

## Estopinal College of Architecture and Planning

# FIRST-YEAR LAPTOP SPECIFICATIONS

Academic Year 2026-27

All ECAP first-year students are required to have a laptop. Because a laptop is a significant, long-term investment, we require the following minimum specifications to properly equip you for your courses beyond first year. A laptop meeting the minimum requirements in this document will be more than sufficient for your first year and give you a strong foundation for any future coursework in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, or Urban Planning.

These specs are written to match how laptops are described on retailer websites (Best Buy, B&H, manufacturer sites) so you can shop with confidence. If you are purchasing online or in-store, we recommend bringing this sheet or referencing it directly when comparing models.

**Note:** Lightweight laptops such as Chromebooks, tablets, or laptops without a dedicated graphics card are NOT sufficient for the software students will use, even in First Year. Please read the specifications carefully before purchasing.

## Minimum Laptop Specifications

The table below lists the minimum required specification in each category, along with the recommended specifications that will give you more headroom as your workload grows in complexity in Second Year and beyond. Because a laptop is a significant investment, we recommend purchasing the best option within your budget to help ensure it remains capable and reliable throughout your five years in the program.

Component	Minimum (Required)	Recommended
Operating System	Windows 11 Home (64-bit)	Windows 11 Home or Pro (64-bit)
Screen Size	15"	17" +
Display Resolution	1920 x 1080 (Full HD)	2560 x 1440 (QHD) or higher
Processor (CPU)	Intel Core i7 or AMD Ryzen, 12th gen or newer, 2.5 GHz base clock or faster	Intel Core i7/i9 or AMD Ryzen 7/9, 13th gen or newer
Memory (RAM)	32 GB	64 GB
Storage (Hard Drive)	1 TB NVMe SSD	2 TB NVMe SSD
Graphics Card (GPU)	NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4060 with 8 GB VRAM (dedicated, not shared)	NVIDIA GeForce RTX 4070 or higher with 12-16 GB VRAM

## **Computer Purchase**

When shopping, look for “RTX 4060” or “RTX 4070” in the graphics card listing. Avoid laptops that list only “Intel Iris Xe” or “AMD Radeon Graphics” as the GPU — these are integrated (shared) graphics and will not run rendering software smoothly.

## **A Note on Operating System**

ECAP requires a Windows laptop. Most of software students use—including Rhino, AutoCAD, Enscape, D5 Render, and ArcGIS Pro—is designed for Windows. While some software exists for Mac, the Windows versions are more fully featured and better supported, and some applications are truly Windows-only.

We do not recommend buying an Apple laptop (MacBook) for use in CAP courses.

## **Additional Items**

- Bluetooth 3-button mouse
- External hard drive, 1 TB minimum (for project backups)
- USB flash drive, 256 GB minimum (for printing and file sharing)
- Any necessary adapters for your laptop (e.g., USB-C to USB-A, HDMI)
- Waterproof case (student recommendation)

## **Software**

Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative Cloud are available at no cost through your Ball State account. Some software is available through student licensing or trial versions. Students may need to purchase or subscribe to additional software before their second year.

## **Questions?**

If you have questions about the laptop requirements, please contact:

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