DSE ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

This Guidance sheet is aimed primarily at Local Workstation Assessors (LWA) and gives brief details of the 'minimum workstation requirements', simple tips for safe use of DSE, common problems seen with workstations, and possible solutions that could be tried to make improvements. The advice is in line with accepted good practice and the University's BeOnline workstation assessment system.

DSE users are required to carry out online training and then a self-assessment of their DSE workstation(s). The DSE training and self-assessment are available online via the Awaken Portal, which can be accessed from the University StaffNet pages under the link 'BeOnline Health and Safety Training'. New staff will be invited to undertake the training and assessment upon starting at the University.

The DSE Workstation Assessment Procedure, (Appendix 1) shows the processes to be followed. Where the online self-assessment identifies issues in the DSE workstation, a referral will be generated. An in-person (where possible) follow up assessment will be conducted by the LWA to try and resolve any issues. If the issues continue, the HSW Team can carry out further assessments. For more complicated cases or cases that have arisen due to a medical condition, a referral either to Occupational Health via HR or to Posturite will be made.

After assessment by Posturite a report will be provided including recommendations and costs of the equipment recommended. It is worth noting that Occupational Health, LWAs, HSW team and Posturite can all provide recommendations. It is then the responsibility of the School / Directorate to implement any recommendations. Further advice on the recommendations can be sought from the HSW Team where required.

There are a number of online DSE training and assessment packages available:
1. BeOnline DSE Workstation Training and Self-Assessment – Flexi. This is the default training & assessment package and allows staff to assess multiple different workstations
2. BeOnline DSE Workstation Re-Assessment (Mover). This can be assigned to staff who have moved location
3. BeOnline DSE New and Expectant Mothers. This is for those members of staff who have informed the University that they are expecting a child or have recently returned from maternity leave

In addition, all staff who have completed a DSE workstation training and assessment will be required to undertake refresher training and assessment every 3 years.

For members of staff working from home, the DSE Homeworking Checklist (Appendix 2) and the Working From Home DSE Guidance (Appendix 3), will be useful for staff to maintain an adequate workstation setup.

The BeOnline Workstation Re-Assessment (Mover) will be assigned to any staff member requiring it, but the HSW team should be made aware of through the individual's Line Manager. The onus will be on the staff member's Line Managers to inform the HSW team.

Any other reason/change in circumstance for example, Pregnancy, accident or ill health, leading to a requirement for a DSE Assessment, the staff member's Line Manager must inform the HSW team as soon as possible to ensure this is captured and assessed.

LWAs will receive external training, which may be supplemented with additional training, guidance and advice where required.

LWAs can carry out DSE Assessments for members of staff and PGR students. Their recommendations may include replacement of or ergonomic keyboards and mice, additional lumbar support, wrist support and footrests. LWAs should escalate cases to the HSW Team if they do not feel competent to advise on complex cases.

A standard Workstation checklist has been developed to promote consistency of assessment (Appendix 4). This checklist meets the requirement to record assessments. LWAs should consider to use the form to record findings from in-person assessments. Each School/Directorate should maintain records of who their users are, the workstation assessments and any relevant documentation relating to actions that have been taken and training/information that has been provided.

If there are significant changes to a workstation, it must be re-assessed, and actions implemented where required, to meet the requirements of the Regulations.

Some examples of significant changes are:
- Relocation of workstation
- A major change in workstation furniture
- A substantial increase in the amount of time required to be spent using display screen equipment
- A substantial change in other task requirements (e.g., more speed or accuracy)
- A major change to software used
- A major change to the hardware (screen, keyboard, input devices etc); including replacement of an unrepairable item with a new one, even if the replacement is the same model
- Significant modification of environmental conditions such as the lighting

Some Common DSE Problems And Their Solutions

Health – General Body

Aches, pains and any discomfort experienced at the workstation can occur due to different reasons such as medical conditions, sports, hobbies and also using a computer at home. Where possible, the initial workstation assessment should identify if any problems appear to be related to work and any other contributory factors. Sports and hobbies can place additional strain and prevent the body from getting adequate rest required, thereby contributing to any discomfort that felt at work.

A poorly designed home workstation or continuous/extended use of a laptop may be contributing to a particular problem. Although improvements can be made to the work arrangements and office workstation to resolve or minimise problems and prevent any contribution they may be making to discomfort, DSE users may need to make changes at home too to feel the full benefit. Refer to the DSE Working from home guidance and Checklist. However, if the home workstation is more comfortable than the workstation in the office, it will be helpful to identify the differences as these may indicate possible solutions at work. Line managers need to be aware of specific health and medical problems that may be adversely affected by the workstation or work and arrange a referral to Occupational Health via HR.

Chair and Desk

The chair must be stable and allow freedom of movement (normally five-point base and castors) and a comfortable working position. It must have adjustable seat height and adjustable back height and angle. Rigid, faulty or poorly adjusted chairs can lead to sitting too high or too low, in awkward positions, or with poor back support. This can cause aches and pains in the legs, back, shoulders and neck. Chairs should be adjusted to suit, and adjustments known and working properly, with broken chairs replaced.

The desk must be large enough to allow flexible arrangement of equipment and documents and for them to be reached and seen easily. Account needs to be taken of requirements for both DSE and other work. The surface must not be shiny enough to give distracting reflections from lights and windows. There should be enough space underneath for the legs and to allow changes of position for different tasks. It should always be possible to sit directly in front of the work in hand. Frequent reaching and twisting or leaning or turning slightly to one side when sitting can all cause extra muscle tension in the back, shoulders and neck and lead to aches, pains, and headaches. A proper posture should be maintained while sitting at the workstation and the right chair should be used to provide adequate support.

Items around the desk should be positioned to give enough room to write or use the space in front and keep things like the mouse, keyboard, and phone, within reach. Other adjustments may then be needed to the screen height or angle. Raise your chair so that your lower arm is level with the desk, the forearms should rest on the desk, offloading the shoulder and neck muscles. If you can't rest your feet comfortably on the floor you need a footrest.

Space Around The Desk

There must be adequate space at, under and around the workstation for DSE and other work and to change position from time to time. Too little or awkward space can lead to bumps and bruises when moving past furniture, falls over trailing leads and clutter, or aches and pains from working in uncomfortable positions. Equipment and furniture can be moved slightly to make a bit more space or give easier access. Trailing leads and infrequently used items should be kept somewhere else or removed.

Footrest

Once the seat height is correctly adjusted the thighs should be properly supported by the seat pad and the feet should be either flat on the floor or on a suitable footrest. If the seat is too high the edge of the seat can put pressure on the backs of the legs and knees; or the feet may be placed on the castors and give an awkward sitting position and additional strain and aching in the lower back. Do not use a footrest when it is not needed as the thighs will not be fully supported by the seat pad and extra pressure is placed on the buttocks and base of the spine.

Display Screen

The height and angle of the display screen must allow a comfortable head position. The screen may be on the desk or raised but must be adjustable and free from glare and reflections from lights and windows. It must have a clear stable image that does not flicker, and also have adjustable brightness and contrast controls. Poor quality characters and images, or glare and reflections can lead to difficulties reading the screen and may cause tired eyes and headaches, or back and neck pain from

awkward postures. Screen height depends on the need to look at the keyboard when typing and the kind of work being done. The ideal relaxed position for the neck and eyes is looking down slightly. Touch typists may be comfortable looking down just a little with the screen on top of the base unit or a raised stand, with the top of the screen no higher than eye level. It is generally recommended that the screen is about arm's length away, but it may be helpful to move it a little nearer or further away for some work or if the eyes are tired. For wearers of bifocal or varifocal glasses the screen height and distance will also be determined by the need to look through the appropriate part of the lens. The screen brightness and contrast settings may require be adjusted to suit the change in lighting levels change.

Keyboard, Mouse or Tracker Device

The keyboard should be separate from the screen, be adjustable and have clearly legible characters. There must be enough space between the keyboard and the edge of the desk to allow the hands to be supported when not typing. Typing or gripping the mouse too tightly and using the mouse with the arms reaching forward or out to the side places additional strain on the neck and shoulders and can cause discomfort. Forearms should be approximately horizontal, and wrists relaxed but straight. Typing or using the mouse with the wrists bent up, down or flexed to one side can constrict the nerves and blood flow in the joints and may cause discomfort. Resting the hand or wrists on the desk when typing can bend the wrists up, put extra pressure on the contact points and cause discomfort. The mouse should be close to the keyboard to avoid the arm reaching forward or being held out to the side. If the mouse is being used exclusively, it can be moved in front of the body and the keyboard moved to one side. An upright mouse may be preferred. Mouse mats provide cushioning for the heel of the hand but need to be large enough for the task, smooth and free from sharp or damaged edges. Left-handed users may prefer to reverse the operation of the mouse buttons and may need to have a mouse shaped for left-handed use.

Document Holder

A document holder helps to keep papers or documents in a comfortable position for easy reading and annotating when working on the screen. A holder can be useful for people who have to look repeatedly from the screen to a document and back again, and for anyone who finds difficulty refocusing. The document holder must be stable and positioned to minimise head and eye movements. A poorly positioned document holder or leaning to look at papers on the desk can give awkward back and neck postures or difficulties focusing. Back and neck pain, tired eyes and headaches could result. Upright document holders should be placed next to the screen and at a similar height, angle and distance. Touch typists may only need to look at the screen occasionally and could have the document holder directly in front of them and the screen slightly to one side when copy typing.

Eyes and Eyesight

There has been no evidence found linking DSE work to any permanent eye damage, but it may aggravate pre-existing vision defects and make the users more aware of them. DSE work does not itself cause the eye problem; the problem would have been there already but not causing any noticeable difficulty. Uncorrected vision defects and/or poor working conditions may give some users temporary visual fatigue, blurred vision or headaches and can make DSE work more tiring or stressful than it should be. Glare on the screen, bright areas (e.g., windows) in the field of view or a dirty or unclear screen can also lead to eye strain. So, take regular breaks, use blinds to shield windows and keep your screen clean. Avoid poor character definition on your screen. Change your default font size

and/or colour. Try the palest green or blue as a background colour. Under the Regulations, all staff are entitled to a vision test and where required, provision of a basic pair of glasses. This is only where glasses for the distance the screen is viewed at. If an ordinary prescription is suitable, then the University is not required to pay for glasses. The University makes a contribution for a basic pair of glasses and further details can be found in the [Expenses Policy](#).

Factors such as inadequate lighting, a poorly adjusted screen or badly positioned documents can make it uncomfortable for the user. Eyesight commonly deteriorates with age and many people start to wear spectacles for reading and other close work. Users with bifocal and varifocal glasses need to look through the appropriate part of the lens and therefore can find themselves adopting an awkward posture or making repeated adjustments to their head/neck position. Particular attention should be paid to the distance and position of the screen, papers and other items to prevent discomfort.

Rest and Work Breaks

The breaks referred to here, are anything that gives a change from screen, keyboard and mouse work. They include other work such as phone calls, filing or going to meetings and are not only coffee and lunch breaks. The frequency and length of the breaks will depend on the work being done and ideally it should be possible to choose when to take them. Short frequent breaks, for example five minutes after 50-60 minutes continuous screen work, are better than longer breaks at less frequent intervals. Breaks are also more helpful if taken before tiredness and discomfort are felt. Tired eyes, stiffness, poor concentration and mistakes can all result from inadequate breaks from the screen. Most people have a usual mix of tasks providing natural breaks away from the screen, often far more than is assumed. If a mixture of tasks isn't available, the Line manager should be consulted on possibilities for revised working and the introduction of breaks.

It should be noted that drafting documents or amendments on paper helps minimise the time spent working on screen. Breaking off and doing something else is also better than staring at the screen waiting for inspiration. It's natural to save intensive work for quiet times when there will be few interruptions and quite easy to forget to take breaks if colleagues are not around and the phones are quiet. Fatigue and discomfort often lead to mistakes and don't save time in the long run. Concentrating on the screen can reduce the blink rate leading to dry eyes. This can be a particular problem for contact lenses. 'Mini-breaks' of a few seconds from time to time can really help, e.g. the 20-20-20 guide (every 20 minutes take a 20 second break and focus your eyes on something at least 20 feet away (6m)), looking away from the screen or out of the window, taking the hands away from the keyboard and mouse, giving the fingers and hands a massage and shake, letting the arms hang down by the sides of the body, or standing up and stretching.

Lighting

Lighting at the workstation must be adequate for DSE and other work. It may be inadequate or uncomfortable because it is too dim or too bright and harsh, patchy, flickering, or produces shadows, glare or reflections, causing difficulty seeing the screen and other work clearly. This may lead to sore eyes or headaches, or aches in the back or neck either from leaning to read or from sitting awkwardly to avoid glare and distracting reflections. Ask Estates and Facilities to replace dull or flickering lights and clean dirty lights within on-campus offices. Can desks be moved slightly to take advantage of better lit areas of the room? Blinds should be used to control glare and reflections from sunlight or to allow more daylight in.

Temperature and Humidity

Temperature and humidity at the workstation may be uncomfortable because it is too hot, too cold, very dry, stuffy, airless or draughty and can lead to difficulties in concentrating and perhaps more frustration and mistakes. Cold draughty rooms can lead to general tenseness in the body, stiffness and aches and pains. Low humidity could cause problems of sore dry eyes. Check that the radiators working properly and no draughts from windows and doors. Any faults should be reported to Estates & Facilities. Turn off equipment when not in use.

Noise

Noise levels from equipment, other people and external sources must not distract attention or disturb speech. Too much or distracting noise may lead to frustration and mistakes because it is difficult to concentrate, or conversations cannot be heard clearly. Shared printers or photocopiers can be moved further from people to minimise disturbance. Jobs needing close concentration could be done in quieter parts of the office.

Laptop

Laptop computers are designed for portability but carrying them and their accessories (and your paperwork) can still be a problem. They may also be a target for thieves. Their small size can make it very difficult to adopt comfortable and healthy postures when using portables, so they should not be used for prolonged periods. Back, neck and shoulder pain can easily be the result. Facilities for use as a 'docking station' and fitting an external mouse/numeric keypad can help achieve more comfortable postures. Laptop risers, boxes, books, or small lightweight stands can be used to raise the portable's screen to a more comfortable viewing height. A separate keyboard must then be used as the keys will be at too steep an angle for comfort. Sit directly in front of the portable and sit right back in the chair so that the back rest can support you. Try to position the screen at right angles to windows and as far from them as possible and angle the screen so that it is roughly perpendicular to your line of sight to help avoid reflections/glare. Regularly clean the screen and adjust the screen brightness to ensure maximum legibility.

Software

Software must be appropriate for the task and be easy to use with appropriate training. It should allow adaptations to individual abilities and preferences and give feedback and error messages. Using software that is unsuitable for the work or not fully understood can lead to frustration, mistakes and time wasted on over-long processes or corrections. Formal training courses, software 'Help' pages and information on the Internet give good introductions to software but may be of limited help on details.

Pregnancy

If you are pregnant you will need to review your DSE set up. This may mean tilting the set pan forwards slightly to help make room for a growing 'bump' and/or adjusting the lumbar support to accommodate any changes in your posture.

Some potential solutions to common DSE problems can be found at the Posturite resource pages here

DSE Equipment and Providers

Equipment Type	Examples	Providers
Ergonomic equipment	Ergonomic chairs, sit-stand platforms, etc	Posturite (via HS&W or HR). Claremont (via HS&W)
General office equipment	Regular office desks and chairs	Claremont (via Estates and Facilities)
Accessories/additional equipment	Mice, keyboards (including ergonomic), foot stools, laptop risers, headsets, etc	DDIS Banner (also dependant on school/department)

Appendix 1

Start

New Staff — Yes → BeOnline Workstation Assessment
No → BeOnline Workstation Assessment (Refresher – After 3 years)

No → Change in Circumstance

Other

New and Expectant Mothers → BeOnline DSE New and Expectant Mothers

Change in Location / Workpace → BeOnline Workstation Re-Assessment (Mover)

BeOnline Referral

BeOnline Workstation Assessment

No → BeOnline Referral

Line Manager/ Safety Coordinator Referral

Yes → Medical Condition / Disability
No → Local Workstation Assessor

Medical Condition / Disability — Yes → Referral to Occupational Health Provider

Local Workstation Assessor → Further Assessment Required
Yes → Workstation Assessment by HSW Team

Trial Equipment Required? — Yes → Trial Equipment Loaned Out (6-8 weeks)
No

Further Workstation Assessment Required? — Yes, via HSW Team → Refer to external workstation assessor, eg., Posturite
No

Issue Resolved — No → Refer to external workstation assessor, eg., Posturite
Yes

Record Updated by Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

Key:
Start/End
Decision
Process

Home working checklist

Use this checklist whilst undertaking a risk assessment of your homeworking area. Share the findings with your line manager once complete

Employee:	
Home workplace location:	

	✓or X	Comments
A – Working area		
1. Is the workplace segregated from the rest of your home and away from distractions?		
2. Is there a safe means of access to the working area?		
3. Is there adequate workspace in the room to work safely		
4. Is there sufficient height to stand up in?		
5. Is your home workplace free from tripping hazards?		
6. Are the floor coverings / surfaces in good condition?		
7. Is equipment, bags, paper, files, books etc stored safely off the floor?		
8. Is equipment positioned safely so that no cables are left hanging that could lead to the equipment being pulled over?		

	✓or X	Comments
B - Environment		
1. Is heating available to maintain an adequate working temperature in the winter (Minimum 16 °C)?		
2. Is there a means of cooling during hot temperatures, i.e. local cooling, adequate ventilation or hot weather fans?		
3. Are blinds/ curtains available to prevent glare on computer screens?		
4. Is there adequate ventilation in the work area?		

	✓or X	Comments
5. Is adequate lighting provided which may be a combination of natural lighting, task lighting and general room lighting?		

	✓or X	Comments
C – Display screen equipment		
1. Have you completed the display screen equipment assessment for your home workstation?		
2. Are you using a docking station for your laptop?		
3. Have you an external mouse and keyboard for your laptop?		
4. Are you taking short but frequent breaks away from your work?		

	✓or X	Comments
D- Emergency actions		
Have you access to basic first aid provisions?		
Do you know what to do in an emergency? Have you worked out a fire drill so you and anyone else in the house know what to do and where to go in case of a fire?		
Have you a smoke detector/s fitted?		
Are you familiar with the University procedures for accident and incident reporting?		
Are you familiar with the university Lone Working arrangements and supporting information		

	✓or X	Comments
E – Electrical safety		
1. Are University owned portable electrical appliances PAT tested and a sticker applied?		
2. Do you carry out frequent visual checks on plugs, wiring and casings of electrical equipment?		

Employee signature		Date:
Line Manager's signature		Date:

Further Information

http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg226.pdf

https://www.iosh.com/media/1507/iosh-home-office-mobile-office-full-report-2014.pdf

http://www.suzylamplugh.org/

DSE Guidance For Home Working

Introduction

This guidance provides practical advice on steps to take to ensure staff who work from home for short or for extended periods of time, assess any relevant hazards that may be present in their home and help establish reasonable controls, so they can achieve the best possible workstation set up within their limits and look after their musculoskeletal health. Additionally, this guidance will also detail measures that may be taken to mitigate any risk arising from DSE use.

While the University has a duty to take reasonable care of staff health and safety, staff are expected to take primary responsibility for ensuring safe working conditions in their home.

Scope

This guidance covers laptop, desktop PC or paper-based work from an employee's home.

Practical advice for working from home safely

Introduction

University staff work flexibly, including at home and remotely at offsite locations, either carrying out paper-based work on a desktop PC, laptop, tablet or other electronic devices. This is classed as a low-risk activity. There are associated hazards that this type of working pattern can offer, in addition a range of potential benefits. These hazards include and are not limited to:

- working in isolation (wellbeing, personal safety, accidents and feeling of loneliness or stress)
- lack of control over the work environment (DSE, fire safety, electrical safety and other non-work related, external pressures)

Risk assessment

There is a duty to carry out a risk assessment in relation to work activities for all staff, whether working on site at the University or at home. In the University, the work environment and equipment can be more easily assessed and controlled. Working conditions while working at home are possibly not ideal.

This does not mean a visit to the home of staff who carry out some of their work at home to check their working conditions. It is usually sufficient to bring to their attention possible hazards and provide a checklist to enable staff undertake their own risk assessment.

Irrespective of the work being undertaken, a mental note of any possible risks to the health and safety of yourself and others present whilst working should be considered. If the risk is significant appropriate steps should be taken to minimise the problem(s) and where appropriate advice, assistance or resources from School/Service or the Health and Safety Adviser sought. **It should be noted that the BeOnline Workstation Assessment is not applicable to working at home.**

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See attached: Appendices	5: Know your ergonomic working zones	
1: DSE Homeworking Checklist	6: Workstation set up diagram	
2: HSE DSE User Guide		

Roles and responsibilities of line managers and supervisors

- Ensure adequate communication and contact with home workers. The University provides various mediums for online communication including Skype for Business, Teams, mobile phone and email.
- Ensure risks associated with home working are covered by the local safety management system (where applicable), including DSE assessments and ensure home working is covered by local rules.

Workstation set up

To begin, find a place with sufficient space to set up a work zone. Ensure there is sufficient light, ventilation and noa trailing cords.

Proper home workstation set up is as important as the office workstation set up, should be the same as the same principles apply. It should include:

- A table / desk
- Chair
- Desktop / PC or laptop or other electronic devices.
- Workstation peripherals

Tips for working on a PC or laptop remotely:

Table: A table and chair should be used rather than the sofa or bed (see attached 'Workstation set up diagram').

Chair: Sit back in the chair with the back rest adjusted suitable. If an adjustable chair is not available, can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow (folded in half) to sit on and a rolled-up towel against the lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help take the strain and load off the spine, but they are only to be used if they feel comfortable. If unsure, contact your Workstation Assessor or Health and Safety Adviser (there is a lot of advice and guidance on the Posturite website. Ensure feet are planted firmly on the floor or a small foot stool, biscuit tin, Tupperware container or similar can be used as a footrest. If there is a footrest available at work and can be taken home, please do so.

Screen: Ensure the screen is raised so the top of the screen is at eye level. This can be done using an adjustable laptop stand, a box, a rim of paper or some books if necessary.

- A separate keyboard and mouse should be used, as this enables the correct positioning of the laptop screen.
- Pain or discomfort should be reported to your line management as soon as it is noticed. Further advice may be sought through Occupational Health.
- Chair height should be adjusted where possible, so arms are at right angles, with forearms, lightly supported by the work surface.
- Ensure the lower back is well supported. Lower back support helps encourage good posture. A back-support cushion should be considered, if needed.

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Screen Glare: If possible, the laptop/tablet should not be positioned directly underneath bright, artificial light. Try to use as much natural light as possible.

Mouse and Keyboard: If the laptop/tablet is being raised, use an external keyboard and mouse to ensure work is not being carried out with arms too high. If possible, take the keyboard and mouse home, particularly if they are ergonomic ones. Ensure there is enough USB ports to connect these. Elbows should be at a 90-degree angle, tucked closely to the body, and wrists should be in a neutral position. This posture helps prevent rounding shoulders and pulling neck muscles. If an external mouse and keyboard can't be attached, leave the laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but more breaks must be taken. Try moving every 15 minutes.

Breaks and Exercise

Regardless of the workstation set up, the best care for musculoskeletal health is taking regular breaks and moving around as much as possible. The more 'makeshift' the set-up, the more important movement is.

- Regular, short breaks, movement for five or ten minutes every hour, aiming for frequent, short breaks to be taken for a good home office set-up. Consider taking microbreaks to stretch, move around, change in activity like taking a phone call, reading or getting up for a drink to avoid prolonged static postures.
- More frequent breaks up to every 15-20 minutes should be taken if the DSE setup is not optimal or if discomfort is being experienced.

Tips to help more movement:
- Stand up every time you use the phone
- Try doing more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork
- A reminder could be set up e.g. a timer on your phone. Also, apps such as Break Reminder (contact IT Helpdesk for help with this) could be installed on your computer, that allow you to set reminders.

Some workstation exercises that can be done in your microbreaks (Can be found in Appendix 3):

Avoid:
- using phones or tablets for a long time,
- sitting on unsupportive seating such as a sofa,
- static postures.

Whilst it may seem easier to simply open the laptop and commence working without making any adjustments, this can lead to poor posture, which can cause pain and discomfort over time. It is well worth taking a couple of minutes to set up your workstation correctly each time you sit down to work.

Reporting

Accidents, near misses and incidents of ill health should all be reported in the usual way using our online template. This is available on the Health and Safety pages on the intranet. This should be completed for all accidents and incidents whether they occurred at home or at work but are relevant to workplace hazards.

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First Aid

Most homes will have an appropriate level of domestic first aid stock so it would be prudent for those working from home for longer periods to check the contents to ensure they meet their own needs.

Emergency actions and contacts

Ensure you are familiar with the actions required to summon assistance if you require it, specifically when working at home alone. Ensure you have a mobile device/house phone (if installed) available and have emergency numbers programmed into the phone for easy access. These may be for local family members or the emergency services. The university Lone Working guidance and risk assessment can be accessed via the Health and Safety Pages on the intranet or via the following link.

Additionally, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust has some excellent resource information

Wellbeing

It is important to take regular breaks and maintain positive wellbeing when working.

- Take a micro-break (2-3 minutes) every 20 minutes.
- Take a break (5-10 minutes) every hour e.g. make a hot drink or walk around the room.
- Do simple exercises (Appendix 3).
- Keep hydrated and drink water.
- Enjoy healthy snacks and avoid sugary or fatty foods.
- Stay connected and maintain social connections with your team, family, friends and community.

It is quite normal to feel anxious or stressed during these situations. Contact your line manager or Employee Assistance Program for free and confidential help.

The Wellbeing Portal also has useful resources in the 'Wellbeing at home' section

Further Information

https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm

https://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr262.htm

https://www.iosh.com/media/1507/iosh-home-office-mobile-office-full-report-2014.pdf

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Appendix 1: Home working checklist

Use this checklist whilst undertaking a risk assessment of your homeworking area. Share the findings with your line manager once complete

Employee:	
Home workplace location:	

	✓or X	Comments
A – Working area		
1. Is the workplace segregated from the rest of your home and away from distractions?		
2. Is there a safe means of access to the working area?		
3. Is there adequate workspace in the room to work safely		
4. Is there sufficient height to stand up in?		
5. Is your home workplace free from tripping hazards?		
6. Are the floor coverings / surfaces in good condition?		
7. Is equipment, bags, paper, files, books etc stored safely off the floor?		
8. Is equipment positioned safely so that no cables are left hanging that could lead to the equipment being pulled over?		

	✓or X	Comments
B - Environment		
1. Is heating available to maintain an adequate working temperature in the winter (Minimum 16 °C)?		
2. Is there a means of cooling during hot temperatures, i.e. local cooling, adequate ventilation or hot weather fans?		
3. Are blinds/ curtains available to prevent glare on computer screens?		

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		✓or X	Comments
4.	Is there adequate ventilation in the work area?		
5.	Is adequate lighting provided which may be a combination of natural lighting, task lighting and general room lighting?		

	✓or X	Comments
C – Display screen equipment		
1. Have you completed the display screen equipment assessment for your home workstation?		
2. Are you using a docking station for your laptop?		
3. Have you an external mouse and keyboard for your laptop?		
4. Are you taking short but frequent breaks away from your work?		

	✓or X	Comments
D- Emergency actions		
Have you access to basic first aid provisions?		
Do you know what to do in an emergency? Have you worked out a fire drill so you and anyone else in the house know what to do and where to go in case of a fire?		
Have you a smoke detector/s fitted?		
Are you familiar with the University procedures for accident and incident reporting?		
Are you familiar with the university Lone Working arrangements and supporting information		

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	✓or X	Comments
E – Electrical safety		
1. Are University owned portable electrical appliances PAT tested and a sticker applied?		
2. Do you carry out frequent visual checks on plugs, wiring and casings of electrical equipment?		

Employee signature		Date:
Line Manager's signature		Date:

Further Information

http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg226.pdf

https://www.iosh.com/media/1507/iosh-home-office-mobile-office-full-report-2014.pdf

http://www.suzylamplugh.org/

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Health and Safety Executive Guidelines on Working with VDUs

What can I do to help myself?

Lots! You should make full use of the adjustment facilities for your VDU and work environment to get the best from them and avoid potential health problems. Here are some specific tips.

- Adjust your chair and VDU to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your arms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes at the same height as the top of the VDU casing.

- Make sure there is enough space underneath your desk to move your legs freely. Move any obstacles such as boxes or equipment.

- Avoid excess pressure on the backs of your legs and knees. A footrest, particularly for smaller users, may be helpful.

- Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Make sure you change your posture as often as practicable. Some movement is desirable, but avoid repeat stretching movements.

- Adjust your keyboard and screen to get a good keying and viewing position. A space in front of the keyboard is sometimes helpful for resting the hands and wrists while not keying.

- Don't bend your hands up at the wrist when keying. Try to keep a soft touch on the keys and don't overstretch your fingers. Good keyboard technique is important.

- Try different layouts of keyboard, screen and document holder to find the best arrangement for you.

- Make sure you have enough work space to take whatever documents you need. A document holder may help you to avoid awkward neck movements.

- Arrange your desk and screen so that bright lights are not reflected in the screen. You shouldn't be directly facing windows or bright lights. Adjust curtains or blinds to prevent unwanted light.

- Make sure the characters on your screen are sharply focussed and can be read easily. They shouldn't flicker or move.

- Make sure there are no layers of dirt, grime or finger marks on the screen.

- Use the brightness control on the screen to suit the lighting conditions in the room.

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2: HSE DSE User Guide		

Appendix 3: DSE Home Working Checklist

Home working checklist

Use this checklist whilst undertaking a risk assessment of your homeworking area. Share the findings with your line manager once complete

Employee:	
Home workplace location:	

	✓or X	Comments
A – Working area		
9. Is the workplace segregated from the rest of your home and away from distractions?		
10. Is there a safe means of access to the working area?		
11. Is there adequate workspace in the room to work safely?		
12. Is there sufficient height to stand up in?		
13. Is your home workplace free from tripping hazards?		
14. Are the floor coverings / surfaces in good condition?		
15. Are equipment, bags, paper, files, books etc stored safely off the floor and within easy reach?		
16. Is equipment positioned safely so that no cables are left hanging that could lead to the equipment being pulled over or pose a trip hazard?		

	✓or X	Comments
B - Environment		
6. Is heating available to maintain an adequate working temperature in the winter (Minimum 16 °C)?		
7. Is there a means of cooling during hot temperatures, i.e. local cooling, adequate ventilation or hot weather fans?		
8. Are blinds/ curtains available to prevent glare on computer screens?		
9. Is there adequate ventilation in the work area?		
10. Is adequate lighting provided which may be a combination of natural lighting, task lighting and general room lighting?		

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	✓or X	Comments
C – Display screen equipment		
5. Does you know how to set up the workstation and chair for safe use? Eyes level with the top of the screen. Keyboard tiltable with space in front of it to rest hands when not typing. Chair adjustable, adjusted to suit your needs. Do you need a footrest		
6. Are you using a docking station for your laptop?		
7. Have you an external mouse and keyboard for your laptop?		
8. Are you taking short but frequent breaks away from your work?		

	✓or X	Comments
D- Emergency actions		
1. Have you access to basic first aid provisions?		
2. Do you know what to do in an emergency? Have you worked out a fire drill so you and anyone else in the house know what to do and where to go in case of a fire?		
3. Have you a smoke detector/s fitted?		
4. Are you familiar with the University procedures for accident and incident reporting?		
5. Are you familiar with the university Lone Working arrangements and supporting information?		

	✓or X	Comments
E – Electrical safety		
3. Are University owned portable electrical appliances PAT tested and a sticker applied?		
4. Do you carry out frequent visual checks on plugs, wiring and casings of electrical equipment?		
5. Are there enough sockets?		

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4: Workstation exercises

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	✓or X	Comments
F – Fire		
1. Are flammable materials (eg paper) and ignition sources (eg cigarettes) kept to a minimum?		
2. Do you have an escape plan in case of fire?		
3. Is there a smoke detector or fire alarm that is regularly checked?		

	✓or X	Comments
G – Miscellaneous		
Do you have any concerns about managing working hours, workload or work–life balance?		
Are you aware of arrangements for lone working?		
Are you aware aware of arrangements and requirements for communication and reporting to the office base?		
Are you aware of how to get help on using computers or other equipment		
Do you have to carry out significant manual handling? (If yes, a manual handling assessment is required)		
Do you have any security concerns?		
Do you have any other concerns? (Please specify)		

Employee signature		Date:
Line Manager's signature		Date:

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Workstation Exercises

Recommendations to reduce aches and pains

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Why Stretch?

No matter how well the workstation is designed, problems may arise where work organisation is poor or disrupted. Working at a computer often involves few changes in body position. This lack of movement can lead to muscular aches and pains.

Recommendations to reduce aches and pains:

- Regularly vary work tasks, looking at organisation of the working day.

- Break up 'on-screen' activities with micro-breaks – tasks which involve movement, stretching and changes to body position.

- Try standing during some tasks and moving away from the workstation, for short periods, where possible.

Stretches for Wrist, Hand and Forearm

1. Make a fist; ensuring thumb is straight, not tucked under fingers (1a). Slide fingertips up palm, tips of fingers moving towards base of fingers, until stretch is felt (1b). Hold for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

1a   1b
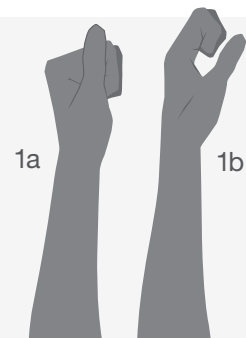
2. With hand open and facing down, move wrist from side to side, until stretch is felt at each extreme. Hold each for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.
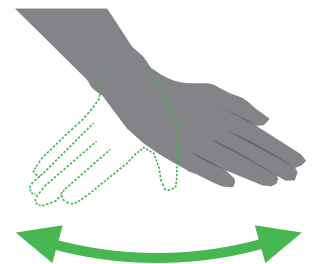
3. With elbow held close in to side of body, slowly rotate palm upwards and then downwards until stretch is felt at each extreme. Hold each for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

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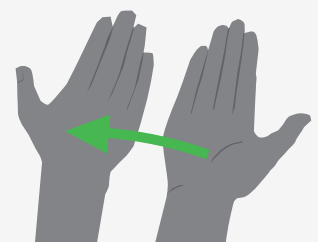
4. Holding upper part of hand with other hand, slowly bend wrist down and then upwards until stretch is felt at each extreme. Hold each for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.
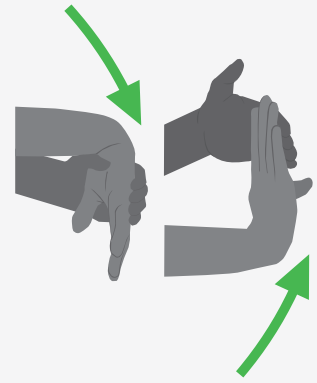
5. Sitting with elbows out and palms together, slowly rotate palms down until stretch is felt. Hold for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Stretches for Neck and Shoulders

1. Sit or stand upright. Without lifting chin, glide head straight back until a stretch is felt. Hold for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times.
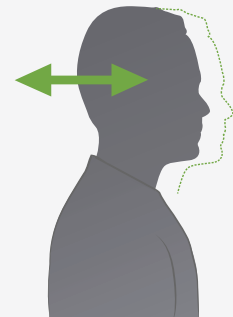
2. Drop head slowly to one side, taking ear towards shoulder until stretch is felt. Hold for slow count of 10. Repeat 3 – 5 times to each side.
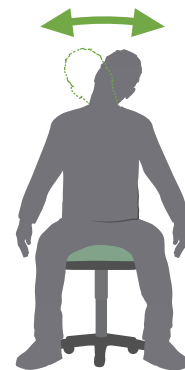
3.

Raise shoulders towards ears until slight tension felt across tops of shoulders. Hold for slow count of 10.
Release and repeat 3 – 5 times.
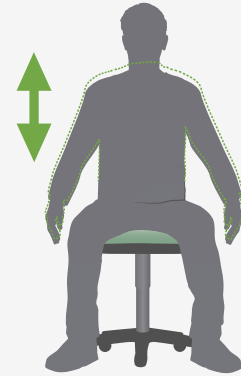
4.

Sitting with back supported, slowly roll shoulders up and backwards in circular motion.
Repeat 10 times.

Stretches for Back

1.

Interlace fingers and lift arms above head, keeping elbows straight. Pressing arms back, slowly stretch to one side. Hold for slow count of 10.
Repeat 3 – 5 times to each side.
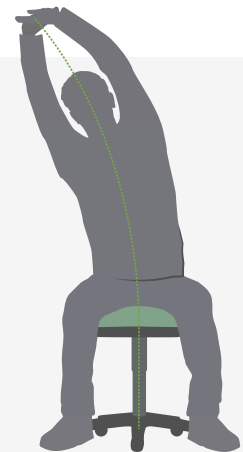
2.

Hold right arm with left hand just above elbow. Gently push elbow towards left shoulder until stretch is felt. Hold for slow count of 10.
Repeat 3 – 5 times to each side.
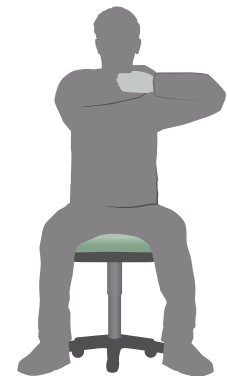
3.

Interlace fingers and lift arms above head.
Slowly lean backwards until stretch is felt.
Hold for slow count of 10.
Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Stretches for Leg and Ankle

1.

Slowly lift one leg, straightening knee.
Hold for slow count of 10.
Repeat 3 – 5 times with each leg.

2.

Lift ankle clear of floor.
Alternately flex and extend ankle in
a pumping action.
Repeat 10 times with each ankle.

Appendix 5 Know your ergonomic working zones

You can reduce your risk of musculoskeletal injury simply by arranging the equipment on your desk into zones.

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Non-working zone

Secondary working zone

Primary working zone
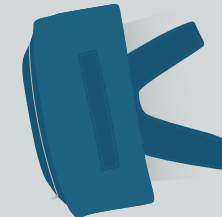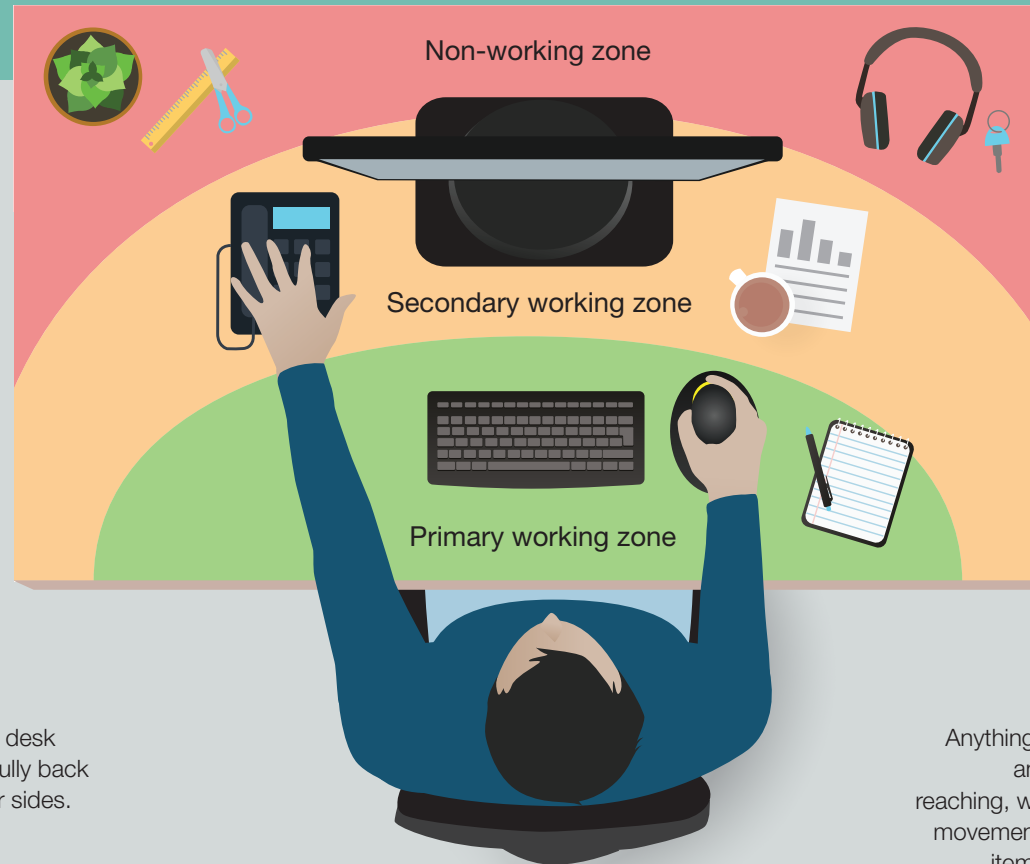
Primary working zone

The primary working zone is the area on your desk that you can comfortably reach when sitting fully back in your chair with your elbows relaxed by your sides.

Non-working zone

Anything positioned on your desk outside of the primary and secondary zones can encourage leaning and reaching, which can increase the risk of repetitive awkward movements that may lead to discomfort. Either bring that item closer, or stand up and move to it to retrieve it.

Secondary working zone

The secondary working zone is the area on your desk that you can reach with your back still in contact with the back rest and your arms extended.

Not sure if your desk is set up correctly? Book an assessment with one of our experts at **posturite.co.uk/dse-and-vehicle-assessments**

DSE Helpful Hints

For your perfect workstation setup

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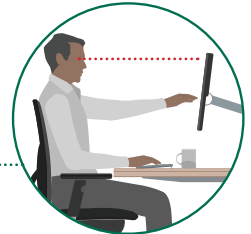

Arms relaxed by your side
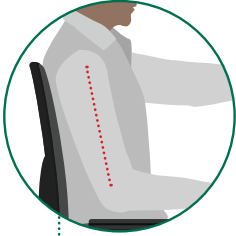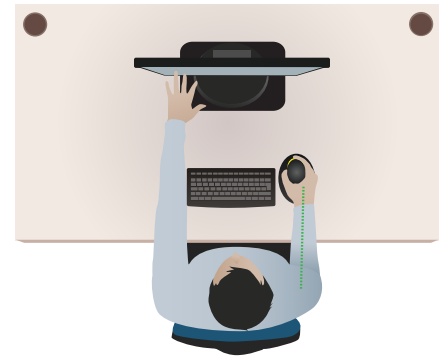
Balanced head, not leaning forward

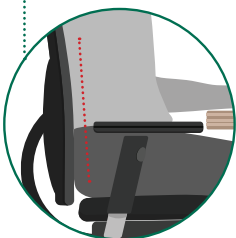**Screen approximately arm's length from you**
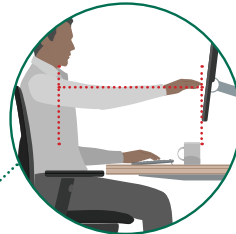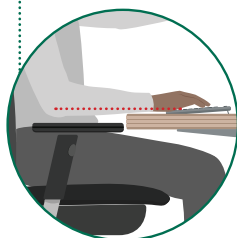
Top of screen about eye level

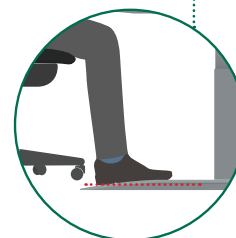Always remember to move throughout your working day to promote good health.
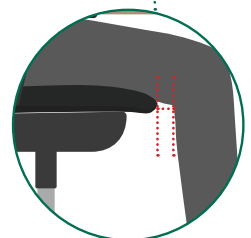
Sit back in chair ensuring good back support

Forearms parallel to desk

Feet flat on floor or on a foot rest

Space behind knee

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Because Health Matters

Appendix 4

Checklist for Computer Workstation Assessment

User: Location:

	Y/N or n/a	Comments
Chair - 3 way adjustable		
Chair set at correct height - upper arm vertical and forearm horizontal; adjust back of chair to support lower back		
Foot rest supplied if required		
Screen is directly in front of user (or immediately to the side of any document holder) and keyboard parallel to edge of table		
Screen a suitable distance from the user and at the correct height		
Space in front of keyboard to rest hands when not keying		
Mouse and mouse mat within easy reach – close to keyboard		
Document holder supplied if required		
Screen is clean with a clear image		
Screen does not suffer from glare and reflections		
Adequate space beneath table for posture changes		
Posture of user - upright with no flexure of wrists and lower back supported		
User's work pattern - regular activity changes		
User is aware of health risks associated with intensive computer work		
Other points:		

Assessor's Signature: _____   Date

User's Signature: _____