Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I have bought (or already owned) a School of Engineering recommended laptop (link to recommendations), now what do I do?
A: Students are recommended to install the following General Use Software for all classes.
   - Adobe Flash: http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/
   - Adobe Shockwave: http://get.adobe.com/shockwave/
   - Apple Quicktime: https://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/
   - Cisco VPN Client: http://www.uab.edu/vpn/
   - FileZilla FTP Client: https://filezilla-project.org/download.php
   - Oracle Java: https://www.java.com/en/ (alternate link to current supported Java)
   - RealPlayer (optional): http://www.real.com/

Q: What about updating my software?
A: Microsoft Windows: It is important that you make sure you are up-to-date. Check that Windows Update is set to "Automatic" or manually check it weekly. If your computer is not up to date, it can result in security and other problems.
   - Microsoft Forefront (or other Anti-Virus): Update daily at the very least. If there is a problem, ask for troubleshooting help. This is your first line-of-defense against security problems.
   - Oracle Java: Check with Canvas.

Q: What is the Cisco AnyConnect Secure Mobility Client, why do I need it and how do I use it?
A: A VPN (Virtual Private Network) Client allows for a user to get access to UAB and School of Engineering Resources. To begin with, the VPN allows access to your personal and class storage spaces. In addition, the VPN also allows access to other Windows and Linux resources that may be required for your course (links to RDP, cluster). To use it, launch the Cisco AnyConnect Secure Mobility Client, when prompted select "UABSecure Access" and "Connect". Enter in your BlazerID and Password.

Q: What is a Supported Configuration?
A: As of Spring 2016, UAB School of Engineering recommends and will support Windows 7 and higher physical installations (non-virtual) with working anti-virus software.

Q: How do I get access to Help/Documentation for a course/software?
A: Once you are connected, click on this link and find your course number. In this location, you will find more information for a given software, downloads, instructions, tutorials, etc. that may have been provided by your instructor or the IT Dept.

Q: How do I get access to my class storage space?
A: Once you are connected, paste this link into your browser \eng-fs1.eng.uab.edu\DriveL and find your course number.

Q: What resources are available to help me install software?
A: We will be working to create step-by-step instructions to help with installation and troubleshooting which will be continuously updated. If you find a question that you would like to have answered, please ask and we will work to create additional documentation.

Q: I'm confused or in need of computer help. How can I get assistance?
A: Starting Fall 2014, the School of Engineering IT Dept. has established a support location in BEC 357 that will be open Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Days/Hours will vary depending on semester schedules and UAB holidays). Assistance will be provided to Engineering Students utilizing a recommended configuration.

Q: What help will be provided?
A: Help includes but is not necessarily limited to:
  - Installation/Support of General Use Software (see above).
  - Installation/Support of Course Specific Software and Hardware (Ex. PTC Creo, Mathworks Matlab, Netbeans, Arduino).
  - Assistance with hardware vendor support (Ex. helping locate current drivers).

Q: What help can not be provided?
A: Some examples include power supply, damaged screen, broken keyboards, failed hard drives and other types of hardware failures. We will recommend and attempt to assist with vendor support but hardware issues will typically need to be handled with the place of purchase. In addition, we regret that we cannot help with issues of lost data or data retrieval.

Q: Can I leave my laptop to be worked on overnight or while I am in class?
A: No, we cannot assume responsibility for your laptop and will not work on it without your knowledge and presence. Additionally, we will only work on your laptop (not a friend’s or roommate’s)

Q: What things should I bring to the HelpDesk (BEC 357)?
A: Not every item is required in every case:
  - The computer (troubleshooting equipment first hand is the fastest path to a solution) in a Supported Configuration.
  - A power supply (we will not be able to provide power supplies for every model).
  - A USB memory stick (with available space) or in some cases, DVD’s.
  - Patience.
  - Some problems take a while to fix and being presented with a laptop with an unknown problem will require some troubleshooting.

Q: Why is a laptop required?
A. A laptop allows students to stay connected with their coursework and personal activities regardless of their location. Being actively engaged in course material is important for success in our engineering program and a laptop gives UAB engineering students that connection 24/7.

Q. What if I cannot afford a laptop?
A. The UAB Office of Financial Aid has been informed of this additional cost to students and has added it to the Cost of Attendance used to calculate Financial Need. Contact Financial Aid regarding required documentation, determination of Financial Need and yearly award limitations prior to making a purchase.
Q. What are the benefits of the laptop program?
A. Benefits include

i. Flexible student space for computing and computing support will be available through reconfiguration of space currently used as undergraduate computing labs. These areas are BEC 357, 359 and Hoehn 227. The desktop computers will be removed and the labs reconfigured for general student use.

ii. Students can access the same technology as their instructors, allowing them to actively participate in course material and activities.

iii. Mobile computing is available virtually everywhere. Students can participate in academic, administrative, or personal activities no matter their location.

iv. The laptop is a standard engineering tool. Engineers use laptop computers extensively and depend on them for communication, data capture, calculations and design.

Q. What are the costs involved?
A. Students can expect to pay anywhere from $800 and up for a qualified laptop.

Q. How do I choose the laptop that is right for me?
A. The minimum requirements for UAB Engineering students are listed at http://www.uab.edu/engineering/home/images/downloads/laptop_policy.pdf. At a minimum your laptop must meet these requirements. Modern engineering requires the use of sophisticated computer programs such as math simulators, equipment design software. These types of programs require a computer that has sufficient processing speed and internal memory. If an engineering laptop cannot run the tools required for an engineer to make decisions, time is wasted. General processing speeds over a gigahertz and a memory of at least 512k is quickly becoming the minimum requirements.

Q. What if I already own a laptop?
A. If it meets the minimum requirements for UAB Engineering Students you should have no problems.

Q. How can I get service or technical support?
A. For IT support, UAB technical support will available to help troubleshoot any problems in BEC 357 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Support will include helping students install software for engineering curriculum as well as providing guidance to connect to the remote computing resources made available for use of engineering software that cannot currently be provided to the students to install on their own laptops.
For service, check with your manufacturer.

Q. Will there be power outlets available in the classroom?
A. Classrooms will not have power outlets available for each student to plug in their laptops. The laptops used should be capable of being used during class without the need for external power. Power outlets for charging can be found in the general student use areas of BEC 357, 359 and Hoehn 227.

Support Work Flow

The School of Engineering IT Dept provides assistance to currently enrolled Engineering Students and non-Engineering Students taking Engineering Courses. To help facilitate this assistance, we have created a troubleshooting workflow and a series of Q&A (FAQ) to help with troubleshooting. Please follow the steps below.
1. Identify the problem and search the FAQ. The more details you can establish, the quicker your issue will be resolved. "I get a missing license message when running Matlab" is much more informative that "It doesn't work". If we find a recurring problem, we will add it to our FAQ.

2. If the problem is not listed in the FAQ, installation/troubleshooting instructions are not available, or the problem exceeds your comfort level, please create a HelpDesk ticket at https://uabweb.ad.uab.edu/eng/HelpDeskNew/default.aspx. Provide as many details as possible.

3. You will receive a confirmation email.

4. We will verify your eligibility for assistance (i.e. current enrollment), review any previous tickets, direct you to FAQ content (or create new content) and/or make an appointment.

5. Students are asked to show up early for the appointment with everything that we have requested to solve the problem. Issues may take time to resolve (Ex. a PTC Creo install may take 30 minutes). For computers with excessive secondary issues (Ex. serious malware/spyware, multiple conflicting anti-virus programs or significant driver issues), the primary issue may not be able to be resolved until the secondary issues are addressed.

6. Once the issue is resolved, the ticket will be closed and a confirmation email will be sent.