

## What are the computer requirements?

The Edinburgh CertAVP and CPD courses are online. This means that you will be accessing materials, discussion boards and a range of tools via the internet.

While the CertAVP and CPD team and the University's Information Services (IS) department provide distance learning support, please remember that you are still responsible for your own technical set-up.

You are not expected to be a technical whizz, and we provide guidance and training for the tools we use. However, we expect that you will take responsibility for your access to the materials, make back-ups of your work and organise alternative access if required.

You should have the following:

- **Access to a PC or Mac** that you are confident will be able to cope with the volume of online activity that takes place
- A back-up plan (**access to an alternative computer/internet access**) in place in case your computer fails at any point (see the **Preparation and Back-ups** section below)
- Access to a good internet connection – we strongly recommend that you have a **broadband connection**, though you will find that a wi-fi or wireless connection is sufficient for most activities
- An up-to-date web browser - we recommend using **Mozilla Firefox**, which can be downloaded for free from <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/>
- **Up-to-date antivirus and computer security software** - free to students from: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/is/anti-virus>
- We use Learn as our virtual learning environment. The **browser settings for Learn** are provided on the IS webpage, and we recommend you follow the guidance provided: <http://edin.ac/1hVD6jA>
- **Adobe Reader** installed on your computer: <http://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/>
- **Adobe Flash Player** installed on your computer: <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>
- **Headphones with a microphone** for live tutorials – we find using headphones with a mic rather than speakers minimises echo and feedback. A webcam is not required, but you may choose to purchase one

You should also be:

- Comfortable when using the internet (feel confident that you can do a basic search and navigate through web pages)
- Familiar with your computer set-up, and be able to add new software to that computer (i.e. have a basic understanding of the operating system)
- Able to schedule your time so that you can log in **at least** once per week during any **live** course, and ensure your **email address** is up-to-date to receive course announcements via Learn as per guidance provided in the course induction

## Additional Resources

We may also use the following tools, and you may wish to register for accounts and/or check the system requirements in advance.

- **Skype:** <http://www.skype.com>
- **Collaborate Classroom:** <http://edin.ac/GS7jo3> (**please note:** access to the classroom will be provided via Learn, so you do not need to create an account)

## Preparation and Back-ups

We have all had experiences of losing an important file, often something we have been working on for a long time!

It is particularly important when contemplating an online course to ensure that the computer system you will be using for the programme is reliable and has up-to-date antivirus and computer security software. You should get into the habit of running regular scans of your system to catch any malicious software as early as possible.

You should also have set in place a number of file back-up options to ensure that, should your computer fail, e.g. approaching assessment submission deadlines, you do not lose your work.

These back-up options can include:

- a) External hard drive
- b) Pen drive (also known as a USB or memory stick)
- c) CD-ROM
- d) Cloud computing, e.g. Google Drive (<https://drive.google.com>), DropBox (<http://www.dropbox.com>) or email
- e) Paper printouts of draft copies – if all else fails, you can type it back up from the last draft print.

The last option is not very environmentally friendly, but it is particularly wise when preparing any assessment materials, e.g. for the CertAVP. Electronic media may fail, but paper can usually be relied on to be accessible!

When using the online discussion forums on Learn, it is also a good precaution to compose your posts offline, e.g. in a Word document. Learn does not recognise typing as 'activity' and may time out while you are working, and your work is then lost when you post.

If you have the original as a file on your computer, it is easy to copy and paste it in to Learn and this easy step removes the frustration of losing your work.

**Happy computing!**