Student IT Equipment Recommendations

Introduction

This document has been designed to help any students with decisions around the purchase of IT equipment for their time at Oxford University. For many students, funds can be tight, and it is essential to get the most out of any purchases.

What **Not** to Spend Money On

As a student at Oxford University, once you have your SSO (Single Sign On credentials) you can download and install the following free of charge & so there is no need to buy them:

- Microsoft Office 365 (All Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc.).   Click here for more info
- Sophos Anti-Virus with Intercept X.   Click here for more info
- 100GB of OneDrive Cloud Storage for files/backups.   Click here for more info
- Variety of Other Software (e.g. VPN, Mathematica, EndNote)   Click here for more info

Brasenose students have a yearly free printing allowance of up to 600 pages (1200 sides of double-sided printing, 600 single-sided) so you won't be charged for printing unless you go over this limit, and paper is provided. The printing allowance period runs from 1st August to 31st July each year. There are several student printers around College, so you don't need to bring your own.

Laptop / Primary Device Choices

The choices are almost endless, what to look out for and what is not worth it.

Minimum Recommended Specification:

Intel i5 / AMD Ryzen 5 / Apple M1

8GB RAM (Minimum) / 16GB (Suggested)

256 GB SSD Hard Drive

HD Webcam / Wi-Fi 6

New vs Refurbished / Secondhand vs Family Pass Down Devices

New devices can be expensive and are not entirely necessary. However, care should be taken when purchasing a refurbished / secondhand device, or relying on an older passed down device, that it will take versions of the main operating systems (i.e. Windows, Mac OS or Android) that will be in security support for the duration of your course. **Please note** that any device running an unsupported Operating System (i.e. no longer receiving security patches) will be removed from the College/University network.

The following operating systems will go end of life in the next 3 years and so ensure any device can take the latest versions that will be in support during your course. It is a good idea to upgrade the operating system now if you can:

Windows 10 goes end of life in October 2025. Ensure your device is Windows 11 compatible here

Mac OS 12 & 13 (Monterey & Ventura) end by 2025/6. Ensure you device can take Mac OS 14 (Sonoma)

What to Consider if buying a new computer?

There are four areas to consider:

- Initial Cost – Do I have to spend £1,000+?
- Compatibility with specialist software

- Upgradability – What if I need something better later?
- Warranty / Support – What if it goes wrong?

Initial Cost – Do I have to spend £1000+?

Definitely not! The minimum suggested specification is above and at the time of writing there are countless offers for students around the £500 mark that will meet most students' needs. Some degrees may benefit from some extra RAM or a higher specification where more powerful statistical packages are required but even then, models are available from £600. If you are looking at spending more than this on a device, it isn't generally necessary.

Look for educational discounts on not just devices but associated warranties at the main direct resellers for brands:

Dell (Up to 20%) – See here
HP (Up to 40% on some products) – See here
Apple Shop for Education (Up to 10% off) – See here
Lenovo (Up to 20% off) – See here

Compatibility with specialist Software

Where specialist software is required, there are generally versions available for use on both Windows and Mac OS operating systems. Some departments have specialist software that runs on only Linux or Unix but in those cases, they generally provide remote access to devices within the department for this. The University is predominantly a Microsoft University – Office 365, OneDrive, Exchange email and so most core provisions work better on a Windows device.

Upgradeability

Some laptops/devices are bought as virtually 'sealed' units. For example, Apple laptops cannot have RAM or extra hard drive space added to them later so it is essential if buying a 'sealed' device it will cover all your future needs now. Always check or ask whether RAM or hard drive capacity can be added later. For example, most Dell or HP laptops can be upgraded from 8GB to 16GB of RAM for as little as £25.

Warranty / Support – What if it goes wrong?

Generally all laptops come with 1 year warranty. But what happens if your laptop breaks in your third year with finals? The college has a loan (Windows based) laptop service for up to 30 days (on a first come first served basis) as a stop gap to help students in trouble. However, we are regularly asked about extra 'warranties/support' & is it worth it? Comparing apples and pears isn't always easy, but we advise you consider the differing options – one piece of advice though is to stick to the manufacturer offered warranties and services – try to avoid third party offerings.

- AppleCare & AppleCare+. Details here. These are offered for 3 years and essentially offer telephone support (AppleCare) and availability to reduced price repairs / extra cover for manufacturing defects (AppleCare+) but not accidental damage. For repairs you will need to take or mail your device to an authorised Apple repairer. Could you afford a repair?
- Dell / HP / Lenovo & many others. Wide variety of options. Pay attention to not only what is covered but how long you would be without your device and how to return it for repair. Some companies like Dell have an initial telephone support service that if not fixed, **send an engineer to you** the next day to fix the device. Some can cover accidental damage – More info here.

When considering a primary device we suggest you look at your budget and think of the whole package: the device you want, whether you may need to upgrade it and what happens logistically and financially if it goes wrong or is stolen. Do you have appropriate insurance to cover the loss of your device?

Mobile Phone / Tablets

Every day we are more & more reliant on our mobile phones. These can be very costly items new but in world with lots of differing competing priorities for our finances, a good mobile phone doesn't have to cost a lot. When purchasing/replacing one (whether new or refurbished) the most critical feature is the operating system version. Is it in security support and will it still be in 3 years' time (or be upgradeable to a version that is). This year the University launches its first major Student App in both Play Store (Android) and The App Store (Apple). However, the University app (and many other) will only work on devices in security support. Ensure your phone meets this criterion:

Android: Only version 12+ are in security support. We recommend a minimum of Android 13 for any device you are purchasing if it is to last.

Apple iOS: Versions 15 & 16 are just still in support. We recommend ensuring any device you purchase can have a minimum of iOS 17 installed.

If your budget will allow, we recommend the purchase of a cheap tablet (£30-£50) for your general internet browsing, researching and 'messing around' – but not accessing any secure service on it. These devices can be very easily factory reset - One reason for this type of device is to protect your main devices (and mobile) from accessing sites you don't know and free services (e.g. free episodes of X!) where there may more to the sites or service than you think! This reduces the chances of your primary device and mobile picking up something nasty that can jeopardise your banking, secure logons and personal data.