

COMPUTERS & COMPUTING STUDENTS



None of the courses run by the School of Computing require students to own a PC or Laptop. The university provides adequate facilities within its buildings.

Many students however do choose to purchase a PC or laptop. This leaflet highlights some of the issues and hardware specification students should consider prior to purchasing equipment.

BUYING A PC/LAPTOP

The School does not recommend a specific supplier or manufacturer.

PC or Laptop: Laptops can be used in the university. However they tend to be more expensive than a PC for equivalent specifications. Laptops are harder to upgrade. Desktop PCs are bulkier and take up more space but are easier to upgrade than laptops.

Whatever you choose to purchase. Remember that a computer course may take 5 years and computer specifications change a lot in that time. You will need to decide if it is better for you to purchase higher specifications now or decide to upgrade later.

HARDWARE

CPU: This is the brain of the computer system; also called the CPU. Generally the higher the speed (GHz), the more powerful it is.

Dual-core refers to a CPU that includes two processors, enabling two tasks to be processed simultaneously.

Recommendations

Desktop	Laptop
Intel® Celeron® 420 (1.60 GHz) - Minimum	Intel® Celeron® 540 Processor (1.86 GHz) - Minimum
Intel® Celeron® (2.33 GHz or higher) – Recommended	Intel® Celeron® Processor T7250 (2.00 GHz or higher) - Recommended

Hard Drive: This is the main storage device for a PC; storing the operating system and any other data files you create. Some computer files like music and video files can be very large.

Recommendations

Desktop	Laptop
160GB recommended minimum	120 GB recommended minimum
260 GB is preferable	160 GB or higher is preferable

Memory: Fast storage area for data processed by the CPU. Data here is lost when the machine is switched off.

Recommendations

Desktop	Laptop
1 GB RAM	1 GB RAM
2 GB of RAM is preferable	2 GB of RAM is preferable

Graphics Card: A separate graphics card is better than an 'on-board' card. The more memory on the card the better.

DVD Burner: Different suppliers provide different drive types as standard. Check what type you are buying. For example is the Drive just a DVD-ROM or DVD burner. It is also worth checking if it uses -R or +R media.

Wireless Card: Come as standard with many laptops. The RGU network is compatible with all cards which meet the a/b/g wireless adaptor standards.

Network Card: May be required for a home network. However students are not permitted to connect their laptops to the University's wired network.

Laptop Batteries: All manufacturers give a "battery run-time" however the real duration depends on the power demands made by the equipment. Ensure your charger is on hand.

Monitor: Flat Screen (TFT) monitors take up less space and cause less eye strain but cost more than standard monitors. Laptops of course come with their own screen but you may want an external one for working at home.

USB Ports: General utility ports for quick and easy connection of anything from a mouse to a printer. Ensure you have enough ports for all your peripherals; pen drives, cameras, headphones, printers, modems etc.

Multimedia Work: Multimedia work would require a PC with a good quality sound and graphics capability. If using a digital camera, the camera memory card may require an interface slot.

OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Printer: "Pay to Print" is available in the labs. Inkjets are relatively cheap to buy but can be expensive for refills. Small laser printers are more expensive to buy but cheaper to run, page for page.

USB Pen Drive: Portable storage device in a variety of capacities. Useful for transferring files and data between PCs but not as a principal storage area.

Backup: No matter how careful a user is accidents happen. PCs fail, laptops are dropped or stolen. Backups are lifesavers on these occasions. Any data stored on a PC or Laptop should be backed up somewhere else. Burning to CD or keeping duplicate files of coursework in the home area at university are two of the simplest methods.

Warranty and Repair: Questions to ask are:

- Is the warranty an optional extra or included in the price?
- What does it cover?
- How long is the warranty?
- If a fault develops are repairs carried out in the home or back with the manufacturer?

Notebooks for Students Scheme: Toshiba and Getech have developed the Notebooks for Students Scheme which is available to RGU School of Computing Students

www.studentstore.co.uk/robertgordon
www.studentstore.co.uk

SOFTWARE

Microsoft XP is the operating system installed on the School's PCs. It is recommended that XP Professional NOT Home Edition is used.

FREE COPIES of specific Microsoft software are available under the MSDN Academic Alliance Program. This does not include Microsoft Office.

Academic Software: Several companies sell software for school and university use.

www.pugh.co.uk/studentsandstaff/index.htm
www.software.co.uk/

Protection: It is in your own interest to ensure that your PC or laptop is adequately protected. All critical updates for Microsoft products should be installed.

These are details of virus protection, firewalls and spyware which are free to download.

Virus Protection

Grisoft AVG Anti virus <http://free.grisoft.com>
Anti Vir Personal Edition <http://www.free-av.com>
Avast! Home Edition <http://www.avast.com>

Firewall

Kerio Personal Firewall <http://www.kerio.com>

Spyware Removal/Prevention

Spybot <http://www.safer-networking.org>
Adaware Personal <http://www.lavasoft.com/uk>
Google Popup Blocker <http://toolbar.google.com>

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The School has various computer systems that are under the supervision of the School's Systems Support team. The support team manage the local computer server room and PC laboratories.

The School has excellent computer facilities with over 250 PCs available exclusively for Computing students. The labs contain 17" TFT screens as standard and most machines have DVD burners installed.

Students may access the labs at any time during the extensive building opening hours. Typically this is 8 am until 10 pm

There is a 3 year replacement cycle for lab PCs. The current top specification is:

- Core 2 Duo Processor,
- 4 Gb Memory,
- 250 Gb Hard Drive,
- DVD burner & 19" TFT

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