Webcasting/Zoom
Equipment Guide and Recommendations

The standard equipment provided by the University includes everything you need to conduct meetings and courses in Zoom: a computer with a webcam and microphone. Along with an Internet connection, you don’t need anything else for basic participation and management of sessions. However, with the right investment in equipment dedicated to online communication, you can dramatically improve the quality of your video and audio, which can enhance the experience for you and your students.

Improving Video and Audio

The two fundamental improvements you can make are a dedicated external webcam and microphone. An external webcam (rather than a webcam built into your laptop or monitor) are generally better quality, so the image quality is slightly better—but more importantly, because they are not in a fixed position relative to your screen. You can move them to provide a larger image, to frame you better, or if you are using multiple monitors, move the camera to the monitor you are using for your notes, presentation, etc. We generally recommend Logitech webcams, and there are two models listed below, including the C920, which is our recommended webcam. The BRIO is a high-end model, with higher than HD video resolution—which may be useful in some applications.

Having more control over audio makes an incredible difference in quality; audio quality can often be more important than video quality. If students cannot hear the lecture or discussion, that’s usually a bigger problem than not being able to see the instructor. How you want to interact with the audio will largely be a matter of individual preference. The first option would be earbud type headphone/microphone combinations. These in-ear headphones do not have the same bulky appearance as over-the-ear models, and can be used via Bluetooth with either a phone (for dial-in audio) or your computer. Examples would include the Apple iPods or the Jabra Elite series.

Some users do not care for earbuds, and prefer an “over-the-ear” type headphone, which will generally provide better quality audio for listening and speaking. For these, we recommend gaming headsets, such as the Cooler Master MH630, or the slightly higher-end Logitech G Pro X. These offer a good compromise between audio and microphone quality and price.

Note on Equipment Availability

With so many schools and businesses working remotely and using technology like Zoom, some of the equipment that we recommend here may have long lead times and limited availability. There may be lower-cost/generic alternatives that can serve in a pinch as well, on sites such as Amazon. You should also check a variety of sites: Amazon, Target, Best Buy, WalMart, and B&HPhoto as availability may vary from site to site.

If you need assistance, please feel free to reach out to the Help Desk (helpdesk@law.uchicago.edu) or 773-834-5300.
Finally, for the best audio quality, we would recommend a dedicated USB microphone, such as the Blue SnowBall, or the higher-end Blue Yeti (which has advanced features like the ability to use the microphone for two people in an interview application, for example). With a dedicated microphone, you can achieve very near studio quality audio, with very good clarity.

**Improved Functionality**

In addition to increasing quality, adding few pieces of equipment can also help you with improved functionality for a small investment. First, an external monitor connected to your laptop can give you increased screen real estate for Zoom gallery views and viewing students remotely as they participate in your class. Right now, 23/24” monitors are very affordable and good quality, and adding one you’re your laptop is typically as easy as plugging in a single cable (or using an adapter with some Macs). With an external monitor and webcam placed on-top, you can have a larger view of your class, and while interacting, they can see more of you looking at them, instead of looking away to your laptop screen.

An additional wireless presenter, such as the Logitech R400 allow you to advance your PowerPoint presentations naturally, without having to grab the mouse or use your laptop keyboard.

**Additional Improvements**

There are additional improvements you can make to make your presentations look professionally produced. The most impactful addition are lights, which will give your video a uniform look, regardless of location and clear, bright video to help you look your best. “ChromaKey” backgrounds, which are solid green/blue color also allow you to use features like Zoom’s virtual background at a higher-quality level than without them.

These types of additions do come with more costs—and additional setup time. They work best when you have a dedicated space where you can set up the equipment and leave it ready for your meetings and courses. Otherwise, it can take a significant amount of time to setup and prepare your “studio” space for each presentation. Even with a dedicated space, it will take some time to get everything setup and configured to your liking, so it’s worth making sure you have some time to dedicate to the setup and tweaking of the equipment if you decide to go this route.
Equipment Recommendations

Webcam Recommendations
Logitech C920 Webcam (~$125)
Logitech BRIO Webcam (~$230)

Microphones/Headsets

Earbuds
Jabra Elite 65t Earbuds ($100)
Apple AirPods or AirPods Pro (~$130-$200)

Headsets
Cooler Master MH630 (~$60)
Logitech G Pro X (~$130)

Microphones
Blue Snowball (~$50)
Blue Yeti USB (~$175)

External Monitors
ASUS VS239H-P (~$125)
Dell S2419H S Series Monitor 24" Black (~$200)

Adapter for Macs: Anker Anker USB-C/Thunderbolt3 to HDMI Adapter (~$15)

Lights and Other Accessories
Logitech Wireless Presenter R400 (~$35)

VILTROX VL-162T CRI95+ LED Video Light (~$50)
Elgato Key Light Air (~$180)

Joby GorillaPod (~$50)
Neewer Chromakey Green Collapsible Backdrop ($60)
Fovitec - 7'6" Clip Stand Kit ($25)