

The University of Melbourne Information Division Computer Platforms 2000

1. Purpose

For several years now, the University has each year suggested some standards for computer technology, for guidance of students and staff. The objective is that people in the University do not experience technical obstacles in information access. The strategy is to work to a common set of assumptions about the computers, software and connectivity available on staff desks, in lecture theatres, in student computing facilities - and in many cases, in student and staff homes.

These standards are reviewed once a year. In the case of personal computers, two types of standard are set: a "basic" and a "standard" specification. The **basic** specifications are a minimum for existing equipment: for 2000, if you have a computer which meets this specification, it will be able to run the basic software set and the University will do its best to ensure that your computer and software remain adequate throughout the year for accessing course materials and completing assigned coursework.

The **standard** specifications are a guide to reasonable equipment levels for new purchases in most cases. In most cases, it would be short-sighted, in terms of expected useful life, to purchase a new computer which did not meet or exceed the spec.

The University, and in particular the Information Division, will not necessarily be in a position to provide support or advice to people using equipment which does not meet the basic specification.

2. Document / Content Formats

Key to avoiding technical obstacles in information access is a set of supported document/content formats. These standards are important for anyone who wants to be able to exchange computer-based information with others.

Generally speaking, use of earlier formats of the same generic type (eg an older Microsoft Word format) will not disadvantage any student, but use of formats later than the standards will tend to disenfranchise those students who use older computers.

Non-standard content formats must be used with great care. As a general guideline for Web content, non-standard formats may reasonably be used if, and only if, students are provided with a convenient pointer to a downloadable plug-in or helper application which is likely to run properly on both the Wintel and Macintosh basic platforms.

Content-type	Standard Formats
Word processing document	Word 97/98
Spreadsheets	Excel 97/98 Workbook
Presentations	PowerPoint 97/98 presentation
Pictures	JPEG
Sound and Video	All formats supported by QuickTime 4.0
Any printable output	Adobe PDF 4.0
Web pages	HTML 4.0
Compression / Encoding	Stuffit/Binhex (Mac); SEA (Self-extracting archive - Mac); MIME (Mac and Wintel for mail attachments); ZIP (Mac and Wintel); Self-extracting Zip (Wintel).

3. Software

Web helper and plug-in software is an extremely dynamic area and it is not possible to set annual standards, because local content-authors may well wish to include links to external sites hosting government, University, library and current affairs content, to name but a few. However, content developers should provide links to download required helpers and plug-ins, and should select only software which is likely to run properly on the Basic platforms.

Generally, but especially in the case of standards for student-owned computers, the standards reflect a preference, where practicable, for software which is bundled with the computer; is available free on the Internet; or which is available for download at a moderate shareware or other licence fee.

Category	Mac -Basic	Mac -Standard	Wintel - Basic	Wintel - Standard
Operating System	MacOS 8.1	MacOS 9	Windows 95	Windows 98/NT Workstation
Anti-Virus¹	Virex	Virex	VirusScan	VirusScan
Word Processing	Word 5.1 ²	Word 98	Word97	Word97
Spreadsheet	Excel 5	Excel 98	Excel97	Excel97
PowerPoint	PowerPoint Viewer (for PPT 98 files)	PowerPoint 98	PowerPoint Viewer (97)	PowerPoint 97
E-mail	Eudora Pro 4.0 or higher	Eudora Pro 4.0 or higher	Eudora Pro 4.0 or higher	Eudora Pro 4.0 or higher
Telnet	NCSA Telnet 2.6	BetterTelnet 1.2.2 or higher	WinQVT	WinQVT
FTP	Fetch 3.0	Fetch 3.0	WinQVT	WinQVT
Web Client	Netscape Navigator 4.06	Netscape Communicator 4.7 or later stable version	Netscape Navigator 4.06	Netscape Communicator 4.61 or later stable version
Web Helper or plugin/Acrobat	Adobe Acrobat 4 viewer	Adobe Acrobat 4 plugin and viewer	Adobe Acrobat 4 viewer	Adobe Acrobat 4 plugin and viewer
Web Helper or plugin/QuickTime-supported formats	QuickTime 4	QuickTime 4	QuickTime 4	QuickTime 4

¹ The latest available version of anti-virus software should always be used in preference to older versions.

² With plug-in to allow Word 5 to read documents in Word 97/98 format.

Category	Mac -Basic	Mac -Standard	Wintel - Basic	Wintel - Standard
Web Development/ graphic image conversion & simple editing	GraphicConverter	GraphicConverter	PaintShop Pro ³	PaintShopPro
Web Development/ Word-to-HTML conversion	RTFTOHTML	Built-in to Word	RTFTOHTML	Built-in to Word
Web Development/ plain-text editor for html	BBEdit Lite - latest version available	BBEdit Lite - latest version available	TextPad	TextPad
Multimedia object manipulation (optional)		QuickTime 4 Pro		QuickTime 4 Pro

4. Computers

Item	Mac -Basic	Mac -Standard	Wintel - Basic	Wintel - Standard
CPU	180 MHz PowerPC	333 MHz G3 or better	150MHz Pentium	Pentium III 450 or better
RAM	32Mb	64Mb	32Mb	64 Mb
Hard Disk	2 Gb	3 Gb	2 Gb	3 Gb
CD-ROM	24 x	24 x	8 x	32 x
Network interface (University computers)	Ethernet – thin coax or UTP Cat 5	Ethernet - UTP Cat 5	Ethernet – thin coax or UTP Cat 5	Ethernet - UTP Cat 5
Modem (off-campus use only)	28.8kbps	56kbps	28.8kbps	56kbps
Display	16-bit 800 x 600	16-bit 1024 x 768	8-bit 800 x 600	16-bit 1024 x 768

Note: The purchaser should be satisfied that backup and data transfer needs will be met, whether through an external or internal removable media drive, or networking. Depending on circumstances (eg home/lab/office use), the use of emerging removable storage media (eg Iomega Zip and Jaz, Imation Superdrive) is encouraged.

³ Shareware available at Monash ftp mirror. For University-owned machines, it is a policy requirement that the shareware fees be paid if the software is used beyond the legitimate “free trial” period, and the University would encourage owners of private computers to adopt the same policy.

5. How Much Does It Cost???

Based on list prices (incltax) at UCS in early December, the following table summarises the cost of comparable better-than standard (but reasonable) workstations. The table depicts the costs faced by a student in acquiring a computer which is likely to last 3 years without upgrade, and will be covered by a three-year warranty from a reputable supplier. The equipment listed exceeds the standard comfortably: these would be jolly nice systems!

5.1 Student Costs

Item	Macintosh	Price	Wintel	Price
Computer	APPLE MACINTOSH iMAC 350Mhz 64/6GB/CD Ethernet & Modem (Blueberry)	\$1863	WIN 98 WORKSTATION - PIII450, 64MB RAM, 6.4GB IDE HDD, 8MB VID, 40XCD, (Combo)	\$1947
Modem	Included	\$0	MODEM - INTERNAL DIAMOND 56k PCI Data/Fax V.90 upgradable	\$119
Monitor & Speakers	Included	\$0	MONITOR - MICROPRO 15" with built in speakers	\$441
Upgrade RAM to 128Mb	RAM - G4 & G3 64Mb for PowerMac(2) & iMac(2) F 178	\$212	DESKTOP RAM - 64MB for Pentium Pro and PII Systems (168pin EDO Non parity)	\$338
Microphone	PLAIN TALK MICROPHONE	\$43	No product listed - but estimate	\$20
Backup/ Archive/ Transfer removable media drive (100Mb)	REMOVABLE MEDIA DRIVES - IOMEGA ZIP DRIVE EXTERNAL USB	\$251	REMOVABLE MEDIA DRIVES - IOMEGA ZIP DRIVE INTERNAL (IDE) for G3/G4 & PC's	\$210
Microsoft Office (Shrinkwrapped student version)	INTEGRATED - MICROSOFT OFFICE 98 for Macintosh	\$229	INTEGRATED SOFTWARE - MICROSOFT OFFICE 2000 STD for Windows	\$221
Allowance for shareware fees (including QuickTimePro)		\$150		\$150
GRAND TOTAL		\$2748		\$3446

5.2 University Costs

The exercise is readily repeated for University-owned computers at extax prices and taking advantage of University-only licensing programs.

Item	Macintosh	Price	Wintel	Price
Computer	APPLE MACINTOSH iMAC 350Mhz 64/6GB/CD Ethernet & Modem (Blueberry)	\$1610	WIN 98 WORKSTATION - PIII450, 64MB RAM, 6.4GB IDE HDD, 8MB VID, 40XCD, (Combo)	\$1618
Modem	Included	\$0	MODEM - INTERNAL DIAMOND 56k PCI Data/Fax V.90 upgradable	\$106
Monitor & Speakers	Included	\$0	MONITOR - MICROPRO 15" with built in speakers	\$367
Upgrade RAM to 128Mb	RAM - G4 & G3 64Mb for PowerMac(2) & iMac(2) F 178	\$178	DESKTOP RAM - 64MB for Pentium Pro and PII Systems (168pin EDO Non parity)	\$284
Microphone	PLAIN TALK MICROPHONE	\$36	No product listed - but estimate	\$20
Backup/ Archive/ Transfer removable media drive (100Mb)	REMOVABLE MEDIA DRIVES - IOMEGA ZIP DRIVE EXTERNAL USB	\$216	REMOVABLE MEDIA DRIVES - IOMEGA ZIP DRIVE INTERNAL (IDE) for G3/G4 & PC's	\$177
Microsoft Office (Select Licence with maintenance)	MICROSOFT OFFICE for Mac (LICENCE)	\$162	MICROSOFT OFFICE 2000 (LICENCE)	\$174
Allowance for shareware fees (including QuickTimePro)		\$150		\$150
GRAND TOTAL		\$2352		\$2896

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Approved by the Information Strategy Advisory Committee 13 December 1999.