in an Accreditation Manual) that includes a pre-accreditation visit to the centre. One of the centres visited had gone through the accreditation process within the last year. The centre confirmed that a pre-accreditation visit had taken place

and stated that the overall process was clear and completed within a reasonable timeframe.

- There is an Approved Centre Contract, issued during the accreditation process, which includes all the provisions set out in Condition C2.3. The current contract is being reviewed and a new contract has been piloted with a small number of centres.
- Centres have access to comprehensive support and guidance documentation including the IT User Operational Requirements Manual (ORM).
- Centre staff are required to undertake mandatory BCS training, much of which is available online. A log is kept of this training. One of the centres visited questioned whether all the mandatory training was relevant to every centre role.
- Centres have a designated Channel Partner. A centre visited had encountered IT system issues, but commented on the quick response and helpful advice provided by the Channel Partner Quality Team.
- BCS monitors its level of service to centres through:
  - automated rating of BCS query handling;
  - questionnaires;
  - provider forums; and
  - feedback obtained from External Verifiers (EVs).
- Centres have access to the CRM database. BCS acknowledged that there had been some issues during the introduction of this new system.

- Centres use the CRM database to maintain centre information (including assigning roles to centre staff), to confirm monitoring visit dates and to respond to centre actions identified in monitoring reports.
- Centres used the Approved Centre Forum to register learners and track their progress.
- CRM database information is used by BCS to review centre activity and to provide intelligence for risk rating of centres.
- BCS has a risk-based centre monitoring policy in place that provides for onsite and remote audits. A centre's first audit is always onsite. Every centre is audited annually and visited at least once every three years. Unannounced visits, for example to observe live testing, may be carried out.
- The outcome of an audit may be a list of required centre actions (with timeframe) and/or updating of the centre risk rating.
- Currently, centres can provide comments regarding specific actions, however there is no opportunity for a centre to make an overall comment concerning the audit.
- BCS has an EV or auditor based in Northern Ireland.
- Centres are permitted 12 months of inactivity before centre accreditation is withdrawn, unless there is an action plan to become active again.
- When a centre is closing, it is required

to provide BCS with an action plan for meeting the needs of the learners.

- In cases of serious concerns with a centre, the Approved Centre Contract allows BCS to intervene. This may include suggesting alternative centres to learners.

## Non-compliances

No non-compliances were noted.

## Observations

BCS should consider providing a free response box for centres in the audit section of the CRM Database to allow for comment on the audit process.

BCS should consider obtaining feedback from more centres to ascertain whether there is a need for mandatory training to be better targeted at specific centre roles.

# E

## Findings GCoR Section E: Design and Development of a Qualification

### Condition E3 Publication of a qualification specification

- BCS conducts a review of its product portfolio each year.
- Ideas for new qualifications come from a variety of sources such as requests from centres, new modules introduced by ECDL and from learners.
- BCS has a documented process for qualification development.
- A business case must be signed off by the Executive Team or Trustee Board (dependent on value) before proceeding with qualification development.
- Development is led by the product team, which produces a product brief for the developers (usually Subject Matter Experts [SMEs]). Typical outputs are: a qualification blueprint, syllabus (based on a template), specification (based on a template), sample assessment material and items for live tests.
- Training is provided for SMEs on different aspects of qualification development.
- Quality assurance is built into the development process with review by the product team or technical reviewer (as appropriate) and signoff at various points.

- As most of the qualifications currently offered by BCS in Northern Ireland are based on ECDL modules much of the development work is undertaken by ECDL.
- A review of the documentation for a sample of two current qualifications identified some non-compliances. These were brought to the attention of BCS and are currently being addressed. BCS has undertaken to review all qualifications in its portfolio to identify similar non-compliances and so that these can also be addressed.

## Non-compliances

BCS must ensure that the non-compliances identified in qualification documentation, provided during the monitoring visit, are addressed for the sampled qualifications and, where relevant, in other qualifications in the BCS portfolio.

## Observations

BCS should consider introducing a formal process for reviewing qualification documentation for compliance on a regular basis and, in particular, following changes to regulatory frameworks or the General Conditions of Recognition.

# G

## Findings GCoR Section G: Setting and delivering the assessment

### Condition G1 Setting the assessment

- Most of the qualifications currently offered by BCS in Northern Ireland are based on ECDL modules with the assessment set by ECDL.
- Non-ECDL qualification assessments are developed using the process outlined in the previous section.
- BCS staff involved in the developmental process attend relevant training such as that provided by the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB).
- The majority of the centres use automated tests. Newly accredited centres cannot opt for manual tests.
- All automated tests are marked electronically.

### Condition: G4 – Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials, including the conduct of specified training events

No specific findings for this section.

### Condition: G8 – Completion of the assessment under the required conditions

- Comprehensive processes for test security are listed in the ORM (Section 16)
  - Invigilators must be registered on the CRM database.

- Confidentiality of automated tests is protected by using a unique Invigilator Key, which is required to unlock the tests for the learners.
- The invigilator creates the Invigilator Key for one session.
- Learners must log on using unique passwords and usernames and must change their passwords after first logging on.
- Manual tests are password protected.

- Detailed processes for conduct of tests and invigilators are listed in the ORM (Sections 5.4, 17, 18, 19 and 22).
- BCS centre visits include checks that the testing regimes are appropriate and that the Joint Council for Qualification (JCQ) regulations are followed.
- BCS is planning to conduct more frequent unannounced centre visits.
- Centre managers are required to observe registered invigilators annually. Evidence of observations is monitored by BCS.

### Condition: G9 – Delivering the assessment

- There are specified Reasonable Adjustments (RA) and Special Considerations (SC) processes in the ORM (Section 15) and a Reasonable Adjustments Policy published on the Approved Centre Forum on the BCS website.
- The centre uploads evidence to support the RA request to the Approved Centre Forum (ACF).

- BCS considers the request together with relevant evidence and the decision to accede the request is recorded.
- SC requests are processed in the same way as RA requests.
- BCS audits the RA and SC processes to ensure that they are carried out appropriately.

## Non-compliances

No non-compliances noted.

## Observations

No observations.





# H

## Findings GCoR Section H: From Marking to Issuing Results

### Condition: H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a centre

- Formal arrangements for marking and moderation are in place – ORM Sections 5 (Roles and Responsibilities), 20 (Marking), 21 (Evidence Based Assessment) and 22 (Quality Assurance).
- All centre staff involved in assessment are required to undertake training. This is generally provided online, but may be supplemented by face-to-face training. A log of training completed is held on the CRM database.
- Most centres use automated testing that is available through the Atlas Cloud platform. Assessments are electronically marked with the results available immediately to learners.
- Some centres choose a manual testing option because of internet connectivity issues.
- Centres mark manual tests, which are also completed on a computer, with the results verified by an Internal Verifier (IV). Centres are required to upload results to the CRM database within 20 days and to retain assessment documentation for three years.
- Centre assessments are reviewed during EV visits (which usually occur after certification). Where issues with marking are identified during EV visits,

it is BCS policy that learners are not penalised unless there is evidence of malpractice.

- BCS conducts a results validation process before issuing certificates. This process will flag up issues such as resits being taken too early or irregularities in results.
- Analysis of results can also be used to assess the comparability of different tests.
- If BCS identifies issues with the assessment process, actions that may be taken (depending on the nature and severity of the issues) include:
  - activating the Certificate Stop process by including a Certificate Stop report in the weekly submission to the print company;
  - requiring centre staff to undertake additional training;
  - withdrawal of the manual testing option;
  - requiring centres to withdraw learner certificates; and
  - requiring centres to initiate an investigation.
- There is a written Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (signposted in ORM Section 13) and a related Sanctions Policy on the BCS website. The procedure includes:
  - investigating the issue;
  - interviewing staff and learners;
  - BCS Malpractice Team review findings and make recommendations;
  - centres act on findings; and
  - if appropriate, the Regulator is contacted.

### Non-compliances

No non-compliances noted.

### Observations

No observations.



## Summary of Non-Compliances and Observations

### Non-Compliances

#### **E3 – Publication of a qualification specification:**

- BCS must ensure that the non-compliances identified in qualification documentation, provided during the monitoring visit, are addressed for the sampled qualifications and, where relevant, within other qualifications in the BCS portfolio.

### Observations

#### **C2 – Arrangements with centres**

- BCS should consider providing a free response box for centres in the audit section of the CRM Database to allow for comment on the audit process.
- BCS should consider obtaining feedback from more centres to ascertain whether there is a need for mandatory training to be better targeted at specific centre roles.

#### **E3 – Publication of a qualification specification**

BCS should consider introducing a formal process for reviewing qualification documentation for compliance on a regular basis and, in particular, following changes to regulatory frameworks or the General Conditions of Recognition.