

ICDL Drives ICT Literacy

Advertisement

Taking PC users into 21st century

ONE major step for Australia's PC users was the introduction four years ago of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL). Essentially, it is a practical, flexible and cost-effective way of learning, testing and certifying basic computer skills.

With over three million participants worldwide in more than 100 countries, the ICDL is recognised as the international standard for computer literacy by employers, educational institutions and Government agencies.

Providing basic computer survival skills for work, home or study, the ICDL is aimed (as a guide) at anyone from 10 to 84 years.

There are now more than 30,000 individuals registered for the ICDL qualification across Australia through over 400 accredited test centres. The ICDL is endorsed and administered in Australia by the Australian Computer Society (ACS).

The ICDL is not a training course but rather a standard of basic competency that is acknowledged through testing.

It is based on the successful European Computer Driving Licence scheme (ECDL) and is governed by the ECDL Foundation in member countries including Australia, the UK and the US.

Within Australia, individuals who pass the ICDL examination benefit by demonstrating they have the skills to correctly use the most common PC applications, and employers recognise its possession as proof of competency among potential recruits.

The ICDL has been shown to improve workplace productivity, increase returns from investments in ICT and reduce ICT support costs. It also reduces the inherent risks in recruiting, hiring and promoting staff. As for return



on investment, the British Computer Society has already calculated that each employee who is ICDL-qualified saves an average of 38 minutes per day through their new found ability to operate their PC and its applications to optimum performance.

The BCS also found a sharp improvement in morale from 65 per cent to 83 per cent, demonstrating that the ICDL benefits more than just the bottom line.

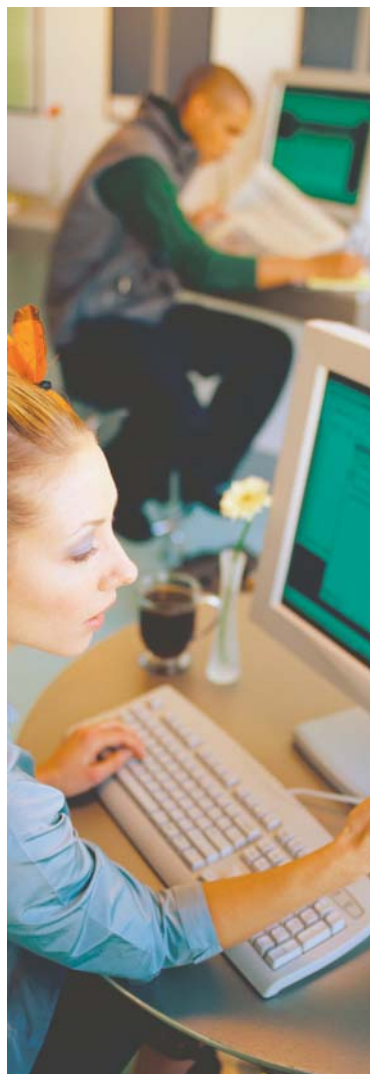
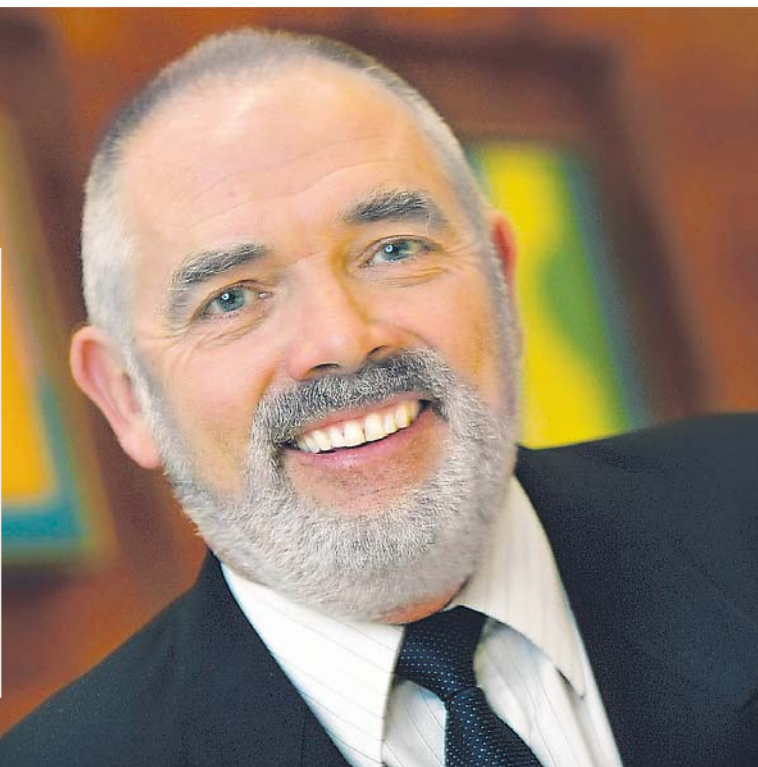
A recent poll of 10,000 people who had completed their ICDL program showed that apart from a gratifying 95 per cent satisfaction rating, almost two thirds of those polled had chosen the ICDL because of its broad recognition as a computer skills qualification. In addition, 97 per cent said they would recommend the ICDL to family, friends and colleagues.

"The ICDL has become the most widely recognised international certification in the field of ICT, because it targets the full spectrum of the population and has the support and supervision of the industry's professional societies around the globe," said Richard Hogg, ACS National President.

"Whilst not a criteria for ACS membership, the ICDL allows us to promote the effective and beneficial use of ICT amongst the wider community."

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ACS National President



Looking to reduce your Help Desk costs?



There's more to the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) than meets the eye. While not relevant to IT professionals, the ICDL is an IT Manager's dream come true.

Designed to equip staff with basic IT literacy skills, the ICDL will reduce your Help Desk costs, improve the return on your IT investment and establish a method of identifying IT training needs. ICDL also makes it possible to eliminate the risks of hiring, by demonstrating that an individual has the skills to operate a range of everyday computer applications.

With 3 million users worldwide in over 100 countries, it's no wonder private and public organisations around Australia are insisting their employees have an ICDL.

ICDL > The Worldwide standard for basic IT literacy.

1800 626 029
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Addressing computer illiteracy

COMPETITION in the business world is global and information-based. As a result, knowledge of computers is critical for anyone wishing to succeed in the workforce. Given the global nature of technology and the business world, a certification of an individual's technology skills that is acceptable and recognisable worldwide would benefit everyone.

Certification has become a more important measurement for employers in validating the knowledge and skills of employees, especially in ICT.

Although only four years old, the ICDL has created a recognisable computer literacy standard for employers and job seekers throughout Australia. Its mission is to provide every individual with basic computer skills and certification required to participate in a global digital society.

Numerous technology standards, goals and guidelines targeting computer literacy have been developed at industry level with standards for employees. Few, if any, are self-contained, providing the resources and materials mapped to the specific requirements.

ICDL Process

THE ICDL certification process requires no prior knowledge of ICT concepts. It also provides a means for anyone to document their acquired knowledge and skills through a series of performance-based tests, confirming the holder of this licence has up-to-date computer skills.

Skills can be acquired through training programs and materials specially designed for the ICDL program. The



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process consists of a documented series of application-based tests available through a convenient network of training and test centres.

The ICDL consists of seven modules with detailed syllabi for each module:

1. Basic Concepts of IT
2. Using the Computer and Managing Files
3. Word Processing
4. Spreadsheets
5. Databases
6. Presentations
7. Internet and E-mail

The ICDL is issued upon successful completion of the seven 45-minute test modules, which consist of 35 to 40 questions each.

In Australia, over 10 learning and testing providers are offering approved learning material for ICDL using proven learning meth-

odologies combined with the latest technology in eLearning development.

Advantages of ICDL

ONE main difference between the ICDL and other training and certification programs is that the ICDL is vendor-neutral and can be adapted to users of most major commercial software applications.

Training can be provided with a traditional textbook approach and/or on-screen software. Participants can gain the knowledge and skills needed to earn the ICDL certification in a variety of ways, such as through coursework at the secondary or post-secondary level.

According to Trudy Turnbull, ICDL Business Development Manager, a number of textbooks from various publishing companies have been developed to support the ICDL requirements, allowing students to learn on their own or in a classroom environment.

Achievement of the ICDL certification provides a solid basis on which to build more ICT skills. And when combined with the resources to provide such training, computer literacy is not only attainable — it's measurable.

Getting Started

If you're interested in obtaining your ICDL or if you'd like to become an accredited test centre, contact the ACS on 1800 626 029, email icdl@acs.org.au or visit us at www.acs.org.au/icdl

Energising Government

THE NSW Department of Lands, formerly the NSW Department of Information Technology and Management (DITM), has recently launched its in-house ICDL program for up to 1000 staff members.

According to a spokesperson for the Learning and Development Unit, the ICDL program is already showing benefits including raising the general level of computer competence, improving productivity in the workplace and reducing user support costs.

"This approach to implementing the ICDL is flexible, cost-effective and allows staff to manage their own learning," she added.

Organising the program with a blend of online, face-to-face teaching and mentoring, the Department's Learning and Development Unit sought a practical and flexible approach which would meet the varying needs of its staff.

The Department chose to roll out its ICDL program using the online learning solution from Webster Publishing. This allowed staff to

access the program, via the Internet from their workstation, at home or in the Department's Learning rooms.

In addition, the Department of Lands has been working with TAFE colleges throughout NSW for face-to-face learning and testing, as required.

In Queensland, the ICDL program has received strong support from all sectors of business and the community, including the Brisbane City Council, which is the largest local government body in the southern hemisphere. BCC has adopted the ICDL throughout the organisation as a benchmark for all staff.

In Canberra, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) has selected the ICDL as the ICT skills delivery tool for new recruits.

As the unique institution that helps develop the future leaders of the Australian Defence force, ADFA understands the value of broad-based ICT skills for the future.

In addition, the Northern Territory Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS) is piloting the ICDL program with a view

to making it available to all government employees in the near future. Other state departments have also expressed interest in the program and the value it can provide.

From a global perspective, one of the first organisations in the public sector to move towards qualifying the computer skills of staff is the UK-based National Health Service (NHS).

As one of the world's largest employers with 1.3 million employees, the NHS recognised the increasing role that computing skills had to play within the public health sector.

This was identified as a crucial element of the vast NHS Connect program, undertaken to upgrade the entire information system infrastructure to allow all patient records to be kept and accessed electronically.

The ICDL allows the NHS to maximise on this multi-million pound investment, providing a comprehensive and measurable standard of computing skills for its 1.3 million employees.

Cultivating ICT Ability

PEOPLE with disabilities and the disadvantaged are expanding their computer skills and their employment prospects through ICT certification.

Computers are often seen as enabling all sections of the community to benefit from technology, but many people with disabilities have not received even basic training on how to get the most from IT. This skills shortage can lead to their exclusion from the workforce.

"It is very important that the ICDL is accessible to all and that people with disabilities can work towards the same ICDL standard as everyone else," said Dennis Furini, ACS Chief Executive.

"The progress of such initiatives is helping to combat the digital divide and to ensure that all members of society can maximise their education and employment prospects through certification with ICDL."

Bridging the Digital Divide

FOLLOWING the launch of the NSW Government's 10-Point ICT Skills Action Plan, Skilling People for an Information Society, 10,000 people in the NSW community gained basic computer skills and received their ICDL.

The program was implemented as a result of the NSW Premier's Information and Communications Technology Skills Forum, which highlighted estimates that a third of Australia's adults lack the skills to use a computer and half lack the skills to use the Internet. The Forum identified a need to increase the basic skills levels of both groups.

The ICDL became a focal point for tuition to extend computer literacy within the community, with an injection of \$6.5 million from the NSW Government.

Essentially, the program provided free tuition and assessment support to enable 10,000 people to gain basic computer skills.

By specifically focusing on the general community, mature age workers, regional and remote communities and equity target groups, the program helped to bridge the "digital divide".

It served not only to meet social justice objectives but also to raise skills levels in



the workforce outside the ICT industry and indirectly contribute to the meeting of specialised skills shortages by expanding the pool of people who could progress to higher-level IT programs.

Assisting the Disabled

AT 47 and blind from a work-related accident, Marcus Morgan enrolled in the ICDL program at Strathfield Regional Community College in January this year.

Strathfield Regional Community College run the ICDL program in an instructor-led environment with access to eLearning.

Despite having no prior computer skills, Marcus has been using a computer with the assistance of an aid.

The result? He has just passed the Module 1 exams for ICDL and has indicated his commitment to complete the entire program.

"The ICDL fills the gap for those with no computer knowledge," said Marcus, who has found the support and expertise from his teacher, Glenn Woof, to be invaluable. He has also benefited from plenty of hands-on support from the entire class.

Last year at the Redfern Community Foundation (RCF), Phuong, a deaf immigrant from Vietnam, received her ICDL certificate.

"With my disability, using a computer is very convenient since I can communicate via the internet," said Phuong.

"The ICDL course taught me how to use a computer and has given me a basic



knowledge of computers."

In Sweden, a special computer-training course for people with dyslexia is currently being developed. Attendees are taught general computer knowledge and how to use computer-based aids. They also have the opportunity to earn their ICDL certification. The course aims to provide them with the skills and confidence to gain a formal education and/or a job.

In Northern Ireland, two deaf girls

have been using ICDL programs to enhance their members' employment prospects.

Deaf students in the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) in Northern Ireland are being taught ICDL programs through sign language, while Hands that Talk, one of Ireland's largest cross-community deaf groups, offers ICDL certification as part of a wide range of educational courses.



Dennis Furini: certifying real skills

Schools give ICDL highest marks

WIDELY recognised as the international benchmark for core computer skills qualifications, the ICDL continues to gain acceptance among the education community.

Mapped against Certificates I and II of the IT & T Training Package, ICDL has seen an increasing number of students and teachers participating in the ICDL.

Over 200 schools in Australia, including Sacred Heart College (SA), Knox School (VIC) Hobart College (TAS), SCEGGS Darlinghurst (NSW) and the Alice Springs School of the Air (NT), are driving computer literacy skills programs based on the ICDL.

"ICDL is about a lot of things but for the Alice Springs School of the Air, it is about providing a focus on skills," said William Newman, the school's ICDL evangelist.

"In this way, it is just as

relevant for staff as it is for students."

"The rapid uptake by the Education community of this program is testament to its effectiveness in certifying real ICT skills for the real world," said Dennis Furini, ACS Chief Executive.

"By integrating the ICDL into the ICT curriculum, educational institutions around the country have not only raised basic ICT literacy levels in the classroom but have also identified skills-gaps in ICT knowledge and established foundation competencies for further education and training for staff and students."

Students of all ages are harnessing the power of technology, including Nicole Lim, a student at Queenwood School for Girls in the Sydney suburb of Mosman, who, two years ago, was named the youngest person in the world to be accredited with her ICDL.

Upgrading ICT skills can cut costs

PROVIDING employees with a recognised level of computer competency that will maximise the effective use of ICT functionality is proving a challenge for managers in the public and private sector.

As the implementation of new computing technology continues to outpace employees' skills, the effect on workforce morale is starting to be recognised as a real business issue with a measurable associated cost.

New hardware, systems and software upgrades, combined with the integration of complementary technologies such as mobile communications and their impact on information management, are now placing enormous burdens on employees.

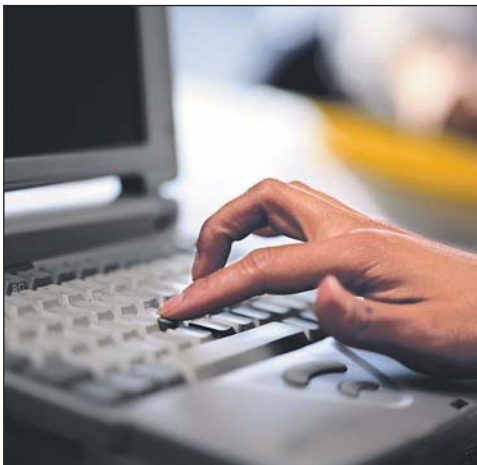
The low level of computer skills qualifications within the public sector has often been attributed to management concern over the perceived costs of committing budget to an area where knowledge and competency is assumed.

Organisations like Sharp and Philips Electronics have identified this as an issue and understand the substantial benefits of a qualified workforce.

Sharp is about to put some 500 dealers through the ICDL to ensure basic computer literacy skills in the channel while Philips Electronics will shortly implement ICDL training and assessment across the organisation.

Research has shown that staff with qualified levels of computing competency will reduce support costs and time wasted due to lack of computer skills and general IT knowledge.

According to the results of a recent survey undertaken in Italy, ICDL-certified competency in basic computer skills can also help reduce running costs for businesses. The comprehensive study, Cost of Ignorance in the Infor-



computer problems, costing the country's economy EUR15 billion annually.

But the researchers also discovered that basic ICDL preparation can help slash the cost of computer ignorance by dramatically increasing the efficiency of staff who use computers.

Cap Gemini Ernst & Young Norway also undertook some research to document the hidden ICT cost in the Norwegian workforce.

It revealed that in spite of more standardised and intuitive user interfaces, the average computer user wastes more time on ICT problems than any other.

In fact, the average user loses three hours per week, which translates to 136 hours per year, demonstrating that the cost of ICT-related problems can indeed be significant in any organisation.

How Kerrie beat the age barrier

FEW would question the increasingly strategic role that technology is playing across all industry sectors, as the automation of previously manual processes delivers greater productivity.

Business is now so dependent on technology that it demands a high standard of ICT competence, skills and knowledge from its workers. And Kerrie Newton is no different.

Retrenched after 20 years in the hospitality industry, Newton knew her mature age and lack of computing skills could hamper her chances of employment.

Being unemployed and mature-aged, she knew after scanning the job vacancies that she would need good computing skills to succeed in a highly competitive

job market. Kerrie had never even turned on a computer before embarking on the ICDL program at TAFE NSW Southern Sydney Institute's Lidcombe College.

She completed the WorkSkills course in conjunction with the Certificate I in Information Technology and the ICDL program.

Toward the end of the program, Kerrie noticed an advertisement for a Food and Beverage Manager at Harold Park Raceway. The main requirements of the job (aside from previous experience in the Hospitality industry) were to give PowerPoint presentations, and to use Word and Excel extensively.

Applying her newly-acquired skills to prepare her resume and lodge an appli-

cation for the position by email, Newton was able to use the ICDL to establish her PC competence and eligibility. To Kerrie's delight, she was appointed to the position of Food and Beverages Manager at Harold Park Raceway on completion of her ICDL course. She credits the ICDL program for her success as it equipped her with the necessary computing skills required for the position.

Kerrie's experience is being repeated throughout business and the community, as corporate and government programs put users through their paces.

And proving that age is no barrier, the oldest ICDL participant in Australia is an 84-year-old gentleman from the southern suburbs of Sydney, who has been attending ICDL courses at St. George and Sutherland Community College!



Working for the growth and development of the ICT Industry.

As the professional body representing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) practitioners, the Australian Computer Society (ACS) plays a critical and growing role in establishing and promoting standards of excellence.

Through its highly-regarded certification, education and research initiatives, the ACS is helping the ICT industry grow and develop, whilst promoting the beneficial use of ICT amongst the community at large. See for yourself how our ICT-based initiatives can assist your organisation and your people to gain a competitive edge.



Industry-Leading Certification - Advancing ICT Professionals

As the leading program of its type in Australasia and South-East Asia, the ACS Certification Program certifies specialist ICT knowledge. ACS Certification is a global learning program and offers masters level subjects on specialist ICT topics. It is formally recognised by a number of educational institutions, which credit Certification subjects towards relevant post-graduate qualifications. Tel: 1800 671 003 >> www.acs.org.au/certification



ACS Foundation - Investing in the Future of the ICT Industry

Established in August 2001, the ACS Foundation encourages both private and public sponsorship of ICT higher education and research projects. By increasing funding opportunities for industry to contribute to education programs, the foundation aims to create a highly skilled workforce, able to effectively access research and industry-specific training. Tel: 1800 626 029 >> www.acsfoundation.com.au



International Computer Driving Licence - Promoting Basic Computer Skills to Individuals and the Community at Large

Administered by the ACS, the ICDL program is a practical, flexible and cost-effective way of learning, testing and certifying basic computer skills. With over 3 million participants worldwide in over 100 countries, the ICDL is recognised as the international standard for computer literacy. As a basic competency standard, the ICDL is not a criteria for ACS membership. Tel: 1800 626 029 >> www.acs.org.au/icdl

To find out more about ACS membership or to discover how ACS initiatives support individuals in the community, industry, government and educational institutions, call us on 1 800 626 029, visit www.acs.org.au or email us at membersupport@acs.org.au