IT Guide for Prospective Students and Parents 2022

Background

The College has always been at the forefront of using technology to support and enhance teaching and learning. Learning the skills (including in IT) required in higher level learning is part of overall development and progression beyond sixth form studies. We have developed a Digital Strategy to ensure we continue to harness maximum benefit from technology to support all aspects of the College operation.

Students attending College through the Covid-19 pandemic experienced blended learning, using IT to share live lessons delivered via Microsoft Teams, and also work independently. While we hope that a return to remote learning can be avoided, all students are expected to consolidate and complement their learning outside lessons and the College provides resources electronically to support this. Good access to IT at home is important, as is its portability, so that it can be used in College too.

We recognise that not every student already owns a mobile device. The following information is intended to help parents and students looking to obtain this useful study tool.

We will supplement this information on our website, under the 'Frequently Asked Questions'.

What is a mobile device?
A mobile device can be any laptop or tablet that has access to the internet and can easily support applications used in College.

What is expected of me?
College work is set using online tools, and where lessons or additional support sessions are online, they are run using Microsoft Teams. Some coursework must be submitted electronically (in order that it can be checked for plagiarism). Teachers communicate using email and Microsoft Teams, and we expect students to check messages, respond promptly, and maintain their in-box. In order to succeed, students need to engage in the work that is set and try their hardest to participate as fully as they can with classroom, virtual, online, offline, and self-directed study.

I don't have a mobile device, what's available in College?
We have over 1000 Windows 10 PCs installed in classrooms, workshops, and shared areas such as the Independent Learning Centre. Each device has Microsoft Office installed, plus any specialist software for the subject area. Wherever possible, software is obtained with a 'site licence', which enables students to use the ILC to complete work. All College PCs have access to a nearby colour A3 printer.

However, we do recommend that you obtain a mobile device, to complement any equipment used in College.

Can I use my phone in College?

Most students have a smartphone, which can provide basic access to College email, Microsoft Teams lessons, and the online resources used on College but is more difficult for completing homework. Teachers may encourage, or discourage, phones to be used for quick internet searches in lessons.

The College has a Wifi network across the campus.

Do I need a 'home office'?

In short, no. But working at a computer device can be tiring as is the homework that goes with it. Students should identify a working area at home – a kitchen table, bedroom desk etc. Make sure it's kept tidy, the screen is level and at a comfortable height, and that using the keyboard does not require contortion. Take regular breaks from the screen.

I have a mobile device already – will it be OK?

Yes, we would not want devices that still have a useful life to be discarded! If you're not sure, there is no harm in starting studies with whatever you have and consider an 'upgrade' later in the first term, using the initial experience of learning at College to inform your decision.

Where the existing mobile device is a tablet (e.g. iPad, Windows tablet etc), consider whether a keyboard can be connected. Long essays or reports are very tiring and cumbersome using an on-screen keyboard. A USB keyboard can be obtained from any computer shop – be sure to get one that is compatible with the device.

I want to buy a mobile device – what should I buy?

As a College, we are very careful to not influence towards a particular manufacturer or proprietary technology.

The College uses Microsoft products within its infrastructure, and therefore the best compatibility and performance is likely to be with a Windows device. Our suggested baseline specification would be:

- Windows 10 or 11, Home/Pro (not W10S for compatibility)
- 8Gb RAM, 256 Gb HHD/SSD (students studying graphics or media would benefit from additional storage)
- Intel i5 or equivalent. Students doing graphics or media work may find an i7 gives better performance; also consider a device with a GPU for graphics/video editing
- Keyboard (to enable typing – there are lots of essays/coursework in A levels and BTECs!)
- Screen size to user preference. Students planning to do video-editing or digital graphics may find a larger (high resolution) screen is helpful. However, this has an impact on portability, and a smaller device may be more practical. Students writing essays may find a small screen less comfortable.
- A built-in webcam and microphone is useful to participate in online support sessions – consider a headset device, particularly if the home working environment isn't quiet.
- A suitable case and screen protector are very important – often a requirement for insurance.

Other manufacturers are available, and students have successfully used Apple, tablets, and other devices. We understand there may be compatibility issues with some College software for Chromebooks.

Where can I buy a mobile device?

You can obtain a device from any of the normal computer suppliers, local computer shops, or online shops. Your choice of supplier might be influenced by the extent of customer support or advice you may need, financial services, and aftercare. Some suppliers offer special pricing to students.

The local computer shop nearest to the College, Disking, offers Godalming College students a discount on a range of computer products. Their website is https://www.diskingcomputers.com – to obtain the discount, please mention to them that you're a Godalming College student (they may wish to see your College ID card, or confirm with us to check that you're about to be a College student!)

I can't afford a mobile device, what can I do?

There is financial support available via the College Bursary scheme, further information can be found on the College website. This can be used to provide a suitable device, on a loan-basis, or for the student to keep – depending on circumstances. Please contact the College for further information – we regularly update the scheme to try to help as many students as possible.

What software do I need?

Wherever possible, the College obtains software licenses which can be used by students at home. In 2022/23, students will have access to:

- Microsoft Office 365 – this can be downloaded and installed on up to 5 devices, including OneDrive for file storage.
- The College uses Microsoft Teams, which can be freely downloaded.
- Adobe Creative Cloud – including Photoshop and Illustrator – again this can be installed.

Other specialist software may be available, or students will be directed to free or inexpensive alternatives by their teachers.

What technical support can the College offer me?

The College IT Team's role is to support the infrastructure and College network equipment, and to facilitate the lessons taking place. We will support students with their equipment where we can, but this will be on a strictly 'best-efforts' basis, and only when time permits.

What about insurance?

All IT equipment is expensive, and laptops are easily dropped, left on the bus, or worse. We suggest that you ensure your household insurance covers student laptops or obtain insurance when you buy any equipment. Bursary devices are covered by the College's insurance.

I'm still not sure – can you offer any more advice?

Please look at the 'Frequently Asked Questions' section of the website for further guidance, we will keep this up-to-date. However, if you have further specific questions, please contact admissions@godalming.ac.uk, our Admissions Team will direct your query to the person best placed to respond.

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