



Minimum technology guidelines for online teaching

This short document has been created for Fall 2020, in light of the pandemic, but should also be useful in ongoing semesters. Any minimum technology guidelines really start with what an instructor wants to do in their course: recording HD video, sharing audio only, simply posting files to Blackboard Learn, video conferencing with Blackboard Collaborate, etc.

Computer (laptop or desktop) guidelines start with the minimum requirements needed to run Google Chrome. This is the preferred browser to be used first and foremost with all Blackboard applications. Using it solves a number of potential integration issues.

For Windows operating systems Chrome works with: Windows 8, Windows 8.1, Windows 10 or later with an Intel Pentium 4 processor or later that's SSE2 capable;

For Mac operating systems Chrome works with: OS X Yosemite 10.10 or later.

There is no particular model or brand of laptop/desktop required, nor a particular year that a computer must be newer than – so long as the unit meets the above minimum operating systems. Every full-time faculty member has an NU owned/leased computer, if you are concerned with your existing unit contact Technology Services (UTS) at helpdesk@nipissingu.ca for further details. If you are a part-time faculty member and wish to purchase a computer, NU has preferred pricing with Dell (contact UTS as well; NU purchasing policies will need to be followed). Using only a tablet (iPad, etc.) or a smart phone for online teaching is not sufficient on its own. Another consideration is that Chromebooks are not compatible with secure online testing, and thus if you intend to use Lockdown Browser/Respondus Monitor in your online teaching you will need a more robust computer.

For those recording video, the camera supplied with most laptops/desktops should be sufficient. Additional storage may be required to store these files and investing in an external hard drive would be more cost-effective than adding to the actual computer system.

For those recording audio, a good noise-cancelling microphone headset will work best. This will also help to get best results when video conferencing. Plug in versions (via USB, etc.) are always the best option as wireless ones can get interference with other wireless devices in the home. As one teaches online more often, comfort may be the most important factor (chunkier headsets made for gaming, versus ear buds).

If there are specific software licences that you will need to run (SPSS, R+, etc.) contact staff in UTS to discuss. If there is a particular ed-tech tool you will use (Snagit, Padlet, etc.), contact a Learning Systems Technologist (LST) regarding its connection to Blackboard. The accessibility of these programs for students, and how these programs interact with Blackboard are important factors to consider.

The speed of your internet connection (bandwidth) is also critical and may affect your ability to teach online much more so than any hardware.