

Desktop computing hardware standards for Penn
Office of the Vice Provost for Information Systems and Computing
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Information Systems and Computing, with the Penn community, has developed minimum standards for new desktop computers at Penn. Why are standards needed? They help hold training and support costs in check and make it possible for people across campus to work together. They clarify buying decisions and help in planning equipment life cycles. And two new campus-wide initiatives—next-generation electronic mail and Cornerstone business systems—will make extensive use of the power and graphics of modern personal computers.

The computers described here are required only if you plan to use advanced e-mail that makes use of point-and-click graphical user interfaces to exchange spreadsheets and graphics or if you plan to use one of the first Cornerstone systems. The standards also provide a guide if you are buying a new general-purpose computer. Research and instructional computing may require more specialized machines.

Macintosh and Windows computers will be general-purpose, supported standards at Penn, in the minimum configurations shown in the charts below. ISC does not recommend mixing Macintosh and Windows computers within an office or workgroup, where a single standard is much easier to support.

Most of the standard configurations are “freshness dated,” with ISC support guaranteed until July 1998. ISC will review desktop standards each year in light of University needs and industry changes. As new desktop standards are issued, they too will specify support guarantees.

How soon will your computer need to meet these standards? That depends on how you will use it.

For advanced electronic mail. During 1995 support programs will be put in place for advanced electronic mail software packages soon to be recommended by a campus-wide task force.

For new administrative systems. New business systems will be acquired over time, beginning with General Ledger Accounting, Purchasing, and Payables. In general, direct users of these first systems will be Penn’s business administrators. By July of 1996, all access to the first systems will be through point-and-click graphical user interfaces and a computer that meets the minimum standards will be required. If you do not expect to use the first Cornerstone systems, you may not need to upgrade your computer until future systems such as Payroll become available.

The standards for new administrative systems are somewhat higher than the standards for advanced electronic mail. A machine that can access Cornerstone systems can handle advanced e-mail, but the reverse is not necessarily true.

If your school or department is considering major changes or investments, ISC strongly recommends a consultation to weigh pros and cons in today’s rapidly changing environment. Contact Noam Arzt, ISC Director of Information Technology Architecture (arzt@isc.upenn.edu; 898-3029).

The standards

Desktop standards for advanced e-mail

If you plan to use advanced e-mail, with an existing machine, here are the minimum configurations:

Existing machine—Windows MINIMUM for advanced e-mail

Hardware	Processor: 386DX Memory: 8 MB Hard disk: 100 MB Monitor: 14 inch
Operating system	Windows 3.1
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) PPP (off campus)

Existing machine—Macintosh MINIMUM for advanced e-mail

Hardware	Processor: 68020 Memory: 5 MB Hard disk: 80 MB Monitor: 13 inch
Operating system	MacOS System 7
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) SLIP (off campus)

If you're buying a new machine, here are the somewhat higher *minimum* standards, with a specified support guarantee. This is the "general departmental use" option in Penn's 1994 Fall Truckload Sale. Buying the best computer you can afford usually pays off in extra years of service from the machine, so you may prefer to buy a more powerful configuration.

New machine—Windows MINIMUM for advanced e-mail—Supported until July 1998

Hardware	Processor: 486SX2 Memory: 8 MB Hard disk: 210 MB Monitor: 14 inch color Support guarantee: Until July 1998 Today's est. price: \$1,750
Operating system	Windows 3.1 Support guarantee: Rolling—current version plus one prior
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) PPP (off campus)

New machine—Macintosh MINIMUM for advanced e-mail—Supported until July 1998

Hardware	Processor: 68LC040 Memory: 8 MB Hard disk: 250 MB Monitor: 14 inch color Support guarantee: Until July 1998 Today's est. price: \$1,750
Operating system	MacOS Support guarantee: Rolling—current version plus one prior
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) SLIP (off campus)

Desktop Standards for new administrative systems

All access to Cornerstone systems is expected to make use of point-and-click graphical user interfaces by July 1996. If you plan to use General Ledger Accounting, Purchasing, Payables, or the "data warehouse" for management information you will need one of the following *minimum* desktop configurations by July 1996. Buying the best computer you can afford usually pays off in extra years of service from the machine, so you may prefer to buy a more powerful configuration.

If you're buying a new Macintosh primarily for Penn's new administrative systems, wait as long as possible until market trends become clearer.

Windows MINIMUM for new administrative systems—Supported until July 1998

Hardware	Processor: 486DX4 or Pentium Memory: 16 MB Hard disk: 540 MB Monitor: 15 inch color Support guarantee: Until July 1998 Today's est. price: \$2,500
Operating system	Windows (then current version) Support guarantee: Rolling—current version plus one prior
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) PPP (off campus)

Macintosh MINIMUM for new administrative systems—Supported until July 1998

Hardware	Processor: PowerPC Memory: 24 MB Hard disk: 500 MB Monitor: 15 inch color Support guarantee: Until July 1998 Today's est. price : \$3,000
Operating system	MacOS (then current version) Support guarantee: Rolling—current version plus one prior
Network connection	Ethernet (on campus) SLIP (off campus)

Note of caution: If you're buying a new Macintosh primarily for Penn's new administrative systems, wait as long as you can to make sure that Macintosh user interfaces to those systems are available as expected.

ISC will publish Macintosh advisories as Penn approaches the July 1996 Cornerstone deadline. You are also welcome to contact ISC's Director of Information Technology Architecture, Noam Arzt (arzt@isc.upenn.edu, 898-3029).