SHAPE YOUR FUTURE TOWARDS A CAREER IN IT

BCS HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS GUIDE

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A CAREER AT THE CUTTING EDGE

The technology industry is moving at a faster pace than any of us could have anticipated. Digital evolution continues to transform the way we live, learn and work – while emerging tech like quantum computing and the ongoing developments in AI promise ever greater transformation.

For employers the challenge is finding people who can exploit this new technology within their organisations, and this means far-reaching career opportunities for those working in the IT industry. If you can develop the right skillset, knowledge and attitude, you'll be a valuable asset to any forward-looking organisation and will have a very exciting future ahead of you.

REACH YOUR POTENTIAL WITH BCS

For a long and rewarding career in IT, it's important you set out on the right development pathway but choosing which path to take can be confusing as there are many routes on offer. When it comes to qualifications, flexibility is key as your learning will need to support the twists and turns your career journey is likely to take.

As the professional body for IT, BCS The Chartered Institute for IT understands what it takes to succeed in the fast-paced evolving technology industry. Our aim is to support you throughout your training and career development, so you reach your full potential.
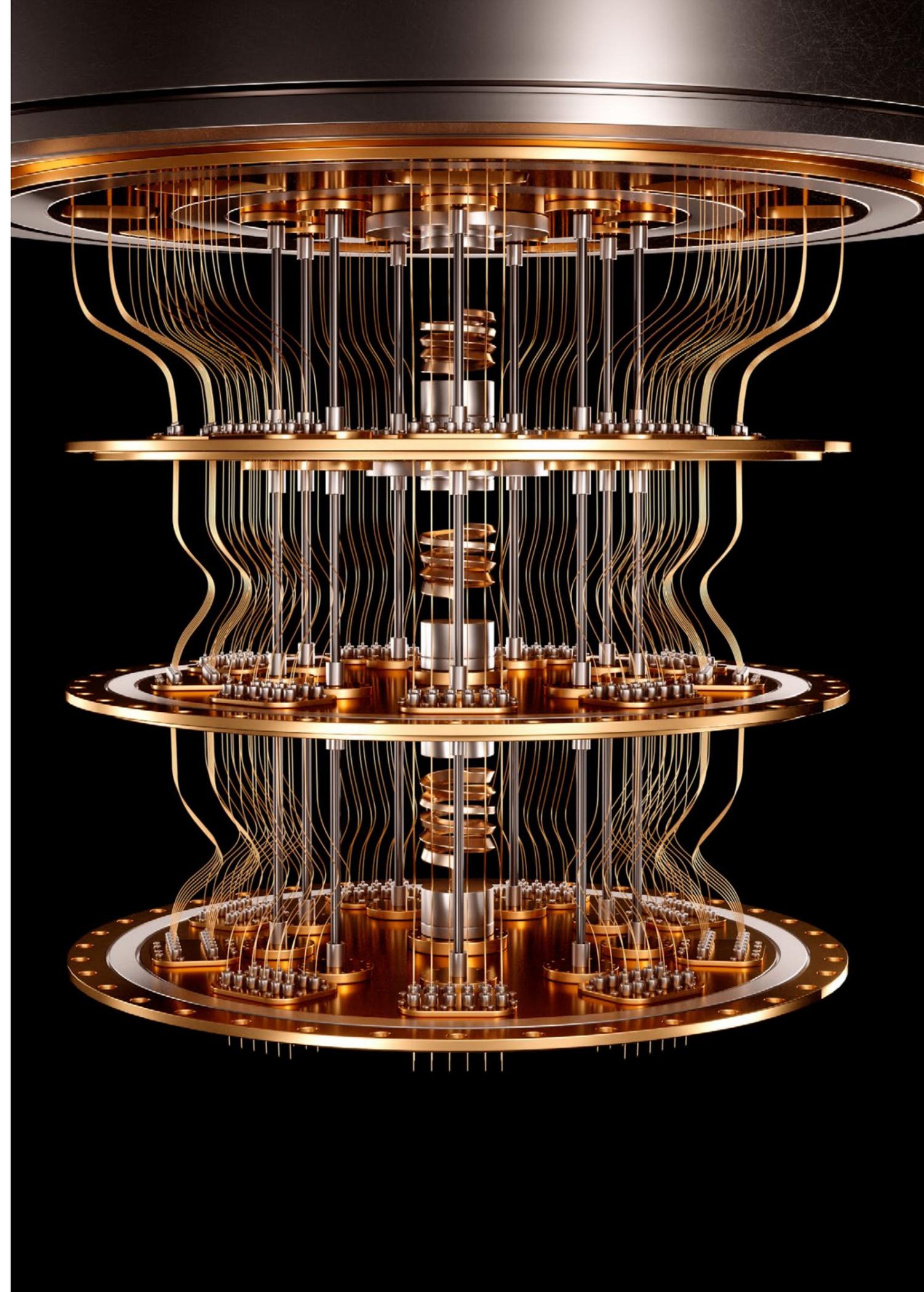
IT CAREERS BUILT AROUND YOU

BCS, THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE FOR IT

Are you about to embark on your working life and want to know which qualifications will give you a solid learning foundation? Perhaps you need to brush up on your existing skills to stay on top of your game, or are you looking for wider industry recognition to benchmark your talent against global standards?

WHO ARE YOU?

CAREER STARTER

I'm just starting out in the IT industry and want to follow a respected learning pathway that enables me to fulfil my ambitious career goals.

CAREER PROGRESSOR

I'm already an IT practitioner looking to take the next step up, so I want to enhance my capabilities with flexible study that fits around my work.

CAREER CHANGER

I've decided on a career change and will bring transferable skills with me to build on for a role in the IT industry.

No matter where you are in your career or wherever you want to go next, you can get there with the support and guidance of BCS, your professional body. With BCS you can take your skills and knowledge to the level you need, validate your performance in line with industry standards and meet all your professional goals.

YOUR PROFESSIONAL BODY

We've been leading the development of the IT industry for more than 60 years – enabling practitioners to fulfil their career ambitions and helping organisations shape the IT workforce into a trusted and ethical profession.

BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE WITH BCS

We can guide you on your journey to IT professional through a unique blend of Ofqual-regulated qualifications, professional membership, registration, industry insight and thought-leadership, career mentoring, networking and so much more.

WITH BCS YOU CAN:

- study qualifications that give you practical skills so you can hit the ground running when you reach the workplace
- raise your profile in the industry by becoming a BCS member and access lifelong career development resources
- sign up to our code of conduct and demonstrate to clients and employers your commitment to professional standards
- plan your skills, training and career goals against the global IT Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA)
- set yourself on the path to Chartered IT Professional (CITP) status – the industry's highest competency standard

BY ROYAL CHARTER...

We're on a mission to make IT good for society – because we think everyone in society should have the tools and understanding they need to benefit from technology and thrive in the digital age.

That's why we work with key partners and our global membership community to improve IT education, influence ethical practice, share expertise, raise industry standards and support career progression. It's all set out in our Royal Charter.

WHICH IT ROLES ARE IN DEMAND?

When deciding which direction to take in your IT career, it's important to understand the type of roles industry is recruiting for, now and in the future.

BCS conducts research each year into the strategic priorities of business leaders across the technology industry, giving you the critical insight you need to make the right career choices.

LATEST RESEARCH

Our IT Leaders 2021 report highlights the global demand for IT specialists to fill the skills gap, including:

- Cloud adoption
- Cloud migration
- Cloud infrastructure and security
- Cybersecurity
- DevOps
- Project management
- Testing
- Legacy systems' knowledge
- Robot process automation
- Software engineers
- Software developers
- Networkers
- Data scientists
- Data specialists
- Analysts

OUR REPORT ALSO REVEALS:

- A 'skilled workforce' is number one priority for 67% of IT leaders worldwide – yet only 9% say they currently have enough resources to succeed.

- Organisations are prioritising these technologies:

  - Cyber
  - Cloud
  - IT governance
  - automation
  - 5G
  - AI
  - Change management
  - Decoupling data from legacy systems
  - Digital transformation and optimisation
  - Disaster planning
  - Shadow IT.

- IT leaders want solutions to support these areas:

  - Data
  - AI
  - Xaas
  - Data Science
  - Machine Learning
  - DevOps
  - Automation

BCS HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS (HEQ)

FAST-TRACK YOUR IT CAREER

Whichever IT discipline you choose, our high-quality, international qualifications programme will kickstart your progression in the workplace.

BCS Higher Education Qualifications have been launching the careers of thousands of IT practitioners around the world since the 1960s. With its focus on practical skills and application in today's industry, HEQ is recognised and respected by employers around the world for delivering core knowledge and highly relevant specialist skills.

UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION

HEQ is delivered at three UK academic levels: 4, 5 and 6. Many universities internationally recognise our HEQ qualifications for entry onto computing-related degree and MSc courses.

At each of the three levels, our HEQ programme is accredited by the UK government regulator, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

89%

OF IT LEADERS SAY IT'S IMPORTANT THAT IT PROFESSIONALS HAVE THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF ETHICAL THINKING AND PRACTICE

BCS HEQ	UK ACADEMIC LEVEL	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS
	8	• Doctorate (PhD, DPhil)
	7	• Master's degree (MA, MSc) • PGCE
BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT	6	• Degree with honours (BA, BSc) • Degree apprenticeship
BCS Diploma in IT	5	• Foundation degree • DipHE • HND • Level 6 NVQ (Sri Lanka)
BCS Certificate in IT	4	• CertHE • HNC • Higher apprenticeship
	3	• A-level • Advanced apprenticeship • Level 3 NVQ (UK) • International Baccalaureate diploma
	2	• GCSE grades 9,8,7,6,5,4(A*- C)
	1	• GCSE grades 3,2,1 (D - G)
	Entry	• Skills for Life • Entry level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

GLOBAL INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

As you'd expect from the professional body for IT, our qualifications are aligned with the SFIA global IT skills framework allowing you to plan your progression and translate your competencies with organisations the world over.

HEQ also neatly aligns with our BCS membership grades and professional registration including the Register for IT Technicians (RITTech) and Chartered IT

Professional (CITP) status, setting you on route to achieving the highest competency standard the industry has to offer.

STUDY WITH ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE

An extensive choice of specialist modules enables you to match your HEQ study to your chosen career path; and accessible study options mean you can tailor your learning around your other commitments.

FLEXIBLE LEARNING BUILT AROUND YOU

Choose how you study for your HEQ exams depending on your own circumstances and commitments. Classroom training is available from our global network of accredited providers, or you may opt to self-study.

If you just want an introduction to working in the industry, you can finish your study at BCS level 4 Certificate in IT. If it's a more comprehensive career foundation you're after or you're preparing for MSc study, you can complete the programme to BCS level 6 Professional Graduate Diploma in IT.

HEQ's flexible modular approach will support your specific career path and, should you decide to change your IT discipline or career direction during your study, the modules you've completed up to that point will equip you with relevant transferable digital skills.

Our flexible option allows you to enter and exit to suit your personal circumstances; this approach can work well if you are already working or taking a break due to family and childcare responsibilities. (Each level of qualification must be fully completed to receive certification.)

DELIVERED ALL AROUND THE WORLD

OFQUAL REGULATED LEVELS 4 TO 6
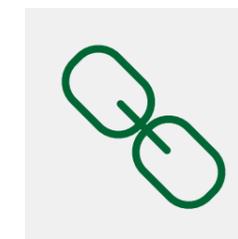
ALIGNED WITH BCS MEMBERSHIP

SELF-STUDY OR ACCREDITED TRAINING PROVIDER

THE HEQ PORTFOLIO

BCS LEVEL 4 CERTIFICATE IN IT

3 core modules		
Computer and network technology	Information systems	Software development

BCS LEVEL 5 DIPLOMA IN IT

One core module	Choose 3 from these optional modules		PROFESSIONAL PROJECT IN IT
Professional issues in IS practice	Big data management	Database systems	
	Computer networks	Object oriented programming systems	
	IT project management	Principles of internet technologies	
	Systems analysis and design	Smart systems	
	Web application development	Software engineering 1	
		User experience	

BCS LEVEL 6 PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN IT

Choose 4 from these optional modules			PROFESSIONAL PROJECT IN IT
Advanced database management systems	IT and the environment	Network information systems	
Computer services management	Management information systems	Software engineering 2	
Programming paradigms		System design methods	
Web engineering			

YOUR HEQ JOURNEY – A CLOSER LOOK

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

To sit your HEQ exams, you'll need to be a BCS member.

If you join as a BCS Student member at the start of your HEQ study, you can take full advantage of exclusive membership resources to support your study, including e-learning, personal assessments, specialist groups, mentoring and networking.

BCS LEVEL 4 CERTIFICATE IN IT

The Certificate in IT is for students looking to build a solid foundation for a career in IT and computing. All three modules are mandatory at this level providing you with a rounded education, on which to build your career and onward learning.

THREE CORE MODULES

- Computer and network technology
- Information systems
- Software development

200 guided learning hours per module/734 hours total qualification time.

BCS LEVEL 5 DIPLOMA IN IT

Choose this level of study if you already understand the fundamental principles in IT and are ready to start developing your specialist skills. You'll need to complete a core module and any three of the optional modules.

CORE MODULE

- Professional issues in IS practice

OPTIONAL MODULES – CHOOSE ANY THREE

- Computer networks
- Database systems
- IT project management
- Object oriented programming systems
- Principles of internet technologies
- Software engineering 1
- Systems analysis and design
- Big data management
- Smart systems
- User experience
- Web application development

225 guided learning hours per module/1086 hours total qualification time.

PROFESSIONAL IT PROJECT

If you're not going on to study the Professional Graduate Diploma in IT, you will need to complete a 5,000-word **professional IT project** as part of your Diploma in IT.

200 guided learning hours to complete project.

BCS LEVEL 6 PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN IT

The Professional Graduate Diploma in IT is for students who are dedicated to progressing in the IT industry and looking to gain in-depth knowledge and expertise. There are no core modules at PGD level – instead you can choose any four of the optional modules available.

OPTIONAL MODULES – CHOOSE ANY FOUR

- Advanced database management systems
- Computer services management
- IT and the environment
- Management information systems
- Network information systems
- Programming paradigms
- Software engineering 2
- System design methods
- Web engineering

250 guided learning hours per module/1414 hours total qualification time.

PROFESSIONAL IT PROJECT

You'll also need to produce a 10,000-word **professional IT project** to complete your Professional Graduate Diploma in IT.

300 guided learning hours to complete project.

QUALIFICATION SPEC

Take a look at the full **HEQ specification** for further detail about the modules at the three qualification levels.

BCS Certificate in IT

BCS Diploma in IT

BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT

IS THERE ANY EXEMPTION?

If you already hold a qualification that covers the HEQ syllabus – at any of the HEQ levels – you can apply for exemption from individual modules (up to 50 per cent of the qualification).

Find out more about exemption criteria

HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED?

- HEQ exams are paper-based with hand-written answers.
- Exams may include short answers and essay-style questions including scenario-based questions.

- There are two HEQ exam sessions every year – usually held in **April** and **October**.
- All exams must be sat in examination conditions at a **BCS-approved venue.**

EXAM DURATION AND NUMBER OF QUESTIONS

BCS LEVEL 4 CERTIFICATE IN IT	BCS LEVEL 5 DIPLOMA IN IT	BCS LEVEL 6 PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN IT
• 2 hours • Choose 7 questions from 12	• 2 hours • Choose 4 questions from 6	• 3 hours • Choose 3 questions from 5
PASS MARK = 40%*		
* Whilst BCS would not normally want to make changes to either grade thresholds or grading algorithms, there is potential for them to change in order to maintain standards.		

WHERE CAN I SIT MY EXAM?

Our examinations are held at a number of standard venues globally. No matter where you are in the world, we will aim to arrange an exam sitting for you – **find out more about registering for an exam.**

ARE THERE ANY ENTRY REQUIREMENTS?

- To be awarded an HEQ at any level, you will need to be a BCS member. By becoming a **BCS Student member** at the start of your HEQ study you can take full advantage of the many exclusive membership resources available to support your learning, including personal assessments and e-learning, specialist groups network, mentoring, advice from employers and discount across the BCS Bookshop.
- To sit exams at Diploma in IT level, you need to have already achieved the Certificate in IT.
- To sit exams at Professional Graduate Diploma in IT level, you'll need to have achieved the Certificate in IT and Diploma in IT.

PREPARING FOR YOUR EXAM

Preparation is everything when it comes to achieving exam success. Give yourself plenty of time to revise ahead of your exam date and use all the resources available on our website, such as the syllabus which includes a recommended reading list, and past papers and examiner reports.

And if you choose to complete your study with a **BCS-approved training centre**, they'll be able to provide you with additional resources to support your revision.

- **REVISE THE SYLLABUS**

HEQ exams are always based around the module syllabus so it's essential you familiarise yourself with all the areas within the syllabus. Each HEQ syllabus is available to download from our website and they all include recommended reading to deepen your understanding of the respective module.

FOR MAURITIUS CANDIDATES ONLY
Contact the BCS Regional Office for project submission dates and fees.

- **PRACTISE WITH PAST PAPERS**

There are few better ways to prepare yourself for an exam than by revising and 'sitting' past papers. When completing the paper, try allowing yourself the same amount of time you'll have in your actual exam, and simulate other exam conditions as best you can. Then use the examiner report to mark your efforts – you'll find a library of **past papers and examiner reports** on our website for every module, at every level.

- **A LITTLE LAST-MINUTE ADVICE?**

We know how nerve-wracking exams can be, so we've compiled these **useful hints and tips** to help you stay calm and collected so you can perform at your best when the time comes to open your exam paper.

EXAM FEES

- **Certificate in IT**
  Price per exam - £45
- **Diploma in IT**
  Price per exam - £50
- **Diploma with project**
  Project submission - £90
- **PGD in IT**
  Price per exam - £90
  Project submission - £105

HEQ – INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

BCS' higher education programme has met rigorous standards internationally and we are proud to have received recognition from the following bodies and regulators. This global recognition gives you confidence in the quality and standards of your learning, and assurance to employers and clients that they are working with high calibre IT professionals.

SRI LANKA

- Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) recognition for BCS Diploma in IT at NVQ 6

- University Grants Commission recognition:
  - Professional Membership of BCS is accepted as an entry qualification for a Master's degree in IT
  - BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT with professional project accepted as an entry qualification for a master's degree in computer science
  - BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT with professional project and a minimum of two years' post-qualification relevant experience accepted as an entry qualification for a postgraduate diploma or master's degree

- BCS membership (MBCS) with other UGC-recognised qualifications accepted for master's stipulated by many government and private institutes/ universities **https://www.ugc.ac.lk/en/universities-and-institutes/other-recognized-degrees.html**

- ICT sector in Sri Lanka receives a range of tax incentives

MAURITIUS

- Ministry of Education and Scientific research and Tertiary Education Commission:
  - HEQ Certificate in IT, Diploma in IT and Professional Graduate Diploma in IT together are considered equivalent to a first degree in the same subject
  - All three HEQ levels together with a professional project at PGD level are recognised and considered equivalent to an honours degree

NIGERIA

- Federal Ministry of Education Support Services Department
  - BCS has been notified of recognition by the Federal Ministry of Education Support Services Department, Nigeria and is on their list of accredited institutions in the United Kingdom.

UK

- BCS Higher Education Qualifications are accredited by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications for England and Northern Ireland: **https://register.ofqual.gov.uk**
  - Certificate in IT is recognised at UK academic level 4
  - Diploma in IT (with professional project) is recognised at academic level 5 – the same level as the first two years of a UK degree; successful candidates are eligible for progression to UK academic level 6
  - Professional Graduate Diploma in IT (with professional project) is recognised at UK academic level 6
  - Find out more at **www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels**

BCS MEMBERSHIP – WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!

Become a BCS Student member on day one of your studies and access a wealth of professional development tools, resources and guidance to boost your progression.

When you come on board, you'll sign up to the BCS code of conduct, and join a global community of 60,000+ practitioners and business leaders, students and academics working together to raise professional and ethical standards across the technology industry.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP - WHY WOULDN'T YOU?

You need to be a BCS member to sit your HEQ exams, so it's a great idea to become a Student member as soon as you begin your learning, as you can start tapping into exclusive membership resources to support your studies. Plus, when it comes to booking your exam at the end of your study, you'll already meet the membership entry requirement and can remain focused on your exam revision.

46%
OF GLOBAL LEADERS NEED ADDITIONAL QUALIFIED IT STAFF TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS

CHOOSE YOUR IDEAL BCS STUDENT SUBSCRIPTION

FULL COURSE MEMBERSHIP

If you're studying the HEQ programme at all three levels, we recommend taking up the full course option - you'll become a BCS Student member for four years which should be enough to cover your study period.

Price: £30
Duration: Four years

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

If you're planning just the one HEQ level, or you're not yet certain you'll progress through the full qualifications programme, you could become a BCS Student member for one year at a time.
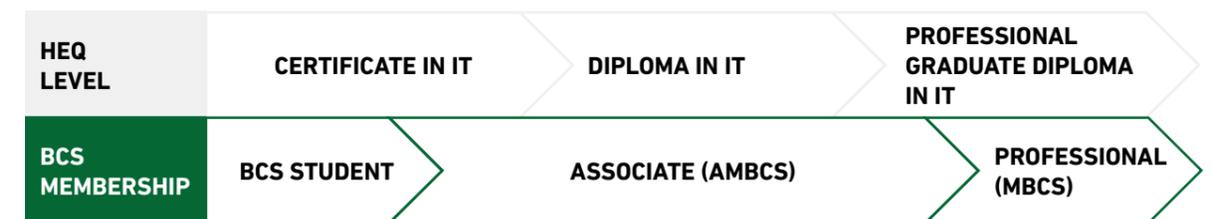
Price: £20
Duration: One year

ON THE PATH TO PROFESSIONALISM

Student membership is just the start of your BCS membership journey. Once you've joined BCS, you're set on the path to Professional (MBCS) membership and professional registrations including Chartered IT Professional (CITP) status.

Your HEQ study is fully aligned with BCS membership grades so you can upgrade your membership as you progress through the qualification levels. For example, as soon as you complete your BCS Certificate in IT, you're eligible to upgrade to Associate (AMBCS) membership where you'll gain letters after your name.

HEQ LEVEL	CERTIFICATE IN IT	DIPLOMA IN IT	PROFESSIONAL GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN IT
BCS MEMBERSHIP	BCS STUDENT	ASSOCIATE (AMBCS)	PROFESSIONAL (MBCS)

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BCS MEMBERSHIP

WATCH THE VIDEO

BCS MENTORING NETWORK

Tap into the experience of someone who's already been there. Our mentoring scheme will find you a professional mentor based on your specific needs.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY

With over 100 specialist groups, branches and international sections, it's easy to connect with the wider IT community and build your network.

SPRINGBOARD – YOUR PERSONAL CAREER CENTRE

Take advantage of your very own online career centre and manage your own career destiny! Springboard offers thousands of pages of resources and tools including:

- **CV360 platform** – draft your perfect CV then find out how it performs against the selection systems used by recruiters across industry
- **Interview simulator** – browse the questions commonly asked by employers and practise your answers in a mock interview

- **e-learning modules** – hone your business and soft skills with over 1000 self-study courses, articles and videos
- **Bite-size videos** – receive guidance and advice from employers and industry leaders on everything from boosting your commercial awareness to performing well in appraisals
- **Personal assessments** – understand your motivations, preferences and values in the workplace so you can prepare for rewarding employment
- **Publications** - access a range of BCS e-books for free

INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

Receive our membership magazine ITNOW and keep up to date with issues, innovations and advancements in the world of tech

- Mine our exclusive research reports for valuable insight to support your studies
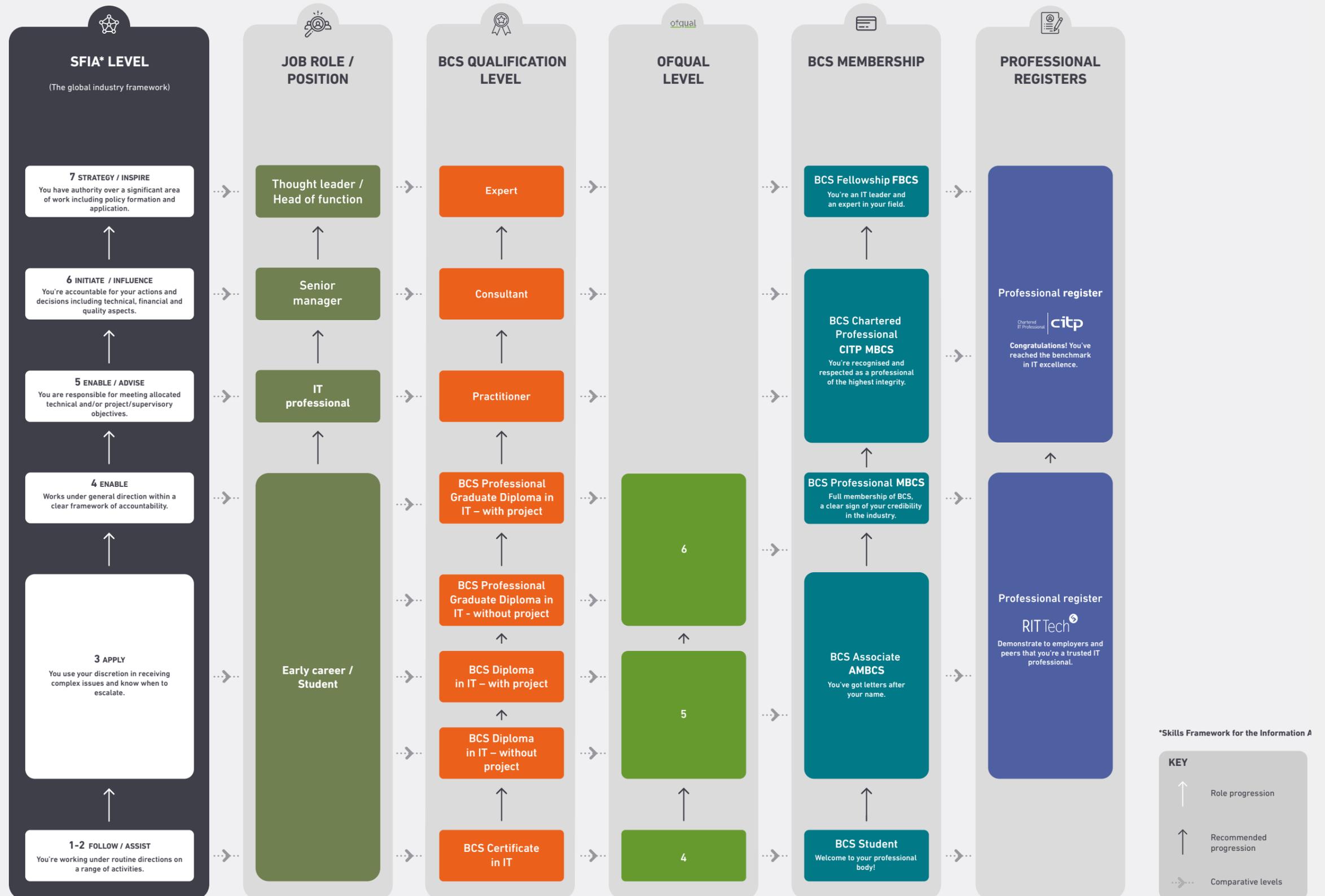- Take advantage of 20% discount across our entire BCS Bookshop

BROWSE SFIAPLUS

Explore the full SFIA (Skills for the Information Age) framework to identify your current skills level and the training and development you need to reach your professional goals.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION – WHAT IS IT?

Professional registration is a status awarded to individuals who show they meet the required standards of competence. It's a way of benchmarking yourself against the recognised industry standard and gaining independent endorsement of your skills and credibility.

As a BCS member, you can achieve the following registration:

- **Registered IT Technician (RITTech)** recognises the professionals who design, build and maintain our digital world - that's developers, programmers, testers, analysts, cyber experts, to name just a few!
- **Chartered IT Professional (CITP)** status represents the highest standard of competence and conduct in the industry, instantly demonstrating to employers, clients and colleagues the value you bring to your role.
- **Chartered Engineer (CEng)** registration demonstrates that you are a highly-skilled engineer working with complex systems, delivering innovation, creativity or change through technology solutions.
- **Incorporated Engineer (IEng)** recognises the talents of practitioners who apply current or developing technology to undertake engineering design, development, manufacture, construction or operation.

SFIA* LEVEL

(The global industry framework)

7 STRATEGY / INSPIRE
You have authority over a significant area of work including policy formation and application.

6 INITIATE / INFLUENCE
You're accountable for your actions and decisions including technical, financial and quality aspects.

5 ENABLE / ADVISE
You are responsible for meeting allocated technical and/or project/supervisory objectives.

4 ENABLE
Works under general direction within a clear framework of accountability.

3 APPLY
You use your discretion in receiving complex issues and know when to escalate.

1-2 FOLLOW / ASSIST
You're working under routine directions on a range of activities.

JOB ROLE / POSITION

Thought leader / Head of function

Senior manager

IT professional

Early career / Student

BCS QUALIFICATION LEVEL

Expert

Consultant

Practitioner

BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT – with project

BCS Professional Graduate Diploma in IT – without project

BCS Diploma in IT – with project

BCS Diploma in IT – without project

BCS Certificate in IT

OFQUAL LEVEL

6

5

4

BCS MEMBERSHIP

BCS Fellowship FBCS
You're an IT leader and an expert in your field.

BCS Chartered Professional CITP MBCS
You're recognised and respected as a professional of the highest integrity.

BCS Professional MBCS
Full membership of BCS, a clear sign of your credibility in the industry.

BCS Associate AMBCS
You've got letters after your name.

BCS Student
Welcome to your professional body!

PROFESSIONAL REGISTERS

Professional register
Chartered IT Professional citp
Congratulations! You've reached the benchmark in IT excellence.

Professional register
RITTech
Demonstrate to employers and peers that you're a trusted IT professional.

*Skills Framework for the Information A

KEY

↑ Role progression

↑ Recommended progression

⇢ Comparative levels

CONTINUING YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY WITH BCS

In the fast-moving IT industry, keeping your skills and knowledge up to date is a career long commitment!

BCS professional certifications are short, practical courses designed to support ongoing progression for IT practitioners in disciplines spanning the industry.

Like our HEQ programme, they can be studied with an accredited training provider or via self-study – and every certificate is aligned with the SFIA industry skills framework and BCS membership.

Our portfolio reflects the breadth and diversity of the IT industry enabling you to develop your skills and understanding in these areas and more:

- Agile
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
- Business analysis
- DevOps
- GDPR and data protection
- Information security and CCP assured service
- Cyber Security

- Software testing
- Solution development and architecture
- User experience (UX)

BCS professional certification is studied at foundation through to expert level and recognised in more than 100 countries around the world – so you really can go further when you're BCS certified.

Deliver our professional certifications | BCS

67%

OF LEADERS WANT TO ENHANCE IT CAPABILITY AND SKILLS IN THEIR EXISTING WORKFORCE

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Head to **bcs.org/heq** to find out more about the BCS higher education qualifications pathway.

GOT A QUESTION?

We're here to help with any queries you might have about your IT education and career goals.

CONTACT US AT:

UK / WORLDWIDE

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Email: **customerservice@bcs.uk**
Live chat

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