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Student Computing Policy

Updated: July 2023

The purpose of the policy

This Student Computing Policy outlines the ways in which you as a student will be expected to use personal computing devices in pursuit of your course unit(s) of study, and the areas in which you can expect to be supported in your use of computing devices by the college throughout your studies.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a clear view of the college's expectations of you in regards to your use of computing technologies (as per section *5: Information and Communications Technology Requirements* of the college's *Admissions Policy*.)
- Provide you with details on the areas in which the college can provide you with support in the use of computing technologies.
- Outline the technologies you will require in order to engage with college systems. Individual Programmes and Units of study may have their own specific hardware and software requirements, which will be outlined in the relevant Programme and/or Unit descriptors.

Values

1. **Equality of access**. The college endeavours to ensure that access to learning resources, activities and channels of communication are not hampered by unreasonable demands on an individual's digital capabilities or their access to adequate technology. This policy informs upfront the college's minimum requirements and expectations for students to engage with its platforms and links to the Reasonable Adjustments Policy where those requirements and expectations cannot be met.
2. **Digital capabilities**. The college will provide guidance and support in how to use its systems, but students must have basic computer skills in order to

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effectively study through OCA's distance and online learning provision, unless where the Reasonable Adjustments Policy applies.

3. **Privacy, confidentiality and security**: The college requires that all staff and students be mindful of each others' rights to privacy and confidentiality when engaging in online discourse. The college provides secure systems to guard against malicious breaches of personal data and does not tolerate the unlawful sharing of personal data by individuals in any setting.

4. **Support**. The college will provide proactive and remedial support to reduce technical barriers to a student's progress through their studies.

Scope

- This policy applies to all enquirers, applicants, and students of the college. Where exceptions are permitted they are specified within the document.
- This policy does not apply to college staff or contractors for the college.
- In the context of this policy, the term 'computer' includes all forms of computing technology, including:
    - Laptop computers
    - Desktop computers
    - Mobile phones
    - Tablets/phablets

Related Standards, Policies and Processes

- OCA Admissions Policy
- Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy
- Freedom of Speech Code of Practice
- Prevent Duty Policy
- Online Behaviour and Social Media Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Student Code of Conduct Policy

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1. Use of computers in your studies

1.1 Required use-cases

You will be required to use a computer for your studies in the following ways, unless you have been formally granted an exception by the Learner Support or Student Services team as part of the enrolment process due to your personal circumstances.

- To access the college's Google Workspace for Education platform and its associated online services for accessing and sending email through its Gmail application, and uploading and downloading files from the Google Drive application.

- To access the college's 'OCA Learn' Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), where your course materials and activities relating to your course unit(s) and programme(s) of study are available.

- To submit work to your allocated tutor(s) through the OCA Learn VLE, and receive feedback from your tutor in the same environment.

- To engage in one-to-one and group video calls with college tutors and/or visiting lecturers and fellow students.

- Accessing help and support through the college's OCA Learn VLE and other supporting online environments.

- To access and conduct research through the Online Library.

- To create and maintain a digital Learning Log/Reflective Commentary of your academic progress using the college's OCA Spaces environment or other online Blogging or Journaling tools.

- To submit Summative Assessment files (in line with assessment submission guidance) at the end of each course unit, using either the OCA Learn VLE or Google Drive (depending on your programme of study.)

- To communicate with OCA Head Office teams only through your college Email account and with Faculty staff members and take responsibility for regularly checking your OCA-provided email address for College communications.

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1.2 Expectations of Online Conduct

1.2.1 All staff and students are expected to adhere to the college's expectations of conduct in online spaces as outlined in the college's [Online Behaviour and Social Media Policy](#).

1.2.2 As per the [Anti Harassment and Bullying Policy](#), any behaviour considered to amount to bullying or harassment should be referred to the Learner Support team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk.

2. Minimum system requirements

2.1 General requirements (applicable to all)

The college requires that at minimum, you have on-demand access to:

- An internet connection with a minimum of 2MB/s upload and 5MB/s download speed.
- A computer which is receiving regular security updates from the manufacturer and/or Operating System provider.
- Supported Operating Systems include: MacOS 11.x (Big Sur) and above; Windows 7 and above; iOS and iPadOS 13 and above; Android 10 and above.
- Audio input (microphone) and output (speaker) devices, to allow you to engage through video-based discussions and meetings, unless you are engaging through alternative means.
- Webcam for engagement in video-based activities, unless you are engaging through alternative means.
- A reliable means of accessing the college's online applications and associated applications (if studying from overseas, please refer to the section on VPN use, below.)
- Any assistive devices or software which you require in order to engage with the college's applications and systems.

2.2 Course Unit or Programme-specific requirements

Individual Programmes and Units may establish their own minimum system and software requirements within the relevant Programme Descriptors found on the college's website - [OCA Degree Programmes](#).

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2.3 Exemptions

You may be exempt from one or more of the listed requirements in 2.1 and/or 2.2 if you have submitted an IT Exemption Form to the Learner Support Team (learnersupport@oca.ac.uk) and had this exemption authorised prior to enrolment.

3. Minimum digital capabilities

In order to study with the college, you must be capable of the following:

- Confidently operating a laptop or desktop computer that is connected to the internet.
- Navigate the internet using a web browser, and be able to move between multiple open tabs and/or windows.
- Upload and download files to and from websites.
- Create and maintain a simple blog and manage its settings.
- Independently troubleshoot issues relating to connected peripherals (e.g. webcams, microphones, storage devices).
- Understand the principles of privacy online and be capable of maintaining the privacy of yourself and others whilst using the internet.
- Confidently communicate with others through online technologies, including by Email, Forum, Social Media, Video Conferencing and Web Chat technologies.
- Understand basic computing terminology, including but not limited to: Browser; URL; Window; Screenshot; Upload/Download; Bandwidth; Copy/Paste; Megabyte/Gigabyte.

If you do not feel confident in meeting one or more of the listed capabilities, the college recommends that you complete the Open University's open access course 'Digital Skills: Succeeding in a Digital World' to improve your confidence in this area prior to enrolling on any OCA programme or unit of study.

4.   Access to college systems

4.1   College accounts

All students and staff of the college are provided with a college email account hosted through Google Workspace for Education in EU data centres, which is required to be used for all email communications, with the one exception of requesting support to gain access to the account, e.g. password reset requests.

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4.2   Systems access

All college-provided systems, including but not limited to OCA Learn, OCA Spaces, Panopto, Padlet, Zoom, MS Office and the Online Library provide Single Sign-On (SSO) access via Google through college-provided email accounts.

4.3   Data sharing

Limited personal and college data (full name, student number and programme of study), and staff members' roles and responsibilities at the college (job title and department) are shared with Google in order to provide students and staff with Google Workspace for Education accounts. All data is securely stored on Google Workspace servers within the EU in accordance with GDPR Standard Contractual Clauses.

The same personal and college data is shared with the college's Virtual Learning Environment, OCA Learn, which is hosted by Overt in the UK in accordance with the [UK Data Protection Act 2018](#).

The OCA utilises data backup and archiving software (Google Vault) to insure against data belonging to students or tutors being erroneously or maliciously deleted through error or hacking, by maintaining backups of your Email and Gdrive data. These archives may also be referred back to in the event that complaints are made by or against OCA students, tutors or staff.

4.4   Overseas access

The college acknowledges that some students studying from overseas (outside the UK) may have to contend with blocks on their access to some online applications and resources imposed by their national government or through the external application of sanctions.

The college makes regular use of:

- Google Workspace for Education (Mail, Drive, Meet, Calendar), EU-hosted
- OCA Learn (Moodle-based Virtual Learning Environment), UK-hosted
- OCA Spaces (Wordpress-based blogging platform), UK-hosted
- Panopto (Video streaming/storage), EU-hosted
- Padlet (Collaborative Resource pages), US-hosted
- Zoom (Video conferencing), US-hosted

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By enrolling on a course or programme of study with the college, you agree to ensure that you can arrange for access to its systems. If your country or service provider blocks access to required services (such as, but not limited to, those above), access is typically achieved through the use of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection to get around geographic restrictions. Whilst the college imposes no restrictions on access to its systems and resources through use of VPNs, the college cannot endorse, recommend or support any VPN technologies for this use.

It is ultimately a student's responsibility to ensure access to college systems. Loss of access through a change in personal circumstances, e.g. loss of internet connection or loss of computing device, is not sufficient reason for a refund of fees.

5. Support provision

The college provides technical support to students in the use of core applications and services it provides, but not in the use of personal computers, routers, mobile phones, tablets and other digital devices.

By 'support' we are referring to a provision of assistance in gaining access to applications and systems, and in the performing of basic tasks relating to the fulfilment of teaching and learning processes. Support does not extend to the provision of comprehensive tuition in the use of provided applications and systems, but guidance is provided or linked to where possible.

5.1 Methods of support

The college provides support for its core applications and services through the following channels:

- **Email**: All support requests, with the exception of those relating to account access, must be submitted using a college-supplied Email account under the oca.ac.uk domain.
- **Phone**: The college provides phone-based support during surgery hours. Surgery hours will vary according to time of year.
- **Video call**: Support via video call will be provided where this medium would benefit a swift resolution.
- **Webinar**: The college's technical support staff provide a programme of webinars on various topics for students and staff to attend throughout the academic year.

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5.2 Technical support service level agreement

The college's technical support team will make every effort to respond to a support request within 48 working hours of its receipt. All requests for technical support should be made to techsupport@oca.ac.uk or through forms provided within the OCA Learn VLE.

5.3 Core applications and services (supported)

- Google Workspace for Education (and associated applications)
- OCA Learn
- OCA Spaces
- Panopto
- Padlet
- Zoom

5.4 Non-core applications and services (partially supported)

Through your OCA-provided account, you also have access to other applications and services for which some support is available but limited to provision of access. Use of the following applications and services or issues encountered through their use are not centrally supported:

- MS 365 / Office 365
- MS Teams
- MS OneDrive

5.5 Examples of unsupported applications and services

The following list is not exhaustive, but provides examples of the areas in which the college does not provide central support. In some cases, academic subject teams may at their own discretion provide limited support in the use of some of the listed applications and services. In such cases responsibility for that provision sits within the subject team, and will be made clear as part of the programme and/or unit descriptor which can be found on the relevant Degree Programme pages of the college's public website:

- Operating Systems e.g. Windows, Mac OS, iOS, Android, Ubuntu
- Email Clients, e.g. Outlook, Apple Mail, Thunderbird
- Adobe Applications
- Apple Applications

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- Music Composition Applications
- 3D Design Applications
- VPNs
- Antivirus Software

6. Accessing digital content as part of your studies

All programmes and units of study provided by the college require you to conduct your own online research into general and subject-specific topics. When conducting such research, as a student of the college you agree to:

Take care in ensuring that the content being accessed does not fall into the category of Extremism or Hate Speak. If such content is discovered, do not access it. The college's Prevent Duty policy provides further guidance in this area.

Not upload or work with any copyrighted material for which you have not obtained prior consent or for which creative commons licences do not apply.

Report to the college any content you discover on college systems that you suspect may be plagiarised or in breach of copyright laws, and refrain from downloading or otherwise accessing such material if it can be avoided.

7. Uploading digital files as part of your studies

Studying with the Open College of the Arts will require you to upload digital files to college-provided systems such as the Virtual Learning Environment (OCA Learn) and other environments, such as Google Drive and OCA Spaces (a blogging platform.) When uploading or sharing digital content to such systems, you agree to:

- Not upload any files to college-provided applications or storage spaces which may contain malicious code, e.g. viruses.

- Not share any illegal, inflammatory, extremist, or pornographic material, unless there is a pre-declared clear and justifiable need. Please refer to the college's Prevent Duty Policy for further detail in this area.

- Not upload or share any content which you do not either solely own or possess specific consent for its use.

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Implementing the Policy

Compliance Measurement

The college will verify compliance to this policy through various methods, including but not limited to, business tool reports, internal and external audits, and feedback to the policy owner.

Exceptions

Any exception to the policy must be approved by the Learner Support team in consultation with the TEL team in advance.

Non-Compliance

Any student found to have violated this policy may face repercussions, up to and including termination of enrolment as defined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Support for the policy

The forms and methods of support are outlined in section 1.4 of this policy document.

Control of the policy

This policy was authored by the Head of Technology and Innovation in consultation with the Senior Management Team and given approval by the Senior Management Team in July 2022.

Reviewing the policy

The next review date for this policy is August 2023. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then please contact paulvincent@oca.ac.uk.