# CreateWorld 2012

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# Without a nod or a wink: Workplace Skills in Interpersonal Computer-mediated Communication (CMC)

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# Work: No longer sitting at the desk...

Smart technology

Tablet Computers

Laptops

# Communication: No longer face-to-face...

SMS

Email

Social Networking

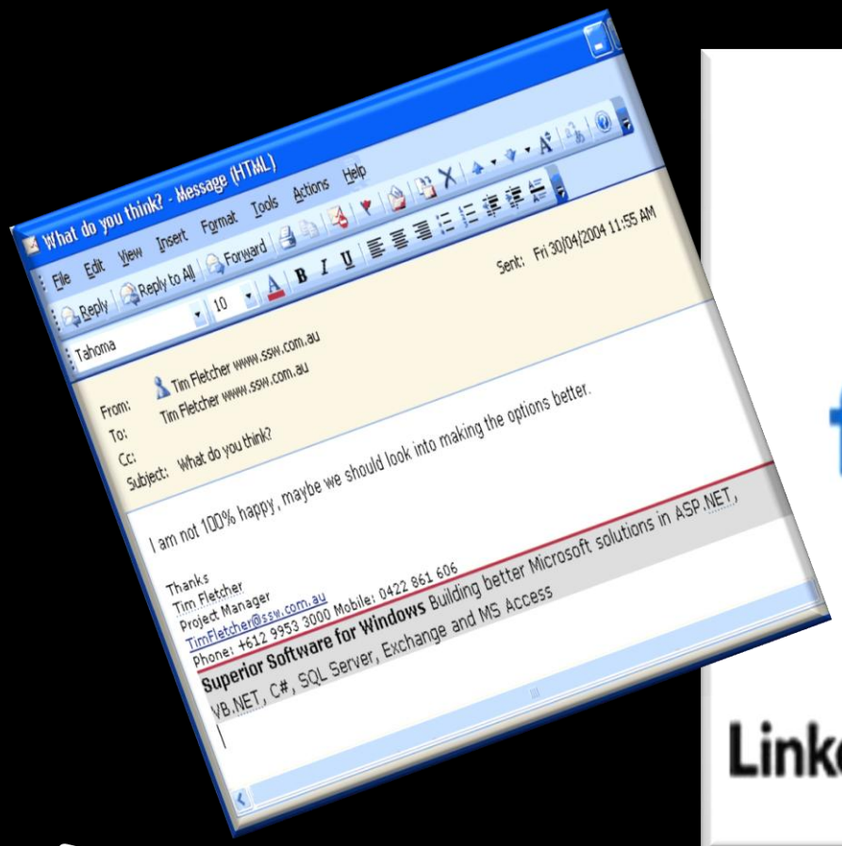
Wiki participation

Blogs

Chat Rooms

Instant messaging

Discussion Boards



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# Computer-mediated communication is here to stay...

According to the Australian Communications Media Authority (ACMA 2010):

- 94% SMEs (*1-200 employees*) are internet connected
- Communication with others is the #1 use for the internet
- 64% use mobile devices to connect to the internet
- Email the most common online activity in SMEs (98% participation)
- Quickest emerging trend in social networking

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# The West Australian

News
**STATE MPs GET TAX WINDFALL**
PAGE 3

**WIN 6 HOLDENS IN SIX WEEKS**

WEEK 5 TOKEN
PAGE 44

# Teachers handed Facebook warning

BETHANY HIATT
EDUCATION EDITOR

State school teachers are being warned that contact with students on social networking websites such as Facebook could lead to accusations they are "grooming" pupils for sex.

The Education Department has produced new guidelines for teachers to raise their awareness of the risks they face when socialising on the Internet.

The document Let's Face It says using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, email and text messaging pictures via computers or mobile phones could give teachers a false sense of anonymity and encourage high levels of intimacy.

This could blur teachers' professional boundaries and lead to allegations of inappropriate contact with students or improper conduct outside school hours. "Staff need to be aware that web socialising with students could easily be classified as 'conduct open to misinterpretation' given that it mirrors the grooming behaviour of paedophiles," it says.

It warns teachers not to share personal email addresses or Facebook identities with students, but stops short of banning all online contact.

Director-general Sharyn O'Neill said the department strongly advised staff against becoming friends with students on Facebook and other social networking sites.

"Even well-intentioned conduct could be interpreted as being consistent with the conduct of an adult grooming a child," she said.

Teachers should also think about what judgments could be made about their professional suitability.

"It is important that staff consider what information about them, or images of them could be accessed by others and whether they believe these represent them in a light acceptable to their role in working with children," she said.

Ms O'Neill said the department's standards and integrity directorate had drawn up the guidelines as a proactive measure in light of increasing community concern.

She was not aware of any incidents of inappropriate use of social network sites.

Catholic Education Office deputy director Mary Reid said Catholic school teachers were aware that any social interaction with students outside school was inappropriate. This included access to teachers' personal Facebook pages.

Association of Independent Schools of WA executive director Vikki Gould said individual schools had their own policies. But many would remind teachers that socialnetworking sites were public and might be seen by students and their parents.

Independent Education Union secretary Theresa Howe supported banning private school teachers from befriending students on Facebook.

"It's important to have proper policies that take account of the changing communication structures because common sense is not always enough," she said.

The warning to teachers comes as students face investigation for writing defamatory and threatening messages on Facebook about staff at a Albany high school.

Education Minister Liz Constable said the students' behaviour was appalling and should be punished.

Not our graduates ... surely?!

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# What are the skills of Interpersonal Computer-mediated Communication?

*(The larger project being ...)*

How can we embed these into university curricula?

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# Graduate employability skills

Employability Skills Framework (Department of Education, Science, & Training (DEST) 2002)

- **Communication**
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Initiative & Enterprise
- Planning & Organising
- Self-management
- Learning & **Technology**

**CMC :** “Any human symbolic text-based interaction conducted or facilitated through digitally-based technologies” (Spitzberg 2006:631)

***Interpersonal* CMC:** When CMC is used for relational communication. If “users have time to exchange information, to build impressions, and to compare values” (Walther 1996: 33)

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# Method

- Qualitative inductive case studies (n=17)
- Framed by Australia and New Zealand Standard Industrial Code (ANZIC) 17 industry classifications (SME = 7; Large Corporation = 6; Government/NFP = 4)
- Semi-structured interviews with key manager supervising or managing university graduates
- Literature review

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*“It’s without a nod or a wink that we communicate using this technology. Now that leaves us open for a whole lot of learning about how to communicate doesn’t it?”*

(Senior HR Manager of a global organisation)

# Workplace ICMC Applications & Uses

| ICMC Application | n |
|---|---|
| Email | 7 |
| SMS | 5 |
| Social Media | 6 |
| - *Facebook* | 3 |
| - *Twitter* | 5 |
| -*LinkedIn* | 1 |
| Discussion Boards | 5 |
| Blogging | 4 |
| Instant messaging/chat | 4 |
| Electronic cards | 1 |

| ICMC Purpose | n |
|---|---|
| Communication with suppliers | 9 |
| Communication between employees | 7 |
| Communication with customers | 4 |
| Virtual staff supervision | 4 |
| Virtual networking | 3 |
| Virtual team building | 3 |

NB: Some employers gave more than one response

Workplace ICMC skills

**1. (Direct) Micro ICMC skills**

**Micro ICMC relational skills**

**Micro ICMC language use and text construction**

*Being direct application of language and interpersonal skills required to deliver effective ICMC*

**2. Parallel ICMC skills**

**Workplace related ICMC skills**

**Generic CMC skills**

*Indirectly associated with ICMC, yet critical to their effective use in the workplace*

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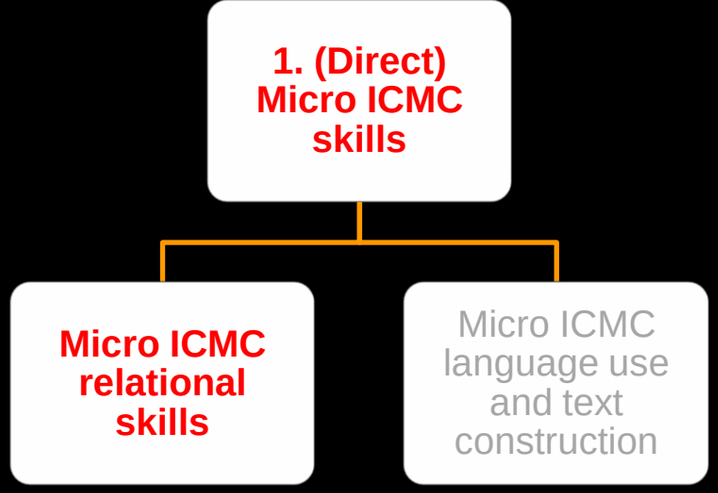
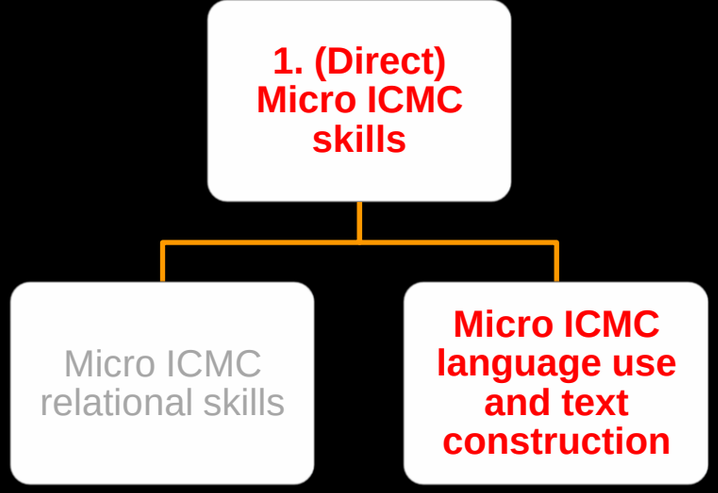
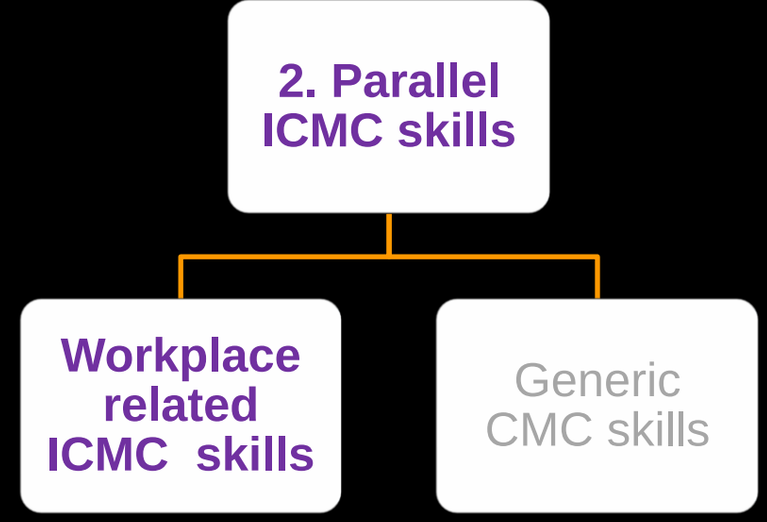


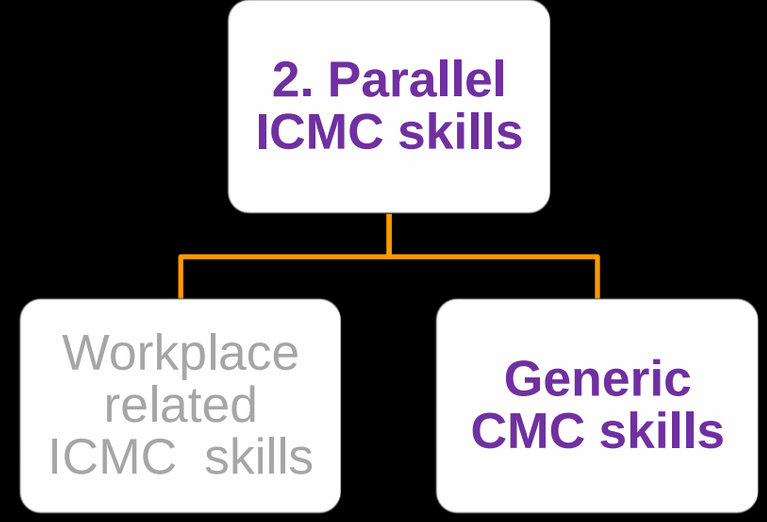

| MICRO ICMC SKILLS | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| **Identity construction & impression management** | Creating online profile/bio, profile pictures, branding self |
| **Relationship building, maintenance & dissolution** | Providing electronic contact details, contact timing &‘load’, dissolving relationship, attentiveness (eg send useful links) |
| **Managing personal vs professional boundaries** | Self-censoring, careful choice of social media (eg no colleagues on personal Facebook), avoid ‘always on’ status |
| **Critical evaluation of messages** | Reading & writing intended meaning, reading context (forums, email trails, Twitter conversations, discussion topics) |
| **Applying netiquette & culturally specific ICMC** | Language choice, learning (via observation or reading rules) netiquette specific to organisations/groups |




| MICRO ICMC LANGUAGE USE & TEXT CONSTRUCTION | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|
| **Generic literacy & editing skills** | Using spell/grammar check facilities, time management to avoid typos and encourage writing for meaning |
| **Paralinguistic text construction** | Portrayal of empathy, using appropriate images, emoticons, non traditional use of punctuation & formatting, language choice |
| **Using CMC specific language** | Understanding CMC related terms (eg. signature, hash tag, thread), appropriate acronym use, message length in various mediums |
| **Reading non-linear CMC** | Using links, reading attachments, scrolling through blog or discussion comments, hash tag use, using threads & forums accurately |
| **Developing an on-line voice** | Understanding implications of non-verbal cues in ICMC, accurate message construction which reflects professional image, speed of responses |




| Workplace related ICMC Skills | Examples |
|---|---|
| **Occupational safety and health** | Safe mobile use of ICMC technologies, prevention from injury from overuse, healthy balance (turning off), cyber-bullying |
| **Policy & Legal** | Writing and using organisational policies related to ICMC, ensure legal use of ICMC |
| **Strategic direction** | Budgeting for software and hardware upgrades, forward planning ICMC needs |
| **Security & privacy** | Understanding implications of permanency of messages, password and logging off, updating virus software, careful ‘copying in’ on email |




| Related Generic CMC Skills | Examples |
|---|---|
| **General technology skills** | Ability to learn, use and maintain software & hardware, installing software updates, creating and maintaining electronic contact list |
| **CMC tool selection** | Choosing appropriate CMC tool for task, contact and context, choosing face-to-face/telephony communication if more appropriate |
| **Individual vs mass CMC *& Faux* relationships** | Understanding the difference between ICMC and CMC and when to use which, implications for relationship building, implications of *faux* relationships |
| **Multitasking and disturbance management** | Effective use of more than one CMC simultaneously, understanding limitations of multitasking, self management of disturbances |

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