

Student Checklist for Online Technology Readiness

As many students and faculty discovered during the switch to fully online instruction during the SP20 semester, applications such as Blackboard Learn, Zoom, ProctorU, Respondus LockDown Browser, and others may not function correctly if the user has an older device, operating system, or browser, or has limited internet access. This document provides recommendations for minimum device, software, and internet resources that students should have in order to use online instructional tools with minimal technical issues. **NOTE: Workstations in UHCL's computer labs meet or exceed these minimum requirements, so students are encouraged to use those computers when/if the labs are open and their personal devices do not meet the following specifications.**

Recommended Hardware

- A computer (desktop/laptop), less than 5 years old is preferable. A newer (also less than 5 years old) tablet/smart phone will also work, although their functionality may be limited (see "What about using my cell phone or tablet?" below).
NOTE: Chromebooks are not recommended and may not be compatible with all third-party tools used in Blackboard.
- Speakers/headphones/earbuds for listening to audio or video presented in courses.
- Webcam for interacting in course activities that require video feedback from students (such as online class sessions), video test proctoring (such as Respondus Monitor), or other third-party tools.
NOTE: If you don't have speakers/headphones/earbuds, make sure that the web camera that you use has a built-in microphone.

Recommended Software

- A current version of your device's operating system, such as Windows 10, macOS 10.15 (Catalina), iOS 13.5, etc. To determine if your device and operating system are compatible with Blackboard, use the [Blackboard Browser Check tool](#).
- The latest version of an internet browser, such as Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome. Macintosh users are strongly encouraged to use Chrome, rather than Safari, for online course work.
 - Mozilla Firefox (latest version) - [Download](#)
 - Google Chrome (latest version) - [Download](#)**NOTE: Do not use Internet Explorer. This browser is obsolete and is no longer supported by Blackboard. We also discourage students from using Microsoft Edge.** Although it is on Blackboard's list of supported browsers, there have been a significant number of issues reported by students using Edge with Blackboard.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (latest version) - [Download](#)
- [Office 365](#) (available to all UHCL students)

Internet Requirements

A stable dialup Internet connection of 56K or greater may suffice for using basic tools/features in an online course, but it is usually insufficient for tools such as web conferencing and online exams. Therefore, **we recommend using a high speed (broadband) DSL/cable internet service when completing tasks in an online course**. Keep in mind that, if you share a router or WiFi service with others (e.g., you live in a house/apartment with family/roommates), how fast and efficient your internet connection is can vary greatly depending on how many people and devices are accessing the internet at the same time.

Synchronous Online Meetings (Zoom, Collaborate, etc.)

For synchronous class meetings, students should use a full-function computer/laptop. Cell phones and tablets are more likely to result in technical problems and may not permit the degree of interaction required by your instructor. Here are some additional tips for successful online meetings:

- Shut down all applications, tools, etc. on your computer except for the browser or tool needed for the meeting. This includes closing your email, social media (e.g., Facebook, Google Hangouts), and other applications.
- Unless your instructor requires you to be seen, leave your camera toggled OFF.
- Keep your microphone muted until called upon to speak to the group.
- If you share internet access with others (e.g., roommates, family members), ask them to avoid using "high bandwidth" internet access (e.g., streaming movies or music, downloading files, online gaming) during important online class meetings.

Online Exam Proctoring

Many UHCL courses require students to use an online proctoring tool when completing online tests and exams. Online proctoring may have additional hardware/software requirements, such as the following:

- You must have a USB camera and microphone connected to or built into your computer.
- You may need to download and use a specific web browser or a plug-in/add-on to your existing Chrome or Firefox browser.

For more information about proctoring tools currently used at UHCL, please visit the [Online Proctoring Resources web page](#). If your instructor requires online proctoring, additional information should be provided to you in the course syllabus or elsewhere in the course.

What About Using My Cell Phone or Tablet?

Blackboard makes a [mobile application](#) for iPad, iPhones, and Android devices. However, it is not a fully functioning version of Blackboard and there may be limitations on the type of tasks you can complete in the app. It is also possible to access Blackboard through the browser on your cell phone or tablet. Again, **these devices may not function as intended, especially when taking online exams, submitting assignments, and other graded tasks**. In general, such devices

are best reserved for consuming information that your instructor has made available in Blackboard, such as articles, lecture notes, PowerPoint files, etc. For graded work, activities, and assignments, students should expect to use a full function desktop or laptop computer.