DCAD Laptop Requirements: Incoming First Years

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.

Recommendations
Apple MacBooks for the majors of Animation, Fine Arts, Graphic Design, Illustration and Photography & Video: Costs will vary but ask for the School Educational Discount and purchasing a 3 Year Apple Care Warranty is highly recommended:

Good	13-inch MacBook Pro	M2 8-core	16GB	10-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	256GB
Better	14-inch MacBook Pro	M1 Pro 10-core	16GB	16-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	512GB
Best	16-inch MacBook Pro	M1 Pro 12-core	32GB	19-core GPU 16-core Neural Engine	1TB

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

Good	13" - 14" screen	Intel i5 12th or 13th Generation	16GB	RTX 3050 4GB	512GB
Better	16" screen	Intel i7 12th or 13th Generation	32GB	RTX 3060 6GB	1TB
Best	17" screen	Intel i9 12th or 13th Generation	32GB	RTX 4070 8GB	1TB

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)

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. **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 also use an external drive with at least one terabyte storage.

5. **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.

6. **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.

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