

Bauman College's Distance Learning program requires students to have access to a computer so they can do their work. Occasionally, students ask us equipment and software related questions so we wrote this post in response.

Hardware Requirements

Computers

As far as hardware requirements are concerned, most computers that are 3 years old or newer should be able to do the job. Even older ones will work but I don't recommend them if you're hoping to have a smooth experience. A laptop is more flexible than a desktop for obvious reasons and usually has a built in webcam and microphone which are needed for video conference call participation.

If you are in the market for a new computer, you will either want a PC or Mac. Any new Mac will do. If you're comparing prices between Amazon and the Apple website, make sure that the product you're looking at on Amazon is the same version as the one on the Apple site. Amazon has older versions of the same model.

If you're interested in a PC, there are a lot of options. Again, all new PCs should work. I recommend looking for something with a decent warranty so even if it fails you should usually be able to get it fixed for nothing. Two brands I recommend are Dell and Asus.

About a year ago I started working on a Microsoft Surface Book. My first non Dell computer in many years. So far I've had no issues. For at least 2 years now we've used Surface Pro 3 tablets as our classroom presenter computers, also no issues.

Tablets and Chromebooks

Tablets and Chromebooks can technically be used to go through the Bauman College's Distance Learning program but I will not go as far as to recommend them. They can be harder to support and troubleshoot and can be limiting when it comes to internet connection, peripheral devices, software options, etc. For tablets, you would need a stand and external keyboard to improve your experience.

Something like this would work:

[Logitech iPad Keyboard and Stand Combo for iPad](#)

Here is the Android version:

[Logitech 920-003390 Tablet Keyboard for Android](#)

Peripheral Devices

If you're working on a desktop, you will need to purchase a USB webcam. All USB webcams also comes with a microphone built in. There are plenty of options out there. Here are two that I've used and recommend:

[Logitech HD Webcam C310](#)

[Logitech HD Pro Webcam C920](#)

A printer is not required but in case you're looking for one I would recommend a wireless HP with Google Cloud Print and Apple AirPrint options. This way you have all your devices covered. Something like this would work: [HP OfficeJet Pro 8210](#)

When buying a printer it is important to find out how much it costs to replace ink cartridges. For the printer I just mentioned, it costs around \$35 for the black ink and around \$46 for color (\$81 in total). Genuine cartridges have less chance of leaking and ruining your printer but cost a lot more. Also some printer firmware will make sure that your compatible ink doesn't work with their printer. I hate to say this but even so, sometimes, in certain situations, it might be worth buying compatible ink and risking it since you can buy a new printer for sometimes less than genuine ink alone. Just remember, new printers come with "starter cartridges" which will have to be replaced soon after purchase.

Software Requirements

Operating Systems

Students should be able to work on either Windows (Windows 7, 8, and 10) or OSX operating systems with no issues. While recent Linux distributions should work just fine, we have not tested this recently and for that reason do not recommend it.

Android and iOS devices should also work but might require third party plugins and apps for full compatibility.

Word Processor

Since all students are required to have a gmail account, using Google Docs as your word processor is a great option. This is especially true if you're working on a tablet or Chromebook.

Other than Google Docs, you can use Pages (on a Mac), Microsoft Office, Libre Office (free), Open Office (free), WPS Office (free), or any other word processor that allows you to save your work in a DOC format. Since submitting your assignments in PDF format is also acceptable, any word processing solution can work since you can use a PDF printer to “print” your document (no matter the format) to a PDF file.

Web Browser

While any web browser should work, we recommend Google Chrome. Since I am one of Bauman College’s helpdesk technicians, if you’re using another browser and are experiencing issues, the first thing I will ask you to do is clear your browser cache. If that doesn’t work I will recommend that you use Chrome instead.

Since Chrome takes about 52% of the web browser market share, I expect it to be a more reliable and less error prone of the browser options. FYI: Safari is in second place with around 14% of market share.

If you’re on a tablet or a smartphone and your built in web browser is having issues and Chrome is either not available or not fixing the problem, we would recommend you install and try [Puffin](#).

Internet Access

Students will need access to a reliable broadband internet connection (DSL, Cable, or High Speed Satellite connections) with at least 4Mbps download speed (recommended). Lower speeds or additional users may drastically impact student experience. This means that if you have an internet connection with 4Mbps download speed and another person is streaming a Netflix movie or browsing the internet, your might not be able to get your work done without delays or issues.

You can test your internet speed [here](#).

In Conclusion

Bottom line is this. For accessing Bauman College’s Distance Learning program any new desktop or laptop should work just fine. Most tablets or smartphones should also work but your experience will most likely be better if you’re working on a traditional desktop or a laptop.