1. Background

1.1 Context

The proposed standard must:

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a. Be fit for purpose for whole project especially themes 1, 2 and 3
b. Be fit for all IoC partners
c. Be fit for broad industry
d. Take into account existing standards
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1.2. Requirements

1. Some overarching targets are givens:
    a. FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualifications) outcomes statement
        i. equivalents for Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland
    b. QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) subject benchmark statement
    c. (for degree apprenticeships) Institute for Apprentices (IfA) endorsement.
2. The standard needs to specify both technical and “soft” skills.
    a. The focus should be on work readiness rather than employability
3. Must meet the needs of, and be endorsed by, industry
    a. Should be able to recognise both industry-created and academic content.
    b. Should allow interoperability between HEIs and industry
    c. In particular, must support needs of SMEs

4. Must be flexible
    a. Given that there will be several curricula, a core standard with extensions may be appropriate.
        - The core might include such as coding, group work, lifecycle, soft skills.
    b. (For theme 2) – needs to support degree apprenticeships as well as degrees (L6 & L7).
    c. (for theme 3) – would be good if it were possible to specify chunks smaller than a complete degree – perhaps using some sort of “layering” or “component” model.
    d. Should link to other accreditations
        i. e.g., BCS, IET
        ii. Will be different from Tech Partnership Degrees (TPD) standards for degree apprenticeships.

Industry involvement in the development and adoption of the standard is crucial. This will require ongoing involvement of individuals from a wide range of employers from across the sector, constituting a broadly-based industrial panel.

1.3. Constraints

Development will require industrial participation in discussions and workshops.

If the standard is to be used for Degree Apprenticeships (DAs), then it needs to address a distinct space from those standards already in operation, primarily those developed/under development by Tech Partnership and ONS.

No standard is of value if it is neither accepted by the sector nor implementable. The eventual operation of the standard is outwith the discussion in this paper.

The IoC is not (yet) authorised to accredit anything – at best, it might offer a “kite mark” endorsement. Only professional bodies, such as BCS are currently able to accredit against a standard.

1.4. Opportunities

In developing the new standard, we could choose to work with existing accreditation bodies (BCS, TPD, GCHQ), and/or with other bodies such as the SFIA Foundation who manage a user-defined skills framework for the sector.

In order to distinguish the IoC standard from other standards, such as those managed by TPD, we might align it to professional qualifications, such as CITP, or CIISP.

1.5. Discussion

The separation of the standard from the curricula (workstreams 1.2, 1.3 and themes 2/3) mean that the standard itself needs to be very flexible and adaptable. This is best achieved by abstraction.

There is a marked contrast between standards such as the BCS accreditation criteria and the TPD DA standards: the former has relatively few generic requirements that can be contextualised for a particular degree, whereas the latter is essentially a long conjunctive list of requirements. Indeed, in the latter, there is no application of MoSCow (must/should/could/won't) – all requirements and sub-requirements are given equal weight.

One of the key requirements is that the standard must meet industry needs. Although foundational knowledge and principles are important, the key focus is to be on what [graduates] will be able to do. That is, it will focus on skills and outcomes, rather than on curriculum and inputs.

And, crucially, the definition of skills and outputs needs to be recognised and accepted by industry.

It may be appropriate for the standard to suggest “staged” outputs – particularly in the context of degree apprenticeships – to ensure that those following a standard are “billable” early in their studies.