

Laptop Requirement
Incoming First Years Fall 2023

All incoming first-year students are required to have a laptop. A laptop is an essential tool, used for everything from email and attending classes to making creative design work using Adobe Products; recording sound; editing video; creating and completing liberal arts writing assignments.

To make your selection easier, DCAD recommends the following requirements in the tables below (Good, Better, Best). Students are always welcome to purchase a higher-end computer than is recommended. A laptop is an investment that should last at least three to five years. Higher end units are a better long-term investment (up to 7 years) to prepare students to transfer or be industry ready with the necessary tools.

Students entering their first year are welcome to bring a laptop they already own if it meets minimum requirements specific to the area of study the student is entering. For more information, see the [Laptop FAQ](#). Please note that all hardware recommendations prices are subject to change at the manufacturer’s end.

Software

Software is provided to DCAD students. This includes the full Adobe Cloud Creative Suite and Microsoft Office 365. DCAD students access classes and all DCAD related information through the college portal Populi. Some majors may include other software, check the specifications of each major.

External Hard Drive

Students are also encouraged to purchase an external hard drive or a cloud backup solution to back up their work (see the FAQs)

Recommendations

Apple MacBooks for the majors of Animation, Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Illustration and Photography & Video:

Estimated Total cost with School Educational Discount and 3 Year Apple Care Warranty:						
Good	13-inch Macbook Pro	M2 8-core	16GB	10-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	256GB	\$1,598 – note- Only supports 1 external display
Better	14-inch MacBook Pro	M1 Pro 8-core	16GB	14-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	512GB	\$2,098
Best	16-inch MacBook Pro	M1 Pro 10-core	32GB	16-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	1TB	\$3,218

Students who plan on majoring in Game Arts should purchase a Windows laptop.

Good	Dell	Inspiron 14 Plus	i7 - 12700H 14-core	16G B	RTX 3050 4GB	512GB	\$1,429	Only has USB-C Ports / 4yr support plan
Better	Dell	Inspiron 16 Plus	i7 - 12700H 14-core	32G B	RTX 3060 6GB	1TB	\$1,890	
Best	Dell	XPS 17 Laptop	i9 - 12900HK 14-core	32G B	RTX 3060 6GB	1TB	\$3,251	Only has USB-C Ports, Touch screen

FAQ

1. **Who is required to purchase a new laptop?** All incoming students are required to bring a laptop. The laptop does not necessarily have to be new but needs to meet the minimum requirements of the software you will be using.
2. **Is there financial aid available to cover the cost of a new laptop?**
There is no financial aid designed specifically to aid in the purchase of a new laptop, however, financial aid received may be used to cover the cost of the laptop. Clarify with the Financial Aid Team (financialaid@dcad.edu)
3. **School is about to start but I don't have my laptop yet. What can I do?**
If you already have an older laptop, you may be able to get by using that. If you do not have a laptop at all you may be able to borrow one from the library until your financial aid arrives.
4. **I really cannot afford a laptop. What can I do?**
There are laptops for loan available in the library. That includes both 13" and 16" MacBook Pros. Labs are also outfitted with some computer stations for those students who cannot get their own laptop or have broken or lost their laptop.
5. **Should I buy an external drive to back up my work?**
Yes. Your work should be backed up in the cloud platforms (Office 365, Adobe etc.,) but *especially if you are borrowing a laptop from the library*, get an external drive with at least one terabyte (library workstations do not save your projects 'locally').
6. **Should I buy the AppleCare+ Protection Plan or a Dell protection plan?**
It is highly recommended that students purchase a Protection Plan. This extended warranty covers defective parts and offers service and support for three years. Bear in mind this does not cover accidents such as theft or physical damage. Many students choose to insure their laptops and other personal property through a parent or guardian's homeowner's or renter's policy. We recommend an insurance policy that will cover the laptop for loss, theft, environmental damage and accidental damage. Affordable insurance options specifically for students are available through [College Student Insurance](#) or [National Student Services, Inc.](#)
7. **What if I already have a desktop computer?**
Mobile computing is critical to a student's ability to complete coursework at DCAD. Not all classes occur in rooms equipped with computers and all classes require at least some computer work.