

Laptop Policy for MSI Students

Version: 2009-2010 (rev. 30-Dec-08)

The School of Information strongly recommends that all students starting the MSI program have a personal laptop. A laptop is a powerful tool that will support your learning and professional development at the School of Information (SI). Laptops are used in some classes, in group projects outside of class, and of course can serve your other information processing needs (most students find a laptop sufficient and do not purchase a desktop computer for home use).

Free, high-speed, wireless Internet access is available in all campus buildings (and in many locations around town). At SI many class readings are posted online, so you can reduce your cost, and the paper use and carrying weight, for textbooks and articles. SI also provides free access to a package of Virtual Lab software and a print environment to support your needs.

Laptop specifications

To ensure that your laptop has sufficient capability to use SI's suite of Virtual Lab software for classroom and project activities, we strongly recommend that it meet at least the following specifications:

MS Windows XP SP3 or MS Vista SP1, Mac OS X 10.5 or greater

1.8 GHz Dual core processor (not Celeron)

Video Card with 128MB memory minimum

1GB RAM Minimum (2 GB minimum for Vista)

80GB Hard Drive

10/100 Ethernet

802.11g wireless

CD Writer/DVD player or DVD+/-RW drive

Padded carrying case

Apple (Mac OS X) and PC (Windows) machines are more or less equally common among our students, and we support both platforms.

Note: Be sure to consider the weight of your purchase. Some students find that heavier laptops can be too weighty to carry around all day (although others want the functionality that heavier laptops provide).

Backup

You should also have a plan and resources for backing up your critical files. SI and the University provide sufficient (free) online file space for most students' needs; other low-cost and free services are available as well. Some students burn crucial files to DVDs, or purchase external drives (drives with 300GB or more are currently available for about \$100).

Support

We recommend that you purchase a warranty with your laptop that will cover the span of your degree program (typically 2 years for a full-time student). Students can get low-cost assistance for software and (Apple or Dell) hardware through the on-campus ITCS Computer Support and Repair service (<http://www.itd.umich.edu/repair/>).

Classroom etiquette:

Each course and faculty member may have different expectations for laptop classroom etiquette. Please check in with your instructor regarding the expectations for use of laptops in your classes. In all cases, personal business such as answering email or web surfing should be done outside of class (such activities usually distract and thus detract from the learning experience of others seated nearby). We ask that each student use their computers as a tool to contribute to the classroom environment and to respect each other with full attention and participation.

General expectations for safe SI Computing:

- Do not leave your computer unattended.

- Keep your computer updated with up-to-date anti-virus software (available free from the University).
- Back-up files regularly.
- Enable automatic OS updates.

Questions and additional resources:

If you have questions regarding the laptop policy, please contact Laura Elgas, Assistant Director of Admissions and Student Affairs, at lauramb@umich.edu or Judy Lawson, Director of Admissions and Student Affairs, at jmlawson@umich.edu. The student services staff can help you strategize about resources and opportunities as you purchase your laptop. In addition, SI has a few loaner laptops to help students who demonstrate significant need.

If you have questions about the SI Computing environment please contact the SI Computing team at si.computing@umich.edu.