



## **Recognising the Expert BA – Final Paper January 2012.**

### **Introduction**

Business Analysis practice has developed in scope and maturity over the last two decades. This has led to many organisations investing in their BA teams by defining standards, templates and approaches, and enabling BA practitioners to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result of these developments, many BAs perform senior roles with responsibility for significant improvements to their organisations.

Within such organisations there is often a career framework for the individual BAs which encompasses job role, competency and certification requirements. However, while there is formal external recognition of BA expertise through certification, currently such certifications are not targeted at the most senior BAs. While some organisations have internal recognition for their senior BAs, there have been requests – from both individual BAs and their organisational representatives – for an external recognition specifically aimed at senior BAs.

Members of the BA Manager Forum have been involved in formal and informal discussions as part of an initiative to address these requests. This included a workshop held in October 2011 to consider the skill and certification requirements in detail. These discussions resulted in the circulation of an initial white paper to approximately 50 BA practice leads in November 2011.

This final paper incorporates feedback from a broad BA community on the initial discussion paper and sets out the basis for establishing a scheme to recognise advanced capability in business analysis and assessing the suitability of potential awarding bodies for such certification. The paper addresses the following issues concerning an advanced certification for senior BAs:

- What competencies are required of senior BAs? These are defined under the three categories of professional, personal and business competency.
- How would these senior BAs be assessed and what form would this recognition take?
- Which awarding bodies are capable of developing and running such a scheme?

The term “Expert BA” is used in this paper to identify the senior BAs to be recognised but this is not intended to pre-judge the title of any final certification; it is anticipated that this will be decided in discussion with any selected awarding body. Similarly, while a suggested structure for a higher-level certification is included in this paper, it should be emphasised that this will only provide the initial basis for discussion rather than a defined certification model.

The overall aim for this initiative is to establish a certification that recognises individual BAs who possess extensive knowledge and expertise, and provides a benchmark of capability for organisations. The certification will differentiate holders from other professional BAs.

It is intended to enter discussions with potential awarding bodies in January 2012 and establish an external certification within 2012.



## Why Recognise the Expert BA?

“What next?” for the aspirational BA in terms of external recognition is a question that has been asked for many years but not yet answered. The main reasons for the need for such recognition to be externally assessed and awarded are:

- To enhance internal recognition of the skills and expertise held by senior BAs.
- To distinguish BAs with extensive skills and expertise from less accomplished BAs.
- To provide a career development path for senior BAs.
- To ensure that the BA profession is accepted at the higher level alongside other more mature disciplines

Many organisations now seek to maximise the role the BA plays in the successful delivery of change. As the BA is asked to engage earlier in the change process the stakes are raised in terms of required capability. Greater scope and authority drives a broader skill set that can include clarifying ambiguous business issues, prioritising the change portfolio, shaping strategy and providing leadership. Without the means to benchmark individuals, the organisation cannot make reliable judgements on operational ability and has no means to develop its staff to the required higher level.

In addition, higher level recognition will help identify a direction for longer term career development for BAs. This will maintain the engagement of the skilled analyst who may desire promotion within their chosen specialism rather than moving into project or operational management. Thus, while recognition in itself will not create value for organisations, the ability to offer a clear programme for developing skilled BAs in a competitive market could be the decisive factor in retaining key skills and maintaining the continuity of change delivery.

Recognition of a higher level BA role also has the potential to satisfy the highly-skilled BA who feels they are performing, or have the potential to perform, beyond that demonstrated by any currently available certification scheme. For these individuals, recognition can act as a differentiator and a means of confirming, and extending, their ability. Further it may be aspirational, setting out a goal to be achieved and additional skills to be gained. In addition, those business analysts who have already achieved senior positions with extensive responsibilities will welcome the opportunity to gain recognition for their experience and further enhance their capabilities.

## Contributors

Organisations who have contributed to this white paper include:

- Allianz
- Assist Knowledge Development
- Aviva
- Barclays
- BUPA
- Capita Children's Services
- Capital One
- Centrica
- Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission



- Co-op Financial Services
- D&B Technology
- EDF Energy
- Everything Everywhere
- Focus Group
- Friends Life
- ING Direct
- Lloyd's
- Lloyds Bank
- Network Rail
- NFU Mutual
- Npower
- Prudential
- Rolls-Royce
- Skandia
- Virgin Media
- Solicitors Regulation Authority
- The Mileage Company

## **What are the required skills?**

### ***Overview***

Professional business analysts need to demonstrate competence in three areas: personal skills relating to behaviours and attitude; professional skills relating to techniques and approaches applied within business analysis work; knowledge relating to business in general and their specialist domain in particular.

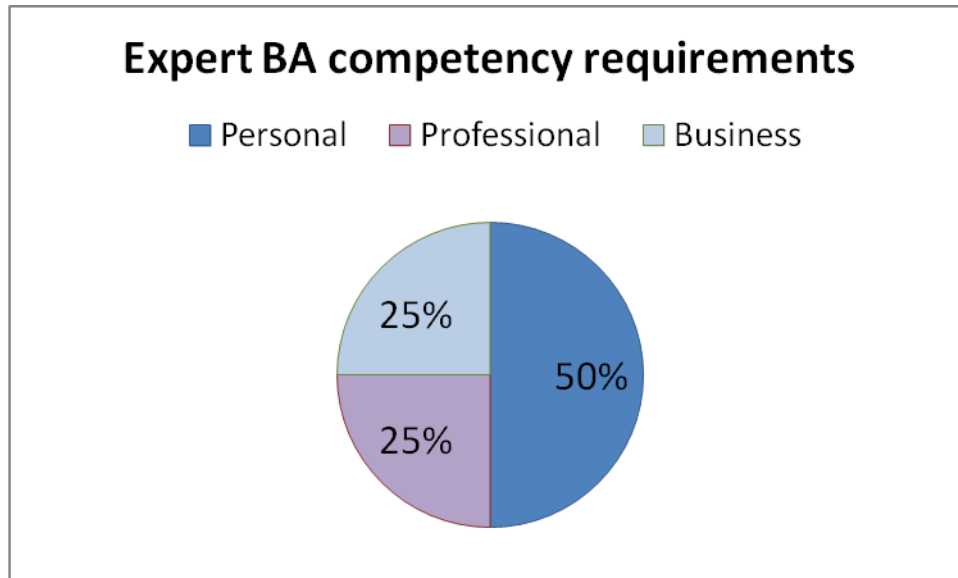
It is vital that all business analysts have this holistic basis for their skills given the range and variety of work they may be required to carry out. However, the relative weighting of the competence areas will vary depending upon the different levels of BA role.

At the entry, or junior BA, level much of the work will be focused on initial requirements elicitation and there is likely to be less engagement with stakeholders of any seniority. Where there is such engagement, it is likely that more experienced BAs will direct the work. As a result, the relative weighting will be focused towards the professional rather than the personal or business skills.

More senior BAs will tend to have greater levels of engagement with stakeholders and will be expected to understand the business context in more depth. As a result, the relative weightings will begin to move towards the personal and business areas and reduce the emphasis on professional skills.

At the Expert level, the engagement with senior stakeholders and the ability to comprehend business issues, increases significantly. The Expert BA needs to be differentiated from the senior BA by demonstrating exceptional ability to improve their organisation and deliver the strategic improvements. The personal skills area becomes the most significant, again at the expense of the specific professional skills.

The suggested weightings for an Expert BA are shown in figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Expert BA competency weightings**

### ***Identifying the skills***

The representative group attended a workshop designed to uncover the key skills required of expert BAs. The results have been rationalised to produce a workable final set that encompasses all areas raised during the workshop. In some instances, this rationalisation involved identifying a composite skill in order to ensure that all aspects were covered. For example, stakeholder relationship management is a broad area that encompasses stakeholder identification, stakeholder analysis, rapport building, diplomacy, political awareness, etc. and requires personal qualities such as emotional intelligence and networking ability.

Some skills could be defined in more than one area. Again, stakeholder relationship management, while primarily requiring personal skills, can also require knowledge of specific professional techniques. Where a skill has been identified as residing within two or more areas, the most relevant area has been selected.

A distinction has been drawn between personal attributes, for example enthusiasm or emotional intelligence, and skills. Many of the former have been identified and will form part of any Expert BA assessment. However, they do not constitute 'skills' and therefore have not been included in the rationalised list. Further, it has been important to recognise the difference between 'roles' or 'tasks' and 'skills'. For example, change management is a task requiring several skills and therefore has not been included in the list of skills; but it is envisaged that any BA working within this area would need to acquire a number of relevant skills.



## **Personal Skills**

The personal skills are listed in the table below. It is envisaged that these skills will be demonstrated through both BA work and other, possibly external, activities. For example, evidence of presentational skills may be provided through presentation delivery at industry seminars or conferences.

<b>Skill title</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Stakeholder relationship management	The co-ordination of relationships with and between key stakeholders, including those operating at the most senior level in the organisation, throughout the business change lifecycle.
Negotiation and conflict management	The resolution of issues where there are alternative desired outcomes or parties in dispute.
Leadership and influencing	The ability to influence at all levels within the organisation and external stakeholders.
Mentoring and coaching	The development of staff through mentoring and coaching.
Presentational skills	The effective delivery of business and/or technical information, either verbally or in writing.
Creative problem analysis and resolution	The analysis of business issues and the use of creative thinking techniques to generate effective solutions.

## **Professional skills**

The professional skills are listed in the table below. Where possible, the definitions have been derived from the SFIAv5 skill profiles. SFIA provides a universally applicable and adaptable framework within which skills are defined, enabling assessment of competency. Each SFIA skill is described in overview and then further defined at the relevant levels of competency. The expert BA would be expected to perform at SFIA levels 5-7 (each defined skill should be performed at least at level 5 but some will be at levels 6 or 7).

SFIA clarifies these levels as follows:

- Level 5 – *ensure and advise*
- Level 6 – *initiate, influence*
- Level 7 – *set strategy, inspire, mobilise*

SFIA is used in many organisations as a basis for creating career development frameworks and detailed descriptions of skill requirements for roles at various grades or bands. Further, senior management and HR managers may use SFIA to provide accepted reference points for benchmarking levels of skill. This approach also enables comparison between roles for grading/salary purposes. Aligning BA skills to a universally accepted framework provides an effective starting point for establishing salary parity with other disciplines requiring comparable skill levels.



Skill title	Definition
Strategic analysis	The analysis of external forces on the business environment and the internal capability and resources, in order to identify business opportunities and define longer term business direction.
Strategy execution	The interpretation of the strategic vision and objectives to define and drive forward the execution approach. The evaluation of the feasibility of the approach.
Portfolio management	The development of a portfolio management delivery framework. The evaluation, prioritisation and management of the portfolio of analysis projects required to deliver business strategies.
Business process improvement	The investigation, analysis and redesign of business processes. The delivery and management of business process improvements.
Business modelling	The production of abstract representations, at varying levels of detail, of conceptual or real world business situations.
Business system investigation and analysis	The investigation, analysis and documentation of business situations including functions, processes, information and data. The identification of issues, problems and root causes.
Requirements definition and management	The definition and management of business requirements in line with business goals. The specification of requirements to a level that enables business change delivery.
Business case development	The production of business and financial cases to assess feasibility, return on investment, risks and implications of business change options.
Business architecture	The creation and communication of defined business operating models, including those relating to business functions, processes, actors and systems. The assurance of business architecture conformance and alignment.
Benefits management	The active planning, monitoring and evaluation of benefits predicted in a business case for a business change initiative.
Risk management	The identification and analysis of business risks, the planning and implementation of actions to address the risks, and monitoring of consequent impacts.

## ***Business***

The business skills are listed in the table below. These definitions have been derived from the detailed points listed at the workshop. The business skills also reflect the importance of extended business knowledge for the Expert BA. It is anticipated that some of this may have been gained from working in other, aligned roles such as programme or business manager.

Skill title	Definition
Business domain	Knowledge and understanding of the business domain, including legislative and regulatory factors, at a market sector, organisational or functional level.





Market awareness	Knowledge and understanding of the market within which the organisation operates, including customer profiles, competitors and product/service offerings.
Organisational architecture	Knowledge and understanding of the range of operating models adopted by organisations, using both internal and external elements, in order to achieve strategic goals.
Organisational structure and behaviour (including culture)	Knowledge and understanding of how organisations behave in terms of their management processes, structures, culture and people.
Business finance	Knowledge and analysis of management accounting (budgeting, costing and investment appraisal) and financial accounting (financial reporting and ratio analysis).
Commercial awareness	The ability to view business situations from a commercial perspective show political nous and work with the culture and internal politics. This requires the range of skills identified within the Business skills area.

While these tables provide a comprehensive list, it is not anticipated that certification would require an Expert BA to possess the entire set. Within the business and professional skills, in particular, the certification will need to be sufficiently flexible in order to accommodate BA specialisation and BAs working in different sectors of the economy. However, it is expected that the majority of skills identified would be held, particularly in the personal skills area. The breadth of skills shown above, and the depth required to perform at SFIA levels 5-7, sets out a high level of attainment for Expert BAs. Any certification will need to align with this standard which may not be suitable, or achievable, for all BAs. Further, some BAs may not wish to progress to this level.

## Assessment approaches

### ***BA Manager Forum Workshop Views***

The representative group identified a set of potential assessment approaches for the areas of capability requiring measurement. The approaches, listed below, are expressed in general terms and may be used to assess a range of capabilities.

- Assessment centre – to include case study exercise, presentation, interview/Q&A.
- References/sponsorship/business mentor views.
- Evidenced portfolio/log book of experience with appropriate sign off.
- Peer review.
- Contribution to accepted best practice.
- Self assessment – the individual actively seeking feedback was seen as a key attribute.
- Personal observation in the workplace.
- Placement of the prospective Expert BA in an alternative environment to demonstrate core skills.

No means of assessment was allocated to a particular skill or behaviour during the workshop. The group requested further information on the approaches to assessment within other professions to enable a wider consideration of what might be possible. The means of assessment from the disciplines of insurance, accountancy and HR are shown below, in



In addition, the structure adopted for the Chartered IT Professional, Cisco qualifications and the APM Project Management are detailed.

<b>Discipline/awarding body</b>	<b>Levels of Assessment</b>	<b>Means of assessment</b>	<b>Points of interest</b>
Chartered Institute of Insurance	Certificate	Basic computer tests	The chance to specialise in chosen area of expertise  Higher level assessment focuses on the more practical "how do we do it"  Working practice consolidates examination for higher level award
	Diploma	5 exams	
	Advanced diploma	Case studies – four key elements	
	Chartered status	Advanced diploma + 5 years post qualification experience	
Chartered Institute of Management Accountants	Associate	3 years practice signed by a witness + 15 exams.	Proposed and seconded a useful means of taking membership  Experiential element is recognised at a mid-ranking level.  Again, a mix of examination and experience  Consider legal requirements for chartered status
	Fellow	Additional appropriate experience at a senior level	
	Chartered	12 professional papers + 3 advanced papers + 450 hours of approved technical work.	
Chartered Institute of Personnel Management	Foundation level	Modular approach with examination	Mix of course input/assignment and examination.  Opportunity to specialise e.g. talent management, employment law, organisational design.  Choice of approaches to suit individual
	Intermediate level	Modular approach allowing for specialism. Typical six month process with clear timetable including; skill development workshops, telephone support and online support.	
	Advanced level	Options on exam or continuous assessment routes in specialist	





Discipline/ awarding body	Levels of Assessment	Means of assessment	Points of interest
		<p>topics.</p> <p>Continuous assessment = 1 day workshop followed by 3,000 word assignment for each module</p> <p>Exam route – 1 x 3,000 word assignment and final examination.</p>	<p>preference – continuous assessment or more exam based.</p>
<p>Association for Project Management</p>	<p>APM Introductory Certificate</p> <p>APMP</p> <p>Practitioner qualification</p> <p>Certified Project manager</p>	<p>Multiple choice exam</p> <p>Scenario-based examination covering 37 syllabus topics</p> <p>Residential assessment to include individual work on a case study and group work discussing and solving problems relating to the case study. Also interview by assessors.</p> <p>Project assessment, application form, self assessment form (strengths and weaknesses) CV presentation and project précis with a project report and interview panel of assessors.</p>	<p>A single but multi-faceted assessment.</p>
<p>Cisco Career Certification Program</p>	<p>Entry</p> <p>Associate</p> <p>Professional</p> <p>Expert</p> <p>Architect</p>	<p>Written examination</p> <p>Written examination</p> <p>Written examination</p> <p>Design scenario examination</p> <p>Examination – architecture challenge set for completion,</p>	<p>Progressive and very structured approach.</p> <p>High kudos and the defacto standard for anyone specialising in the Cisco skill set. Qualification can be an absolute pre-condition for many employers.</p> <p>Limited availability of highest level exam.</p>



Discipline/ awarding body	Levels of Assessment	Means of assessment	Points of interest
BCS	Professional Certifications (ISEB)  - Foundation  - Practitioner  - Diploma  Chartered IT Professional  Fellowship	Written examination comprising 40 multiple-choice questions  Scenario-based written examinations  1 Foundation certification, 3 practitioner certifications, oral examination  Stage 1 - CV and personal statement + one or more supporters to validate application  Stage 2 - Breadth of knowledge test – 75 multiple choice questions  Stage 3 – Assessment interview – presentation and questions from two assessors on area of specialism.  Application form + CV submitted. This includes details of supporters.  Supporters are contacted for reports.  Peer assessment by the Fellowship panel.  Possible interview.	Supporter validation (employer, client or colleague – 3 year history)  Based on three factors: eminence – recognition within the industry and contribution made to the industry; authority-respected for knowledge and expertise in a particular specialism; seniority – an individual in a senior position, for example, is managing 50 or more staff and/or has responsibility for a large project team.
IIBA	Certified Business Analysis Professional™ (CBAP®)	Pre-requisites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 7500 hours of BA work experience aligned with the <i>BABOK® Guide</i> in the last 10 years</li> </ul>	



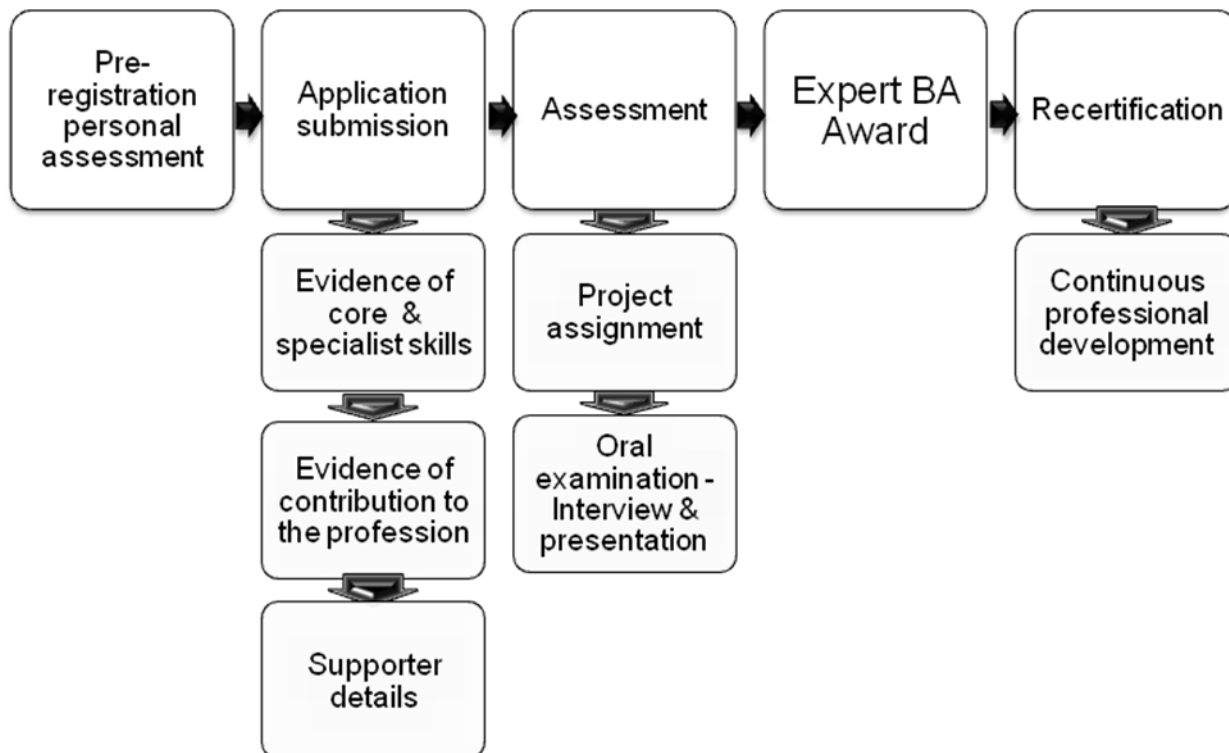
Discipline/ awarding body	Levels of Assessment	Means of assessment	Points of interest
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum 900 hours in four of the six knowledge areas</li> <li>• Minimum 21 hours of Professional Development in the past four years.</li> </ul> <p>Plus two references.</p> <p>Written examination, multiple-choice.</p>	<p>3.5 hours/150 multiple choice questions. The examination is based on v2.0 of the <i>BABOK® Guide</i></p>
	<p>Certificate of Competency in Business Analysis™ (CCBA™).</p>	<p>As above but minimum 3750 hours of BA work experience aligned with the <i>BABOK® Guide</i> in the last seven years.</p>	<p>3.5 hours/150 multiple choice questions. The examination is based on v2.0 of the <i>BABOK® Guide</i></p>

### **Key Findings on Approaches**

A blended approach to recognition has evolved to suit the demands of the role and required capabilities for each discipline or profession. Common themes include:

- Higher levels of accreditation exist for most professions as part of a tiered accreditation structure.
- The opportunity to specialise at the higher levels of accreditation is common practice.
- Chartered status is the accepted highest level. Only some awarding bodies are able to bestow chartered status.
- Mix of examination, practical assessment, case study and interview is the most common combination of assessment at the higher levels of accreditation.
- Supporter validation (proposing, seconding and referencing) is usually required.
- Continued professional development is expected for most professional awarding bodies.

The diagram below represents an overview of a potential assessment model for the certification.



## Accreditation Bodies

The BA Management Forum briefly explored “who” should provide certification. The key points were:

- A strong preference was expressed for external certification based upon employer requirements.
- Continuing professional development should be a part of any offering.
- Any framework should as far as possible be “self-managing”. Individuals seeking higher recognition should have a clear process to follow that they can engage in.
- No particular body was named during the session as being preferred. It was requested that options for further consideration. are presented in this paper

## ***Bodies of Accreditation - Available Options***

The initial investigation has identified the following awarding bodies with the potential to offer certification for expert BAs:

- Chartered Management Institute – The chartered professional body in the UK dedicated to promoting standards in management and leadership. Owner of management certification scheme.
- BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT – The chartered professional body for the IT industry. Member of SFIA Foundation. Owner of BA certification scheme leading to Diploma in Business Analysis.



- APM Group – An international awarding body specialising in the accreditation and certification of organisations, processes and people, within a range of industries and management disciplines. Has licence for Prince2, DSDM Atern and ITIL qualifications.
- Business Schools/universities offering post-graduate business qualifications.

There are two approaches to working with the awarding bodies: one approach is to work solely with one awarding body; alternatively, it is possible to consider certification from joint awarding bodies.

## **Next steps**

Additional consultation will take place with senior BAs and their managers to:

- Further validate the requirements and perceived value of higher level recognition.
- Assess the perceived value of higher level recognition and the corresponding level of commitment to operating a pilot certification scheme.
- Refine the understanding of the competencies to be included in the certification.
- Clarify the requirements of an awarding body.

This final briefing document will form the basis of discussions with relevant awarding bodies to evaluate their capability to offer the required certification to senior BAs.

## **Summary**

This paper has set out the views of the BA Manager Forum members regarding the need for recognition of Expert BAs, the skills required at the Expert level and the options available for providing such recognition. Any certification will need to be relevant and rigorous, incorporating a means of assessing the breadth of skills set out in this paper. Further work will be carried out to explore the potential for this certification following the launch of this paper.