Educational Research Department – computer requirements for distance learners

It will be your choice to decide which web-enabled devices you use for your postgraduate studies but these notes are intended to help inform that decision.

You should be able to use a mobile device for many of the tasks required for your studies but for the longer writing tasks it is likely that you will need a device such as a laptop or desk-based PC.

Essential tasks:

1. Accessing Moodle which is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) used at Lancaster University. Moodle is tested on a wide range of web-enabled devices including several brands of tablet computer. If you use a mobile device then one way to access Moodle is via the iLancaster app although this will not contain all the features you will find when accessing Moodle via the web;
2. Accessing Mahara which is Lancaster University’s e-portfolio and social networking site. Again this is tested on a wide range of web-enabled devices;
3. Using Library search tools such as OneSearch and resources such as electronic versions of books and journal articles. Many library tools and resources are accessible using mobile devices;
4. Writing assignments which will range from about 2,000 words in length up to between 15,000 and 20,000 words for your Masters dissertation or 45,000 words for your PhD thesis;
5. Submitting assignments which is usually done using Moodle.

Optional video conferencing:

If you wish to participate in optional video conferencing activities then you will need a microphone (preferably as part of a headset), a webcam and a reliable internet connection. For video conferencing we currently use Vscene, WebEx or BigBlueButton. These work on many web-enabled devices but not all so you may need to try different devices.

Here are some of the video conferencing activities currently available in the Department of Educational Research:

1. Synchronous video conference sessions with tutors and students, for example, to hold small group discussions about assignment planning;
2. Synchronous discussions amongst students working together on group tasks;
3. Departmental online reading group (about 4 meetings a year);
4. Departmental seminars (about 15 each year).

PhD viva:

Distance learners can choose to attend their PhD viva in person or using Vscene video conference software.

Please contact Rebecca Marsden (Online Learning Support Officer) if you have any further queries. Email: r.marsden@lancaster.ac.uk Telephone: +44(0) 1524 594067

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