**Introduction to the .NET Framework for ICT students**

What is the .NET Framework? What’s in it? Where do I get it?

The .NET Framework (.NET is pronounced “dot net”) is a set of technologies for developing and running software.

As a result, its purpose is to enable software developers to do great things, and it is therefore targeted to software developers. However, the result of using the .NET Framework – software – has almost universal application in life today. Please keep this in mind: Software developers will care about things like the .NET Framework, but other information technology industry professionals may care less about it. People from other parts of life and society may not care at all.

Work on what became the .NET Framework began in 1998, when [Brad Abrams](http://blogs.msdn.com/brada/default.aspx) led a diverse group of Microsoft programmers to create what was then known as “Next Generation Windows Services”. Like ASP.NET above, “version 1” was released in January 2002. The current “version” of the .NET Framework is known as “version 4.5”.

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**.NET Framework components**

There are two main components of the .NET Framework:  
1) The .NET Framework Class Library, and  
2) the Common Language Runtime.

The **.NET Framework Class Library** (aka the FCL) is a comprehensive,object-oriented collection of reusable types that developers can use to create software.

The **Common Language Runtime** (aka the CLR) is an execution environment, providing memory, process, and thread management.

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**How do I get the .NET Framework?**

The .NET Framework, which is free (from cost), is **included in all modern versions of Windows** (back as far as – ugh – Windows 98). Typically, you don’t have to do anything to get the .NET Framework, other than making sure Windows Update is turned on.

Interesting side note: Through the efforts of Scott Guthrie, [source code for the .NET Framework libraries is available](http://weblogs.asp.net/scottgu/archive/2007/10/03/releasing-the-source-code-for-the-net-framework-libraries.aspx).

Another interesting side note: The CLR is Microsoft’s implementation of the [Common Language Infrastructure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Language_Infrastructure) (CLI) ECMA and ISO standards, which define an execution environment for program code.

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