

Technical Suggestions for Online Teaching and Learning

Students enrolled in online or hybrid courses and faculty who teach those classes should be aware of the technical recommendations for success teaching and learning in Blackboard.

General Recommendations

- Although on-campus students have access to campus computers with internet access, those who will be doing most of the studying and related Blackboard tasks from home or work should have access to a reliable computer with consistent, broadband (cable) internet access.
- **Mobile devices (smartphones and tablets) are not recommended as the sole device for accessing and participating in Blackboard courses.**
- It is important that students **log into their UHCL email accounts regularly**. All school communication will use this address - not your personal home email address (unless changed in your PeopleSoft settings).
- Most modern computers (1-3 years old) will be able to access Blackboard courses without issue.
- Students should use an operating system and browser that is fully compatible with Blackboard 9.1 2014 Release. Specific information about supported operating systems and browsers are provided below.
- Some courses have live instructional sessions that require speakers and a microphone or a microphone-headset. Standard microphone-headsets are generally supported and should work fine.

Recommended Operating Systems for Blackboard Learn

- **Windows 7**, Windows 8, and Windows 10
- **Mac OS X 10.8**, 10.9, and 10.10 supports most online course materials. Some applications may require a Windows environment. *If you are using a Mac, you should be able to run a Windows virtual environment such as [Parallels Desktop](#) or [vmWare fusion](#).*

Recommended Browsers for Blackboard Learn

- Firefox 31+
- Chrome 336+
- Internet Explorer (IE9+) – Windows ONLY; do not use with Mac OS
- Edge 1+ (**NOTE: Although listed as supported by Blackboard, users have reported serious performance issues when using Edge with Blackboard. We strongly discourage the use of the Edge browser with Blackboard**).
- Safari 6+ - Mac OS ONLY; Safari for Windows is unsupported.

Recommended and/or Required Plugins

For the best experience, *the most recent version of the following plug-ins* is required for many of the resources available in your online courses:

- [Java v7 or higher](#)
- [Adobe Flash Player](#)
- [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)
- [RealPlayer \(Basic\)](#)
- [Apple QuickTime Player](#)
- [Citrix Online Plug-in/Receiver](#)

Importance of a Consistent Broadband/Cable Internet Connection

Most web-based courses feature streaming video and/or audio. Due to the nature of streaming media, we recommend cable/broadband internet with a minimum speed of 1.5Mbps. Higher bandwidth and speed will greatly assist you in your online courses and minimize playback issues.

We strongly suggest that you have consistent access to a cable modem connection or higher. **Streaming video playback functionality may be limited with DSL or cable modem connections.** Some courses/programs are not functionally feasible to take with a dial-up connection; so please be aware of limitations that come with lower-speed internet connections.

Recommended Computer Skills

It is essential that an online student already has the skills to navigate the internet, as well understands basic computing applications, email functions, and word processing.

Online students need to be comfortable using a computer and have a rudimentary understanding of computers and internet-based systems:

- Download and install software, browser and plug-ins (and subsequent updates)
- Use email, including attaching and downloading documents/files from emails
- Save files in commonly used word processing formats (.doc, .docx, .rtf)
- Copy and paste text and other items on a computer
- Save and retrieve documents and files on your computer
- Locate information on the internet using search engines.
- Take screen captures (used when reporting technical problems).

Reporting a Blackboard Issue

As with most technology tools, Blackboard can sometimes present technological challenges. In cases where you believe that Blackboard is not functioning correctly, get as much information as possible to share with BOTH your instructor and the support center. If possible, get a screen capture of any error messages or write down exactly what the error message reads. **NOTE: For instructions on how to take a screen shot (screen capture), please refer to the following URL: [http://www.wikihow.com/Take-a-Screen-Shot-\(Screen-Capture\)](http://www.wikihow.com/Take-a-Screen-Shot-(Screen-Capture)).** Record the exact time and date of the problem, where you were (e.g., on campus,

home, work, Starbuck's), the type of device that you were using (e.g., desktop, laptop, tablet), the device's operating system (e.g., IE10, OSX, Android), the web browser (and version) you were using, exactly what you were doing when the error occurred, and any other relevant details you can recall. The quickest way to report all of this information is in an email sent to SupportCenter@uhcl.edu. Please also ensure that your email includes your full name, student identification number, preferred email address, and the course in which the error occurred (e.g. WRIT 3313.05).