

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, Zoom or Skype for Business. 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. Telephone: +44(0) 1524 594067

October 2018