

ICDL focuses on schools after overwhelming endorsement of its computer literacy program by universities

The internationally recognised certification is being increasingly endorsed by GCC education ministries

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International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL), the world's largest and fastest growing certification of Basic IT skills, is expanding its program further by accrediting public and private schools to deliver ICDL training and testing to teachers and students, after achieving successful results and endorsements by all the major universities in the UAE and across the Gulf.

The leap of ICDL into private schools is reflected by the recent accreditation granted by ICDL UAE to Global Education Management Systems (GEMS), a global education management organisation with an extensive network of schools in the GCC region and the UK, authorising it to train and test its teachers on ICDL in GEMS schools in the UAE and Qatar.

Most of the education ministries in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) have endorsed the ICDL programme at the school level. The UAE Ministry of Education has prescribed the ICDL programme for all their teachers. The Abu Dhabi Education Zone has already adopted the ICDL programme in two of its schools and plans to have all fifty four of its schools accredited for ICDL training. Kuwait and Oman have made it mandatory on all its teachers to become ICDL certified and incorporated the ICDL syllabus in their curriculum.

"Educational authorities in the region are increasingly realising the benefits of delivering proper IT education from an early age, starting at the school level," said Rich MacLaren, Program Director, ICDL, UAE. "Over the past few months, we have seen a dramatic increase in interest among school managements to get ICDL certification for their teachers and students. The teaching community is looking at ICDL not only as the means for acquiring higher teaching skills but also as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning through the use of computers. Teachers who successfully complete the program will receive a certification that is recognized internationally which will contribute in their future advancement & promotion."

"Making inroads into schools represents an important development for the ICDL programme, having already achieved remarkable success at the university level across the GCC and particularly in UAE," added MacLaren. "The ICDL programme is geared to encourage and assist teachers to make use of computers in today's classroom, regardless of their teaching subject matter. For example, computer knowledge is equally beneficial to teachers of religion, history, science or social studies. Our recent accreditation of GEMS schools reflects the competence of ICDL programmes in delivering solutions at the school level. The results delivered by the ICDL programme are driving some educational institutions to integrate the ICDL programme with their curriculum. The syllabus covers all aspects of computer training and its practical applications, for use in the workplace. It consists of seven modules that must be successfully completed before the ICDL certificate is awarded. Some renowned universities in the Middle-East also offer credits for the ICDL certification."

"One of the key objectives of seeking in-school ICDL training and testing is the enhancement of our IT curriculum with an internationally recognised IT certification," explained John Collins, Director of Training and Quality Assurance, GEMS. "All our schools, whether they follow the British, American or Indian curriculum, offer extensive IT education starting with students as young as 3 years of age, all the way up to secondary school. It is, therefore, logical that this intensive IT learning curve be capped by ICDL through its market-acclaimed certification."

"GEMS is driven by a strategy that is focused on boosting the learning process using best-of-breed technologies. Our pool of highly-qualified teachers is supported by regular training programmes and refresher courses to update their skills with the latest developments in the field of education," added Collins. "In order to optimise the benefits from the new tie-up, we plan to place two ICDL trainers in each school, to provide our staff with the requisite support for IT adoption as a learning aid. The programme will be implemented initially in 15 schools."

ICDL is also gaining acceptance into the corporate sector, with several organizations, public and private, embracing it as the standard for imparting crucial IT skills to employees. Many organisations have made it

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mandatory for all their employees, existing as well as new recruits, to have ICDL certification, a strong endorsement of the efficacy of the programme.

About ICDL

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognized computer proficiency standard that is owned by the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001. ICDL is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting as a requirement to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 132 countries, and is offered in 32 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 15,000 centres worldwide, and over 10 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program.

About ICDL GCC Foundation

ICDL GCC Foundation was created by the ECDL Foundation, the not-for-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills in societies and providing access for all to the information society, to serve the to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with their implementation of ICDL and for providing them with localised support to ensure quality of ICDL programs. The ICDL-GCC Foundation is the sole ICDL licensee and accreditation body that is responsible to support ICDL accredited training and testing centres in the GCC. It also acts as the reviewing and approving body for the local adaptation of ICDL programs, including authorizing the sale of Arabic ICDL content and testing material in the region.

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