

Reinventing Computer Literacy: IC³ and ICDL Paths to Certification

Computer Literacy is being debated, redefined, and reinvented. Antiquated computer literacy definitions and practices are being scrutinized in light of global IT demands and concerns. The push for a new, global redefinition of computer literacy is coming from many directions, but two uniquely different yet complementary camps stand out. IC³ (Internet and Computer Core Certification) and ICDL (International Computer Driving License) are two dynamic certification strategies pushing current dialog, understanding, and standardization of computer literacy for the 21st century.

IC³ and ICDL represent two somewhat different yet complementary “flavors” of computer literacy. Although originating on different continents, the goals of IC³ and ICDL focus on globally recognized standards of computer literacy within the IT and education communities. These standards are under continuous examination and evaluation. The standards represented by the IC³ and the ICDL models are “standardized” (standards-based) and “normalized” (normed) for validity and portability.

IC3, originating in North America, is under the auspices of Certiport and continues to gain recognition as it expands globally. Certiport, Inc. is a leading provider of global, performance-based certification programs and services designed to enable individual success and advancement through certification.

ICDL, originating in Europe on the ECDL (European Computer Driving License) model, is under the governance of ECDL Foundation Ltd. With wide acceptance in Europe, ICDL continues to gain recognition as it expands worldwide and in North America.

IC³ -- a closer look. IC³ is based on refereed standards and comprehensive objectives. Three major areas are covered in an IC³ – aligned curriculum and on the IC³ exams:

1. Computing Fundamentals
2. Key Applications
3. Living Online

IC³ — Computing Fundamentals

This exam covers the following areas:

Computer Hardware:

Identify different types of computers, how computers work (process information) and how individual computers fit into larger systems

Identify the function of computer hardware components and common problems associated with individual components

Identify issues relating to computer performance and how it is affected by different components of the computer

Identify the factors that go into a decision on how to purchase a computer or select a computer for work, school, or home

Computer Software:

Identify how software works and how software and hardware work together to perform computing tasks

Identify different types of software, the tasks for which each type of software is most suited, and the popular programs in each software category

Using an Operating System:

Identify what an operating system is and how it works

Be able to manipulate and control the Windows desktop, files and disks

Be able to change system settings and install software

IC³ — Key Applications

This exam covers the following areas:

Common Program Functions:

- Be able to start and exit a Windows application and utilize sources of online help
- Identify common on-screen elements of Windows applications, change application settings, and manage files within an application
- Perform common editing (cut, copy, paste, spell check, etc.) and formatting (fonts, margins, tabs, etc.) functions
- Perform common printing functions

Word Processing Functions:

- Be able to format text and documents including the ability to use automatic formatting tools
- Be able to add tables and graphics to a document

Spreadsheet Functions:

- Be able to modify worksheet data and structure
- Be able to sort data and manipulate data using formulas and functions
- Be able to format a worksheet
- Be able to add pictures and charts to a worksheet

IC³ — Living Online

This exam covers the following areas:

Networks and the Internet:

- Identify network fundamentals and the benefits and risks of network computing
- Identify the relationship between computer networks, other communications networks (like the telephone network) and the Internet

Electronic Mail:

- Identify how electronic mail works
- Identify how to use an electronic mail application
- Identify the appropriate use of e-mail and e-mail related "netiquette"

Using the Internet:

- Identify different types of information sources on the Internet
- Be able to use a Web browsing application
- Be able to search the Internet for information

The Impact of Computing and the Internet on Society:

- Identify how computers are used in different areas of work, school, and home
- Identify the risks of using computer hardware and software
- Identify how to use the Internet safely and legally

Source: <http://www.certipoint.com/yourPersonalPath/ic3Certification/skills.asp>

In order to earn IC³ certification, one exam in each of the three areas must be passed. Exams may be taken in any order. Each exam takes less than an hour to complete and may be taken at any IC³ testing center.

ICDL -- a closer look. As with IC³, ICDL requires no prior knowledge of IT concepts. An ICDL aligned curriculum is based on seven modules with detailed syllabi for each as follows:

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

MODULE 1 - FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

When you complete this module, you'll know about the basic physical make-up of a personal computer and understand some of the fundamental concepts of IT, such as:

Data storage and memory.

How computer-based software applications are used in home computing and on the job.

What computer information networks are and how they're used.

You'll also learn:

How IT systems are found in everyday situations.

How personal computers can affect your health.

Some of the security and legal issues associated with computers.

MODULE 2 - USING THE COMPUTER AND MANAGING FILES

When you complete this module, you'll be able to demonstrate knowledge and competence in using the essential functions of a personal computer and its operating system, including:

Operating effectively within the desktop environment.

Managing and organizing files and directories/folders.

Copying, moving, and deleting files and directories/folders.

Working with desktop icons and manipulating windows.

Using the search features, simple editing tools, and print management facilities available within an operating system.

MODULE 3 - WORD PROCESSING

When you complete this module, you'll be able to use a word processing application on a personal computer. You'll be able to:

Carry out operations associated with creating, formatting, and finishing a word processing document ready for distribution.

Create standard tables.

Use pictures and images within a document.

Import objects.

Use mail merge tools.

MODULE 4 - SPREADSHEETS

When you complete this module, you'll understand the fundamental concepts of spreadsheets and be able to use a spreadsheet application on a personal computer, including:

- Developing, formatting, and using a spreadsheet.
- Using basic formulas and functions to accomplish standard mathematical and logical operations.
- Importing objects.
- Creating graphs and charts.

MODULE 5 - DATABASES

When you complete this module, you'll understand the principal concepts of databases and be able to use a database application on a personal computer. You'll be able to:

- Design and plan a simple database using a standard database package.
- Retrieve information from an existing database by using the query, select, and sort tools available in the database.
- Create and modify reports.

MODULE 6 - PRESENTATIONS

When you complete this module, you'll be able to use presentation tools on a personal computer, including:

- Creating, formatting, and preparing a variety of presentations for different target audiences or situations.
- Using graphics, charts, and various slide show effects.

MODULE 7 - INTERNET AND EMAIL

When you complete this module, you'll be able to:

- Accomplish Web search tasks using a Web browser application and available search engine tools.
- Bookmark search results.
- Print Web pages and search reports.

You'll also be able to use electronic mail software to:

- Send and receive messages.
- Attach documents or files to a message.
- Organize and manage message folders or directories within electronic mail software.

Source: <http://www.icdlus.com/syllabus.html>

Candidates for ICDL certification must initially register by visiting the ICDL web site and paying a small fee. Candidates must successfully pass a test on each module in order to earn certification. There is no specified order for completing each respective module, but each candidate is given two years to complete the certification process. Each test takes less than an hour to complete and may be taken at an ICDL ATC (Authorized Testing Center).

IC³ and ICDL Q&A.

Q: Which is the better approach -- IC³ or ICDL?

A: Although the question is good, neither IC³ nor ICDL can be identified as superior to the other. It is fair to say that both are aligned to globally recognized technology standards. Both are validated on standards and norms. Both are dynamic. Both lead to foundational technology concept and skill development.

Q: There is an alphabet soup of technology certifications. Why should I consider either of these (IC³ or ICDL) over any of the others?

A: IC³ and ICDL provide a strong foundation thus providing a sound background for further technology study. Also, IC³ and ICDL fill in many of the gaps that other skills-based training programs never attempt to address.

Q: My world is Macintosh. What do IC³ and ICDL offer me?

A: IC³ and ICDL offer a validated suite of standards, objectives, and concepts. As for specific skills, you'd have to modify and adapt, but it is possible.

Q: Does this mean that I may have to purchase all new training materials?

A: No, this really has less to do with training materials and more to do with aligning what is currently taught with IC³ and/or ICDL standards and syllabi. From there, you'd evaluate and fill in the gaps.

Q: Where do I find the details about these two certifications?

A: The specifics about IC³ and ICDL are listed on the websites given below.

Q: I used to do some technology training in a large firm. Then, I worked as a trainer in a technology center. Now, I teach computer application classes in a secondary school. Would either IC³ or ICDL be appropriate in any of these settings?

A: Absolutely! A modern, standards-based, comprehensive internationally recognized certification targeted at 21st century technology concepts and skills should be appropriate for all three of the areas you identified.

Conclusion. IC³ and ICDL are redefining and reinventing computer literacy. IC³ and ICDL certification are unique, globally recognized certification programs offering learners the opportunity to demonstrate computer and Internet literacy. IC³ and ICDL are ideal starting points for those interested in learning computer and Internet basics with sufficient Internet and computer literacy skills to enter the global job market, to prepare for further technology study, and to gain confidence in one's technology skills and abilities.

REFERENCES:

www.certiport.com

www.icdlus.com

www.ecdl.com

Michael "Mike" Houser, Ed.D, Educational Technologist, Heidelberg DSO, DoDDS-Europe, DoDEA. Although recently retired, Dr. Houser remains active in teaching, presenting, studying, writing, and consulting. He also facilitates presentations at conferences in the United States and in Europe. He is an Adjunct Instructor in Computer Information Systems at Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio. He holds IC³ and ICDL certification and is also an Authorized IC³ Instructor and SME.

Email: DrMHouser@yahoo.com