Buying a Computer or Laptop

Issues to Consider

Before purchasing a computer ask yourself the following questions: -

- What do I want to do with my Computer?

- How much money do I have to spend?

- Do I want an Apple Macintosh or an IBM Compatible?

- Do I want a Desktop or Laptop Computer?

Our Department and the University support PC's (IBM Compatible). You can use the University printers from either Mac or PC. BUT you cannot plot direct from a MAC. That means if you purchase a MAC and you do files on it, to be able to print they need to be printed from a PC in the computer room. This should play a major part of choosing between MAC and PC. But remember Software is generally available on both platforms and documents usually can be transferred easily between MAC and PC. When you have decided how much to spend and what you want, you should ask the retailer specific questions, including: -

- Does the computer come with any free Software? (Office, Anti-Virus)

- How long is the warranty period? , Is the warranty for parts or labour or

   Both? Is the warranty on-site or return to base?

- What sort of support is available? Who should I speak to if I have problems with something?

- Can the computer be upgraded; i.e. more memory added, how many expansion slots does it have?

There are many computer retailers in Sheffield and surrounding the University. Try to choose one that is reputable and well established. Retailers do come and go, so it is best to choose one who is likely to stay in business, even if this means paying slightly more. It also helps to take someone along who knows more than you about computers. Make sure that they understand what your computer needs are before you stop shopping around.

Buying a computer is a big decision. Being well informed of your requirements and the capabilities of different systems will assist you in choosing a computer that best matches your needs and budget.

CPU

This is the heart of any computer and processes the data you input into it. It's a chip that is located inside and calculates millions of operations a second. You don't necessarily have to have the fastest chip, but getting the latest technology will provide a degree of future-proofing.

Memory (RAM)

While the hard drive stores your data, it's rather slow, so when the processor needs anything, the data will be loaded into memory. The amount of memory will greatly determine how quick it will run. Aim to have much as you can afford.

Hard Drive

This is a disk that physically holds all your photos, course work, music and videos. The larger the capacity, the more you can store.

Graphics

There are two types of graphics available – Integrated and dedicated. Getting the right one is vital. Integrated chips are the cheapest and are only intended for basic functions. So having a dedicated card will be a must for Architecture students.

School of Architecture Basic Spec

Desktop

Intel I5 CPU, 4 GB Ram, 1024Mb Graphics Card, 500 GB Hard Disk, DVDRW.

Laptop

Intel I5 CPU, 8 GB Ram, 1024Mb Graphics Card (NOT ONBAORD), 500 GB Hard Disk, DVDRW.

Recommended Spec

Intel I7 2.8 Ghz+ with Turbo Boost Technology, 8 GB Ram, 2GB Dedicated video card (not on-board graphics), 500 GB HD