

# CODE OF PRACTICE

## Safe Use of Display Screen Equipment / Workstation

### Document Information

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## Document change record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Change description</b>	<b>Person</b>
December 2025	Code of Practice written to transition from the Safe use of DSE Safety Standard	Chris Young
December 2025	Changes to published standard include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>• Clarification on roles and responsibilitiesClarification on responsibilities to PGR</li><li>• Links to Specsavers eyecare and glasses voucher scheme</li><li>• Specific information on DSE / workstation set up</li><li>• Links to online training module</li></ul>	Chris Young

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## 1. Summary

Employers have a duty of care to assess, manage and control significant risks to their employees and anyone else who may be affected by their undertaking. The University's health and safety policy sets out its general arrangements to fulfil this duty of care.

This code of practice describes how the University manages the risks associated with display screen equipment (DSE) so that we can reduce risks of occupational ill-health and injury and other impacts on general wellbeing that can arise with the regular unsafe use of DSE at work.

The code of practice is also intended to ensure that the University is managing our legal responsibilities to people using DSE under the:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the "management regulations")
- The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, as amended 2002 (the "DSE Regulations").

## 2. Scope

This code of practice (CoP) has been written to support:

- People who work with DSE
- People who line manage people who work with DSE
- Directors, Heads of Department and others who have responsibility for oversight of health and safety matters in departments, directorates, institutes and other functional units.
- Local workstation assessors (where appointed)

It applies to:

- all University provided fixed and portable display screen equipment used by "users" in the course of their employment. Equipment standards set out in regulations will also apply to "work" equipment provided for use by post graduate research students and to agency staff when working on campus.
- employees who routinely homework or work from other premises.

Short duration DSE use, which would include some display screen equipment associated with research equipment is not covered under this CoP. Equipment provided for use by taught undergraduate / post-graduate students, and equipment used by employees for occasional ad hoc home working is not covered by the regulations or this CoP. However, it is recommended that people using DSE in any of these contexts follow the best practice guidance in this document wherever it is practicable to do so.

### 3. Introduction

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), an estimated 543,000 workers in Great Britain suffered from work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in 2023–2024, resulting in 7.8 million working days lost.

The impact of poor ergonomics in the workplace extends beyond physical health. People who experience persistent physical discomfort can develop chronic stress, anxiety, and even depression.

When people are in constant pain or discomfort, their ability to concentrate reduces, which in turn can lead to decreased productivity and increased frustration.

A significant proportion of the University’s employees use computers and other display screen equipment (DSE) throughout their working day.

The aim of this code of practice is to set out how DSE and associated workstations can be set up ergonomically and the practical steps that employees need to take to reduce risks when working with DSE. The CoP also provides guidance on how employees and line managers can access support where issues with DSE are identified.

### 4. Definitions

<b>Display Screen Equipment (DSE)</b>	DSE is a device or equipment that has an alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process involved; it includes both conventional display screens and those used in emerging technologies such as laptops, touchscreens, smart phones and other similar devices.
<b>Workstation</b>	In this context, this includes display screen equipment such as a monitor, keyboard, mouse, telephone, modem, printer, chair, desk and the immediate working environment.
<b>User</b>	Any <u>employee</u> who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work. We would normally classify anyone who uses DSE for an hour or more per day, almost daily, as a “user”.
<b>Competency:</b>	There is no legal definition of competency. However, this is generally accepted as meaning a person has the necessary “knowledge, skills, training and experience” to carry out a specific task safely. All people working with DSE need to be competent to self-assess their workstation. Successful completion of the <a href="#">University’s online DSE Self-Assessment training module</a> is considered as sufficient to demonstrate that the “training” requirement is met in this context.

<b>Eye and eyesight test</b>	<p>This is a 'sight test' as defined by legislation and includes a vision test and an eye examination. For computer users, the test should take their work into account. "Users" are entitled to ask their employer to provide an eye and eyesight test.</p> <p>Voluntary workers, agency workers and casual workers at the University are excluded from this provision. In the case of agency workers, their employing agency is responsible for these costs.</p>
<b>Home workers</b>	<p>Employees who work at home by formal agreement with the University either as stated in their contract of employment or as a long-term reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010 or under the University's hybrid working arrangements.</p> <p>Individuals who choose to work from home on an ad hoc / occasional basis are excluded from this definition, although it is recommended that anyone working on this basis follows the guidance set out in this CoP and the University's workstation training.</p>
<b>Local workstation assessor</b>	<p>Faculties, Departments or teams may appoint one or more staff members to undertake assessments or monitor self-assessments for users. There is no set ratio for local workstation assessors, but it is recommended that departments have 1 trained person for every 50-75 staff. Training for local workstation assessors is provided by SHEW. Training covers all aspects of ergonomic set up and basic aspects of workstation assessment.</p>

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

The University's health and safety policy describes the general roles and responsibilities on all employees to safeguard themselves and others in the workplace.

This CoP sets out the additional specific roles and responsibilities for managing risks related to DSE use.

### 5.1 Heads of Department / Directors of Professional Services

Heads of Department, Divisions (School of management) and Professional Services Directorates are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this code of practice.

Responsibilities include ensuring that:

- Workstations, including homeworking workstations provided for homeworkers, meet the minimum legal requirements (see [Minimum Requirements for Workstations](#), below). Hot desking facilities will be provided with equipment to meet the minimum legal requirements.  
**Where departments provide workstations for use by students for significant periods, then these should take account of minimum equipment requirements.**
- Users within their area complete the [online DSE training module](#).

- Users within their areas complete the University's display screen self-assessment when first appointed and that these are reviewed or renewed in accordance with the guidance in this Code of Practice.
- Recommendations from assessments are implemented. In many instances, users will be able to implement these themselves, but some recommendations will require funding (e.g. for furniture or adapted equipment). The HoD / Director is responsible for ensuring adequate resources are made available to fund any required purchases.
- Records are kept to evidence that assessments have been undertaken and recommendations implemented.
- Appointing sufficient local workstation assessors and ensuring that appointees are trained and resourced to carry out their duties.

### 5.2 DSE users

Anyone who is classified as a "user" has a responsibility to:

- Complete the University's [online display screen equipment](#) training.
- Use DSE in accordance with their training.
- Complete a self-assessment on starting work or after any significant change (e.g. an office move, or a change in health) that may affect their safe use of DSE.
- Implement any recommendations from the DSE assessment. Where users cannot implement recommendations themselves, they can access support from SHEW and/or their local workstation assessor (where one is appointed).
- Review their assessment annually.

If you are a user and have a change in health or develop a disability and this is having (or could have) an impact on you in the workplace, then you are strongly encouraged to tell your supervisor / line manager. If you feel uncomfortable discussing this with your line manager or supervisor you may wish to speak to your [HR advisor](#) instead.

## 6. Minimum Requirements for Workstations

The DSE Regulations set out minimum requirements for workstations. These include:

- DSE equipment – display screens, keyboards, mice, work desks and work surfaces, user chairs.
- Environment – Space, reflections and glare, lighting, thermal comfort, noise, humidity.
- Interface between user and the DSE – software.

Many users now have laptops as their primary machine. The design of portable DSE generally includes features (such as smaller keyboard or no keyboard-screen separation) which make it more difficult to achieve an ergonomic and comfortable working posture. Consequently, if these are to be used as a primary device then there are certain adaptations that are required to address these issues:

- Separate screen (for longer term work). If the laptop screen is to be used, then you will require a laptop riser.
- Separate Mouse and keyboard.

The [University's standard IT provision](#) meets the equipment requirements of the DSE regulations. Where user's equipment is not funded centrally, then department bought equipment must be at least equivalent to the standard provision.

A full description of minimum requirements is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

## 7. DSE Self-Assessments

Before undertaking a DSE assessment for the first time, users must first complete the online DSE training module.

This training has been designed to give users an understanding of how they can ergonomically set up their workstation. By completing this first, users should be able to identify and resolve most issues with their workstation(s). We recommend that the training is completed every three years.

### 7.1 When do assessments need to be carried out?

Assessments should be completed:

- At start of employment, with an annual review, thereafter.
- When a user has a change in working arrangements (e.g., following an office move or a significant change of equipment or work tasks).
- Where a user has a change in personal circumstances (e.g. due to health condition or a temporary or permanent disability or if they become pregnant) which may impact their use of DSE.

### 7.2 Completing the DSE assessment

Before completing the assessment, users should implement the guidance in the online DSE training to try and achieve an optimal set up before they complete the assessment.

If a user is a hybrid worker, then an assessment is required for both their home and their office workstation.

- [Office DSE self-assessment](#)
- [Home DSE self-assessment](#)

If a user routinely "hotdesks" (e.g. in work areas where desks are not allocated) then they should undertake the training and carry out an initial self-assessment. The training should be sufficient to equip these users to make necessary adjustments when they sit at a different desk.

### 7.3 Resolving issues identified in DSE assessments

Once you have completed your self-assessment this will be reviewed by a member of SHEW.

Where no issues are identified then SHEW will close your assessment with no further action required. If your assessment identifies a need for basic equipment, such as a footrest, then SHEW will provide advice on the equipment to be bought. SHEW will then close your assessment.

If your assessment identifies more significant issues (e.g. if you report any issues with musculoskeletal pain) then SHEW will contact you to provide advice on how this should be resolved. They may signpost you initially to your department's local workstation assessor (LWA) to advise that they visit your desk to look at your set up.

If the issue is complex the LWA may request support from SHEW. Where no LWA is appointed, SHEW will arrange a visit to your workstation to carry out an in-person assessment.

**Please note:** SHEW do not carry out home visits; users can be met on campus to discuss assessments, including home assessments. SHEW may also be able to provide home workers support through an online meeting or request that you send photographs so that we can look at your set up.

### 7.4 Standard adaptations to furniture provisions

**Standard furniture:** Most user's issues can usually be resolved by setting up their chair correctly.

Certain older chairs lack the range of features now recommended and on occasion SHEW may recommend that a new chair is purchased. Standard recommendations tend to be relatively inexpensive.

SHEW has access to a small selection of trial furniture in a dedicated area on campus so that users can try these out before any purchase is made. SHEW will provide specific details of the chair to be purchased and will also arrange to visit your workstation to ensure this is correctly set up.

Occasionally, SHEW may also recommend changes to other furniture, such as desks where these are preventing a user from achieving an appropriately ergonomic set up. Again, SHEW will provide advice and guidance on purchases and suppliers.

If a user is pregnant, then they may need to make minor adjustments to their workstation as their pregnancy develops. These adjustments can usually be made by changing the settings on existing chairs. The user should carry out a new self-assessment if they experience any difficulties when using DSE.

**Sit-stand desks:** The University does not provide sit-stand desks as a standard.

Where a user has a medical or other condition and a medical professional or similar (e.g. physiotherapist) has identified in writing that a sit-stand desk would be beneficial in alleviating a specific condition then users should provide this to their line manager for approval.

If a self-assessment or advice from a medical specialist identifies that certain furniture is required for health and safety purposes, then this provision must always be available to the user when they are using DSE. This includes in hotdesking settings and, for hybrid workers, when working at home.

If equipment cannot be accommodated at home advice should be sought from SHEW to see if there are alternative solutions that might be acceptable. If no alternative can be identified consideration may need to be given to permanently basing the employee in an office location.

**Costs for purchasing DSE related furniture are met through departmental budgets SHEW is not responsible for approving or funding furniture purchases.**

**Any cost related to a reasonable adjustment or alleviation of a medical concern should be raised to the relevant 'RAJ' budget code. Departments can request these to be set up by contacting Finance & Procurement.**

### **7.5 Standard adaptations to equipment provisions**

Some people may benefit from different types of equipment to address DSE and workstation-related issues. These could be due to issues such as back or joint pain, or a user may need additional support due to environmental reasons or because of a disability or other condition. The University's [Assistive Technology](#) department has a range of equipment that users can trial to see if this will benefit them in the workplace. Where self-assessments identify that a user could benefit from specialist technology then they will recommend that users contact Assistive Technology to request support. Users should not normally contact Assistive Technology directly about DSE issues unless they have completed their DSE self-assessment.

### **7.6 Complex needs**

Some users will have very complex needs which require more specialist support than SHEW can provide. Depending on context, SHEW will work with the individual user to achieve as good a set up as is possible but may advise that further support be sought from a specialist ergonomist or, where appropriate, that the employee makes an application to Access to Work (AtW).

Where an external specialist needs to be brought in the costs for this service are met by the user's department.

Most DSE related equipment is viewed by AtW as being covered under an employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. This being the case, whilst AtW may provide support by advising on adjustments to be made, they are unlikely to provide any funding.

As with other adaptations, where provisions are made as reasonable adjustments then these must be available to the employee wherever and whenever they are using DSE for work purposes.

### **7.7 Eyesight and glasses**

There is no evidence that indicates that using DSE causes permanent eye or eyesight damage. However, it has been established that using DSE for long uninterrupted spells can cause eyes to become tired and some people can experience sore eyes, headaches, migraine or temporarily experience double or blurred vision.

These effects can largely be mitigated by users taking screen breaks throughout the working day. These may consist of taking actual breaks away from the computer, for example by doing a different work task for a few minutes each hour. Looking away from the screen for 20 seconds every 20 minutes can also help with preventing eyestrain.

All users are entitled to a free sight test. The University has a partnership with Specsavers to provide staff with eyesight tests and occupational eyewear where prescription spectacles are needed **specifically** for Display Screen Equipment (DSE).

You will need to sign onto the University's [Benefits Platform](#) (single sign-on required) to access this service.

## Appendix 1: Minimum Requirements for Workstations

### 1. Equipment

#### *Display screen / monitor*

Screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swivel and tilt easily and freely to suit the needs of the operator or user.</li> <li>Free of reflective glare and reflections liable to cause discomfort to the operator or user.</li> </ul>
Screen height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height adjustable. Alternatively, a monitor stand or adjustable arm could be used to achieve this aim.</li> </ul>
The image on the screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable, with no flickering or other forms of instability.</li> </ul>
Characters on the screen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy to read.</li> </ul>
Brightness and contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily adjustable.</li> </ul>

#### *Keyboard*

The keyboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate from the screen and tiltable so that the operator or user can find a comfortable working position and avoid fatigue in the arms or hands.</li> <li>Matt surface to avoid reflective glare.</li> <li>Arrangement and style should mean it is easy to use.</li> <li>The symbols on the keys should be easy to read in use.</li> </ul>
Space in front of the keyboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficient to provide support for the hands and arms of the operator or user.</li> </ul>

#### *Work desk or work surface*

The work desk or work surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large enough to allow a flexible arrangement of the screen, keyboard, documents and related equipment.</li> <li>Low-reflectance surface.</li> </ul>
Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate for operators or users to find a comfortable position.</li> </ul>
If used, the document holder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stable and adjustable, and positioned to minimise head and eye movements.</li> </ul>

**Work chair**

The work chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable and allows the operator or user easy freedom of movement and a comfortable position.</li> <li>• The seat should be height adjustable.</li> <li>• The seat back should be adjustable in both height and tilt.</li> </ul>
Footrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall be made available to any operator or user who wishes to use one.</li> </ul>

**2. Environment****Space requirements**

The workstation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dimensioned and designed so as to provide sufficient space for the operator or user to change position and vary movements.</li> </ul>
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**Lighting**

Any room lighting or task lighting provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure satisfactory lighting conditions and an appropriate contrast between the screen and the background environment, taking into account the type of work and the vision requirements of the operator or user.</li> </ul>
Disturbing glare and reflections on the screen or other equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent by co-ordinating workplace and workstation layout with the positioning and characteristics of light sources.</li> </ul>

**Reflections and glare**

Workstations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed so that sources of light including windows, and brightly coloured fixtures or walls cause no direct glare and no distracting reflections on the screen.</li> </ul>
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitted with a suitable adjustable covering to attenuate the daylight that falls on the workstation.</li> </ul>

**Noise**

Noise emitted by equipment belonging to any workstation shall be considered when a workstation is being equipped, to minimise distraction and disturbance.	
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**Heat**

Equipment belonging to any workstation should not produce excess heat which could cause discomfort to operators or users.

**Radiation**

All radiation except for visible light shall be reduced to negligible levels.

**Humidity**

An adequate level of humidity shall be established and maintained.

**3. Interface between computer and operator/user**

In designing, selecting, commissioning and modifying software, and in designing tasks using display screen equipment, the employer shall consider the following principles:

Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suitable for the task, easy to use and, where appropriate, adaptable to the level of knowledge or experience of the operator or user. No quantitative or qualitative checking facility may be used without the knowledge of the operators or users.</li></ul>
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must provide feedback to operators or users on the performance of those systems.</li><li>• Must display information in a format and at a pace which are adapted to operators or users.</li></ul>
Software ergonomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The principles of software ergonomics must be applied, in particular, to human data processing.</li></ul>