

Laptop Exams



***SofTest™ User Guidelines
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SofTest User Guidelines

SofTest – How it works

SofTest serves as a simplified word processor similar to Microsoft Word for essay responses. The software is available to JD, LLM and foreign exchange students and blocks access to all applications and stored files on the laptop during the exam. Once the exam begins, you can work only on the exam and cannot regain access to your files until you exit the exam. Even if the laptop is shut off, crashes or freezes, upon rebooting the computer, a dialog box appears informing you that an unfinished exam has been located and gives you the option of continuing the exam or, if you are finished and want to exit, of exiting the exam. The application creates multiple backup copies of the exam, which are refreshed every 60 seconds while an exam answer is being typed. If your laptop crashes during an exam and there are problems rebooting it, multiple encrypted backup copies of your exam answer will be on the laptop, which only authorized law school personnel can retrieve.

Completed exam answer files are uploaded to a secure server immediately following the exam. The answer files are retrieved and printed by authorized law school personnel and given to the professors with the handwritten exams. (The exams are still graded anonymously.)

Fall 2015 Registration Deadline

JD students may download, install, and register SofTest between October 19 and December 2. Download, installation, and registration with ExamSoft may take approximately 30 minutes depending on your Internet connection.

**LLM students will have different deadlines. Please check with your program office for more information.*

Minimum Laptop Specifications

PC System Requirements:

- CPU: 1.86Ghz Intel Core 2 Duo or greater
- RAM: 2 GB or greater
- Hard Drive: 1 GB free space
- Operating System: **English-language versions ONLY** of the following:
 - Windows 7 (all versions)
 - Windows 8 (all versions)
 - Windows 10 (all versions)
 - Windows Vista (all versions)
- Internet access for SofTest installation, exam download and upload. To upload your exam answers at the conclusion of each exam you must have your laptop configured for the law school wireless network (802.1x) prior to the start of exams.
- Display resolution must be 1024x768 or higher

Mac Users:

- CPU: Intel-Based – (MacBook / MacBook Pro / MacBook Air) ONLY
- RAM: 2 GB or greater
- Hard Drive: 1 GB free space
- Operating System: **English-language versions ONLY** of Mac OS X 10.7 or better are supported. **OSX 10.11 (El Capitan) is NOT supported.**
- Internet access for SofTest installation, exam download and upload. To upload your exam answers at the conclusion of each exam you must have your laptop configured for the law school wireless network (802.1x) prior to the start of exams.
- It is not possible to take secure exams through a virtual operating system such as Bootcamp, Parallels or any other virtual operating system environment.

Preparing Your Computer

You can prevent difficulties in registering the software, downloading/uploading exams and system problems during the actual exam by preparing your computer before the exam period begins.

Firewalls

If your computer contains a personal firewall (e.g. Norton Personal Firewall, McAfee Personal Firewall, Zone Alarm, etc.) you can instruct the firewall to treat www.examssoft.com as a trusted website. If you are unsure how to do so, please see your manufacturer's instructions. In most cases, you can also disable your firewall temporarily by right-clicking the firewall's icon in the System Tray beside the clock and selecting Disable. We recommend that you do this before downloading and registering the software, downloading an exam and prior to the start of each exam.

Scan for Viruses and Spyware

Our Information Services and Technology (IS&T) staff recommend that you run anti-virus and anti-spyware software to check your laptop in advance. If you do not have either program, BU has site-licensed software that you may download for free. Visit the IT Help Center website at <http://www.bu.edu/tech/desktop/virus-protection-security/> for anti-virus software or <http://www.bu.edu/tech/desktop/virus-protection-security/spyware/preventing/> for anti-spyware software. Should you encounter a virus or spyware that the software is unable to remove you may contact the Law IS&T service desk (617-358-5555; Redstone Building, room 526A) for assistance.

Internet Access

Your computer must be configured in advance to access the Internet through BU Law's wireless network. This can be done by configuring your system to connect to the wireless network BU (802.1x) using 802.1x authentication. For instructions on connecting to the wireless network BU (802.1x), please refer to <http://www.bu.edu/tech/accounts/wireless/8021x/> or visit the SysTech help desk.

ExamSoft has received intermittent reports from some users of lag time between typing and text appearing on screen during their exam. If your computer has an 'external' wireless card, remove it from your computer prior to launching SofTest. If your computer has an 'internal' wireless card, you must locate the switch or button combination used to turn the card off prior to launching SofTest. Remember to reinsert or enable the card after exiting the exam so that you can upload your exam file.

If you still experience this problem, it may be caused by an existing application on your PC using a large amount of processor time during an exam. ExamSoft Support is capable of examining your computer and determining the application that is causing the lag time. You may contact ExamSoft Support at 866-429-8889 or via e-mail or Live Chat through the BU Law custom home page. <http://www.examssoft.com/bulaw>.

Hibernation Mode, Windows Defender and Automatic Updates

If you have Microsoft® Windows Defender installed on your computer, you must disable it prior to the exam. Also disable your hibernation mode and the install automatic updates features on your laptop. These features may be turned on immediately following your exam. A list of common anti-virus software and instructions for disabling them is available on the ExamSoft site <http://support.examssoft.com/ics/support/KBAnswer.asp?questionID=485&hitOffset=28+26+25&docID=287>.

How to Register

Before you visit the ExamSoft web site be sure to verify that your class schedule is correct. For JD students, a course confirmation was mailed to your local address at the conclusion of the fall add/drop period. JDs are responsible for immediately notifying the Registrar's Office of any errors. LLM and Exchange Students should contact their program office. Note that you will only be able to download exams for classes in which you are officially enrolled.

Download SofTest

1. Visit the ExamSoft web site at www.examssoft.com/bulaw. Instructions for both first-time and returning users are included on this custom home page.
2. Download and install the latest version of the software (SofTest).
3. Register SofTest using your BU email address and the password provided by the Registrar's Office via email. Beginning this year, you will also need to include our institution ID, which is bulaw.

**** If you experience any problems with downloading the software, you must contact ExamSoft directly at their toll-free number 866-429-8889; via e-mail to support@examssoft.com; or via Live Chat through the BU Law custom home page. Their hours are 8:30-5:30 EST, Monday-Friday. Law IS&T staff are also available to assist with this process.**

Confirmation

ExamSoft will e-mail you a confirmation once you've completed the entire download and registration process. If you do not receive e-mail confirmation we recommend you confirm that you've completed the steps by logging onto our custom home page on their website (www.examssoft.com/bulaw) and checking your registration status or by launching the software and checking that your status is listed as 'complete'.

Mock Exam

We strongly advise you to take the "Mock Exam" so that you become familiar with the software and to alert you to potential computer-related problems.

The Mock Exam feature was added to provide an opportunity to experience downloading, taking and uploading an exam administered in secure mode using SofTest. Once you register SofTest, you will be notified on-screen that there is an exam file available for download. You may download, take and upload the Mock Exam at your convenience up to ten times.

Downloading Exams

An exam file is available seven days prior to the scheduled exam date. You will receive an e-mail six days prior to your exam, reminding you that your exam file is available to download. (Adding lawexams@bu.edu to your list of contacts should ensure that the reminder is not sent to your spam folder.) **You must download the exam file prior to the exam.** If you do not receive the automated e-mail and the exam is not available when you attempt a download, you should check your status with the Registrar's Office. Students who have not downloaded the exam file before they arrive on exam day will have to hand-write their exam. The starting time of the exam will not be delayed, nor will the ending time be extended. (Be sure to check your firewall status before downloading an exam.)

Download Instructions

1. Connect to the Internet
2. Double-click the "SofTest" icon on your Windows Desktop (or single-click the icon from the Applications folder or Dock on your Mac). The "SofTest Launcher" window should appear.
3. Click the "Download Exam Files" button
4. Enter your BU ID number (including the "U") and your ExamSoft password then click "Next."
5. If the Download Password screen appears, leave it blank and click "Next."
6. Select an exam from the list and click "Download." If there is a second exam in the list, do the same. When you have downloaded your exam file(s), click "Done" and the program will close.

You can reach ExamSoft Support at support@examsoft.com; 866-429-8889; or via Live Chat through the [BU Law custom home page](#). Note that support personnel cannot provide exam file passwords nor can they extend download periods.

Steps to Take Before Exam Day

- ▣ Verify class enrollment.
- ▣ Configure laptop for BU Law wireless network.
- ▣ Download and Install SofTest.
- ▣ Register SofTest.
- ▣ Take Mock Exam (recommended).
- ▣ Run anti-virus and anti-spyware programs on your laptop.
- ▣ Check your e-mail for important reminders!
- ▣ Download Exam files (instructions above).
- ▣ Obtain your semester exam number (will be available through the Fall 2015 Grade Report on the Student Link).
- ▣ Double-check your exam day, time and room assignment. (JD exam rooms are posted 2-3 days prior to the exam on the BU Law website and on the bulletin boards opposite the Registrar's Office.
<http://www.bu.edu/law/central/jd/academic/exam/assignments.html>)

What to Expect on Exam Day

Reminders

- ▣ Bring your BU ID to exam.
- ▣ Bring your semester exam number (available through the Student Link).
- ▣ Remember your laptop power cord (you may not rely on battery power for an exam) and your battery.
- ▣ If you have Microsoft® Windows Defender (or other anti-virus/anti-spyware) installed on your computer, you must disable it prior to the exam.
- ▣ Also disable your hibernation mode, any firewalls and the install automatic updates feature on your laptop. These features may be turned on immediately following your exam.
- ▣ Be sure to arrive 30 minutes prior to the schedule start time.
- ▣ Leave an empty seat between you and your closest neighbor(s), whenever possible.

Take an Exam

You may begin to power up your computer and launch SofTest before the exam proctor arrives. **Do not proceed further than step 6 below.** Full instructions for launching SofTest, exam passwords and upload instructions will be provided by the proctor on Exam Day. Software must be opened within 15 minutes prior to the start of the exam. **If the software cannot be opened at least 15 minutes before the start of the exam, you must hand-write the exam. The starting time of the exam will not be delayed, nor will the ending time be extended.** The actual time you have to do the exam is the same as for others who are not using laptops for that exam.

1. Double-click the "SofTest" icon on your Windows Desktop (or single-click the icon from the Applications folder or Dock on your Mac).
2. Click the "Launch SofTest" button. SofTest will load.

3. Select the appropriate exam from the Exam File Location drop-down list. Text should appear in the “Exam Name” field. If it does NOT, notify the proctor.
4. If not already there, enter your Semester Exam Number in the ID field and enter the exam password provided by the proctor.
5. Click “Start” to start the exam.
6. Read each Notice window carefully and click “OK” to advance to the next window. STOP when the last Notice window with the Red Stop Sign appears.
7. When instructed by the proctor, type “begin” and click the “Begin” button.
8. To exit the exam, select “File” or “Actions” then “Exit and Save” or click the “Exit and Save” button. Click the “Close Exam” button. On the yellow window, click the “Exit” button.

Upload Answer Files

Your exam will automatically upload to the secure server when your internet connection is established. Students should not leave the building until their file has successfully uploaded or has been retrieved from the laptop by authorized personnel.

Upload Confirmation

ExamSoft provides three methods for verifying that your answer file uploaded.

The first two options will display the Exam Download/Upload History page, which is a detailed report of your account activity; it includes the date and time every exam is downloaded and uploaded. You may print a copy of this page if you need a confirmation of the upload:

Option 1: Launch SofTest, click ‘Exam History’ and enter your login information. This will display your Exam Download/Upload History on your Internet web browser.

Option 2: Visit our custom homepage and enter your login information. Once logged in, click the ‘Exam History’ button.

Option 3: You will be emailed confirmation that your answer file uploaded.

Instructions may be found at the ExamSoft website. You can reach ExamSoft Support at support@examsoft.com; 866-429-8889; or via Live Chat through the BU Law custom home page. Note that support personnel cannot provide exam file passwords nor can they extend download periods.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is eligible to sign up for ExamSoft?

ExamSoft is available to all J.D., LL.M., and Exchange Students whose computer meets the minimum specifications.

Q: Will the Law School provide a laptop if I don't have one?

Unfortunately, the Law School cannot provide laptops. You may want to look into renting a laptop or borrowing a laptop, *but you must make sure that the laptop meets our minimum specifications!*

Possible places to rent laptops: [Rentex](#) (800-574-1702)
[Smart Source Rentals](#) (800-888-8686)
[SLC Rentals](#) (800-752-7368)

Please note that these companies are NOT affiliated with Boston University, and unfortunately we cannot guarantee the quality of any laptops from those companies.

According to our financial aid office, JD students who need to purchase a laptop can use private or federal loan funds. The University allows students to add up to \$2,500 to their student budget to cover the cost of a computer. This amount can include a printer, additional software, peripheral equipment, and warranty or service contracts. Students must make purchases during the academic year in which they are requesting the increase or after July 1 of the summer before that academic year. Students who purchase a computer for less than \$2,500 may request the balance in subsequent years if needed for replacement or upgrade purposes. If you want to add the cost of a computer to your student budget, you must bring a copy of the invoice or receipt with a letter requesting the increase to your budget to the Law Financial Aid Office, 5th floor of the GSU.

Q: My computer does not meet the minimum specs but my roommate takes their exams on laptop? Can I borrow their computer for my exams?

Students may use a borrowed laptop as long as the laptop owner is not registered for the same classes as the borrower and there are no exam time conflicts. Any student who plans on using a friend's laptop to take their finals must notify the Registrar by the registration deadline (December 2, 2015). The Registrar's Office will provide further instructions.

Q: What if I miss the deadlines for registering with the Registrar's Office or with ExamSoft. Can I still register and take exams on my laptop?

JD students who miss the registration deadline do so at their own risk. Any student who has not registered the latest version of the software by the deadline (check with your program office for specific dates) may be required to hand write their exams. The deadlines allow sufficient time for downloading/testing software and will ensure that you have time to download files prior to exam day.

Q. How will the Registrar know which exams I want to take on laptop? What if I change my mind?

We will assume that students who are fully registered with ExamSoft are taking all exams on their laptop unless we are otherwise notified. LLM and exchange students should contact their graduate program office if they wish to switch from ExamSoft to handwriting.

Q: Will I need to plug in my laptop during the exam, or can I just rely on battery power?

Laptop users will be required to plug their computers into outlets and may **not** rely on battery power.

Q: If I use a laptop for exams, will I be in the same exam room as those who are writing or manually typing their exams?

Yes, laptop users and hand-writers will be in the same exam room. The Registrar will provide ear plugs for students as needed. Hand-writers must report to the exam room no later than 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the exam. Laptop users must report to the exam room **no later than 30 minutes before the scheduled time** of the exam in order to perform the required set up. Please note that because of space constraints, laptop users and hand-writers may be in exam rooms where more than one exam is being administered at the same time.

Q. The spell-checker is available on my Practice Exams. Will it be available on my actual exam?

The spell-checker function will not be enabled for your actual exams.

Q. Does the format of the Practice Exam directly reflect the format of my actual exam?

The basic layout of the question and answers will be the same. Spell-check is not enabled for your exam, but you will have the Cut, Copy & Paste options. All other word-processing features will be the same on both the Practice Exam and your actual exam.

Q: What if I have a problem with my laptop or the software during the exam?

Immediately inform the proctor, who will contact Law IS&T staff. In our experience most technical problems can be solved within a few minutes. If any hardware/software problems occur during the exam, you must start hand-writing the exam. (Standard bluebooks will be available in the exam room.) In that case, the professor will be given the typed part of the exam plus any used bluebooks.

****No additional time will be given to complete the exam even if there are problems during the exam with hardware/software. ****

Q: I take my notes on my laptop and my exam is open book. Can I use the notes stored on my computer during the exam?

No. ExamSoft will fully block access to all computer programs and the internet. Even if an exam is open-book, you will not have access to any notes, outlines, etc. that are stored on your laptop. You must bring hard copies of notes or other materials that are allowed for any open-book or restricted open-book exam.

Q: My exam has a word limit for the essay. Can I view my word count?

A character count is automatically displayed at the bottom of the page in which you are working. SofTest also has a tool to check your word count; it is available on the Stats tab to the right of the answer field or under Tools – Word Count. For essays with multiple questions with word limits, you may opt to answer each question in a different answer pane to ensure separate word counts.

Q: Are there any other tools I should know about?

SofTest has an alarm feature. You may use it to enter the number of minutes from that point that you would like a warning message. You may access the Reminder Alarm in the sidebar.

Q: How is my exam answer printed out?

When you finish the exam, your answer file will automatically upload to a secure server once you connect to the internet. Authorized law school personnel will access your exam file and print out the exam. (It is impossible to print out the exam without specialized software that only authorized law school personnel will have.) Unless otherwise directed by the professor, the standard for printing will be double-spaced and the default font is Arial 11 pt.

Q: What if I registered to take an exam(s) on my laptop but I then get permission to reschedule the exam? Can I still use my laptop when I take the rescheduled exam?

Yes. We will attempt to accommodate students taking rescheduled exams in proctored exam rooms. We cannot guarantee proctors or technical support will be available to handle laptop issues for rescheduled exams.

Q: Will I be at a disadvantage if I don't/can't use a laptop on my exams?

No. Schools that have allowed law students to use laptops on exams have not found that those students receive higher grades than students who do not use laptops. In fact, faculty members sometimes report that it is easier to spot weaknesses in answers when they are typed.

Q: What if my computer crashes after the Registration Deadline?

Students who have fully registered with ExamSoft may return to the website and re-download the software, if necessary. Students who experience computer problems after their download and registration deadline should notify the Registrar's Office of any difficulties. (Students who have already downloaded an exam file when their computer crashed will require an adjustment to their account before they can re-download the exam file.)