

Health & Safety

Display Screen Equipment Policy

(computers and other handheld devices)

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<i>Authorised signature</i>	Bob Rennie, Head of Health & Safety

¹ or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

Amendment Control

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1.0	Oct 2018	
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Health & Safety Office
Finance & Operations

health&safetyoffice@napier.ac.uk

Policy Summary

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations aim to protect the health of people who work with display screen equipment.

The main provisions apply to display screen equipment (DSE) users, defined as workers who habitually use a computer as a significant part of their normal work. This includes people who are regular users of DSE equipment, or rely on it as part of their job. This covers you if you use DSE for periods of an hour or more continuously, and/or you are making daily use of DSE.

That does not mean that DSE work is high risk – it isn't. However, muscular skeletal problems can be avoided if users follow effective practice, set up their workstations properly and take breaks during prolonged use. By just taking a few simple precautions, work with DSE can be more comfortable and productive.

All employees in each school/service who have access to display screen equipment must complete the Essential Skillz eLearning Workstation package annually or whenever their work desk/room environment changes or evidence that the workstation is creating a risk to the H&S of users.

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1. Introduction

The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations aim to protect the health of people who work with display screen equipment.

The main provisions apply to display screen equipment (DSE) users, defined as workers who habitually use a computer as a significant part of their normal work. This includes people who are regular users of DSE equipment, or rely on it as part of their job. This covers you if you use DSE for periods of an hour or more continuously, and/or you are making daily use of DSE.

Prolonged working with computers and other devices can be associated with neck, shoulder, back or arm pain, as well as with fatigue and eyestrain. These aches and pains are sometimes called upper limb disorders (ULDs), which can include a range of medical conditions such as RSI. Most of these conditions do not indicate any serious ill health, but it makes sense to avoid them as far as possible. The hazards associated with DSE workstations must therefore be properly assessed so that they are adequately equipped and adjustable to suit the user's needs.

That does not mean that DSE work is high risk – it isn't. However, muscular skeletal problems can be avoided if users follow effective practice, set up their workstations properly and take breaks during prolonged use. By just taking a few simple precautions, work with DSE can be more comfortable and productive.

Employers are required to:

- a) Make a risk assessment of workstation use by DSE users and reduce the risks identified
- b) Ensure DSE users take adequate breaks
- c) Provide regular eyesight tests
- d) Provide health and safety information and training
- e) Provide adjustable furniture (desk, chair etc.)
- f) Demonstrate that they have adequate procedures designed to reduce risks (such as “repetitive strain injury”) associated with DSE work

2. Definitions

Display Screen Equipment

The term 'display screen equipment' (or DSE) is sometimes referred to as Visual Display Units (VDU) or Computer Workstations and includes laptops, touch-screens, tablets, smartphones and other similar devices that incorporate a display screen. Any item of computer-related equipment including the computer, display, keyboard, mouse, desk and chair can be considered part of the DSE workstation.

Use

The term 'use' means for or in connection with work.

User

The term 'user' means an employee who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work. As a guide, anyone using equipment for an hour or more of their time continuously, and/or are making daily use of DSE should be considered a user. Also, any personnel carrying out intensive tasks (which may be less than one hour of their time using DSE equipment) should also be regarded as users.

Workstation

The term 'workstation' means an assembly comprising:

- a) Display screen equipment including keyboard, mouse, screen(s), etc.
- b) Any optional accessories to the DSE including docking stations.
- c) Any disc drive, telephone, modem, printer, scanners, document holder, work chair, work desk, work surface or other item peripheral to the display screen equipment.
- d) The immediate work environment around the display screen equipment, e.g. fans, heaters, lamps, cabinets, etc.

Part-time workers

Part-time workers should be assessed using the same criteria. For example, if an employee works only two days a week but spends most of that time on DSE work, that person should be considered a user.

3. References

Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations
HSE Guidance on Regulations L26 Work with Display Screen Equipment
HSE Guidance Booklet HS(G)38 Lighting at Work
HSE Guidance Booklet HS(G)57 Seating at Work
HSE Guidance Booklet HS(G)60 Work Related Upper Limb Disorders
HSE Guidance Booklet The Law on VDUs: An Easy Guide HS(G)90
Working with VDUs (INDG36)
Health and Safety at Work etc. Act
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations

4. University policy and procedures

eLearning Workstation package

All staff must complete annually the on-line Essential Skillz Workstation training/ErgoWize assessment. This is available through Apps Anywhere on the university network. The interactive training provides practical guidance on the safe set-up and use of workstations, along with a risk assessment to highlight any issues with the workstation and allow these to be raised and recorded with the relevant line manager. The package covers correct posture, workstation set-up, additional issues, exercises and test, along with the Ergowize risk assessment.

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The on-line Workstation training should also be carried out when a new workstation is set up, when a new user starts work, or when a substantial change is made to an existing workstation (or the way it is used). Assessments should be repeated if there is any other reason to suspect it may no longer be valid, for example if users start complaining of pain or discomfort. The assessment must also be completed every year.

Specialist Ergonomic Equipment recommended through an Occupational Health report

If a member of staff advises that they are experiencing discomfort or pain at work they should initially undertake the Workstation eLearning training accessed through Apps Anywhere – Essential Skillz.

If this does not resolve the issue then the line manager, in discussion with the staff member, should complete a [referral for our Occupational Health provider](#) including all relevant details to enable them to arrange a workstation assessment and to provide advice.

For full details of process for specialist ergonomic equipment, please refer to the [HR website](#).

Refer Appendix A: Workstation assessment

Stand up desks/vari-desks

Many studies show that sitting for more than 6 hours a day is linked to being overweight, obese, having type 2 diabetes, some types of cancer and even premature death.

With technology such as computers, television and video consoles changing our work and leisure habits, it seems we're spending increasing amounts of our lives sitting down. There is no doubt this is seriously impacting the nation's health.

An adjustable height sit-stand desk or vari-desk gives you the option to sit or stand throughout the day, keeping your muscles active and reducing the risk of aches and pains caused by repetitive movements. If the individual is tall then they may need an adjustable desk to be comfortable. Where following a workstation assessment a stand-up desk or vari-desk is suggested for the user, the purchase of such equipment will be made through their Line Manager/ School/Service

What are the benefits of a sit-stand vari-desk?

- Increased alertness, concentration and productivity
- Improved blood circulation
- Relief from muscle ache caused by static posture
- Flexibility to adjust your working position to the task at hand
- Burn more calories

<https://getbritainstanding.org/index.php>

5. Responsibilities

Dean of School/Director of Service

The Dean of School/Director of Service is responsible for ensuring that effective arrangements are in place such that the DSE regulations are complied with.

Line Managers

Line Managers will have access to the administration system and will monitor completion of the health and safety eLearning Workstation package for staff in their area and [resolve concerns raised through the ErgoWize assessments](#). This will be recorded and confirmed as part of the annual health and safety report.

Line Managers will be responsible for ensuring that individual users have been consulted on the relevant control measures being proposed and that the user is satisfied with the control measures being implemented. Similarly new users of DSE or who are likely to be affected by the equipment, receive adequate instruction and training to carry out their task

Employee/users

All employees/users in each School/Service who have access to display screen equipment (DSE), whether or not they are considered to be users, must complete the package annually or whenever their work desk/room environment changes, or evidence that the workstation is creating a risk to the H&S of users.

Completion of the Workstation eLearning package is also needed where employees work from home (whether or not the employer provided the workstation).

Risks identified in the assessment must be addressed. All issues raised in the assessment will be reviewed by the line manager for any comments/further recommendations to ensure that suitable control measures are implemented to reduce any identified risk to as low as reasonably practicable.

Where the user has identified problems they cannot deal with, a formal workstation assessment should be requested through [Occupational Health](#) via their line manager. The line manager will follow up with HR who in turn will contact Occupational Health.

The Occupational Health Service is available for assistance and advice, including assessment for users where unusual circumstances prevail, e.g. an individual has a medical condition that requires to be taken into account in the assessment process.

6. What you can do / user comfort

There are several ways to make sitting at a computer for long periods more comfortable, including:
This advice is based on the HSE booklet Work With Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on regulations L26. ISBN 9780717625826.

1. Adjust the angle and height of your back-rest to provide greatest comfort and support. It should support your lower back.
2. Adjust the tilt of your seat so that your body is inclined slightly forwards. This encourages you to sit upright, and keep your back straight.
3. Adjust your screen position, so that your eyes look down on it from an angle of around 15 to 20 degrees (slightly below eye level). This is the viewing angle recommended by the appropriate British Standard.
4. Adjust the viewing angle of the screen to minimise reflections and glare. If this proves impossible you may need to address any problems with natural or artificial lighting e.g. fit blinds to windows or use a screen filter.
5. Adjust the controls to ensure the screen brightness suits you.
6. Check that you have adequate knee and leg clearance under your desk and that you can reach your keyboard without stretching.
7. Adjust your keyboard, so that your desk supports your wrists and forearms and the angle feels comfortable during use.
8. Arrange your desk and equipment to minimise the amount of bending, twisting and stretching. Keep the area around and underneath your desk clear to allow you enough room to change position regularly.
9. Avoid repetitive movement of the head or eyes when reading documents from which you are taking source data, place a document holder beside the screen. Where a document holder has been provided, please use it; adjust its height and reading angle to suit your comfort. It should be adjacent to the screen and at the same viewing distance from your eyes.
10. Work so that there are breaks or changes of activity. Short, frequent breaks are better than longer, less frequent ones, and ideally the individual should have some discretion over when they are taken.
11. It is recommended that all users exercise frequently to avoid muscular fatigue. Neck circles, shoulder raises, flexing of arms and legs, rotation of ankles and wrists, and stretching of all the fingers are all common exercises that can prove beneficial. These exercises can be done quite easily at the desk, and take only a few minutes.
12. Users should avoid staring at the screen for protracted periods, which can lead to eyes becoming dry and irritated. An occasional glance away from the screen will provide visual relief and enhance comfort.
13. The equipment should be kept clean and clear, especially the screen and keyboard.

7. Eyesight

You can request a free eye test if you are classified as a user. Employers have a duty, under the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, to offer regular DSE users eyesight tests. The employee must inform their Line Manager of their intention to attend an Optician/Optomtrist for an eye examination based on one of the reasons below:

- New employee at Edinburgh Napier University using DSE work; or
- Follow-up tests at regular intervals. Periods between eye tests are discretionary, but should normally be at least 2 years between tests; or
- If an employee complains of eyestrain or their eyesight is deteriorating more quickly, which they believe has been caused through using the DSE.

The employee can then attend a local Opticians/Optomtrists for an eye examination (eye tests are free of charge).

Should **normal** 'corrective' spectacles/contact lenses be required, they are not part of this Policy (required for DSE work) and the user is expected to meet the full cost.

If **special** 'corrective' spectacles/contact lenses are required for DSE work, **the user must obtain a VAT receipt** for the spectacles/contact lenses that has been endorsed by the Optician/Optomtrist to verify that glasses are required for DSE use.

If **special** 'corrective' spectacles/contact lenses are required, the sum of up to £50 (including VAT) will be paid by the School/Service through the FIN5 expenses route. However, should employees wish to upgrade to any frame or lens or coating, they will do so at their own expense.

Note: In terms of contact lenses, the University will only pay out a max. of £50 once every 2 years.

Please see Appendix B: Eye Test Flowchart

8. Hotdesking/hybrid working

Hotdesking is a common working practice. If you share your desk, readjust your chair and desk before you start work. It is vital that at workstations where hotdesking is the norm that the equipment offers a wide range of adjustments to offer those using it a comfortable working position. Note: You are not required to carry out the workstation training every time you set up your desk.

9. Working at home

The Regulations apply if you are an employee working at home and habitually using a VDU for a significant part of your normal work. All staff working from home should in the first instance carry out the Essential Skillz eLearning Workstation package and Home Working package. They are separate packages. Homeworking for home and Workstation for workplace. (See also University [Homeworking Policy](#).) This may mean you complete the Workstation module twice.

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Frequent rest breaks and work away from DSE equipment gives eyes a chance to recover. Your 'blink rate' drops the longer you use a computer. Your eyes are less well lubricated and are likely to become dry and sore. It is important to remember to maintain a normal blink rate when using a computer and look at different items near and far to get the eyes to refocus.

The risks of developing a work-related injury to hands, wrists, arms, neck and back through using ill-adjusted equipment at home are high. Your employer has a duty to apply the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations. As a user, your responsibility is to ensure that your workstation complies with the law as if it was the University's premises.

The following aspects should be taken into account:

a) Lighting

Workstations should be positioned so the computer screen isn't affected by glare or reflections. There should be enough available light to work comfortably without eyestrain, using as much natural light as possible. Adjustable blinds or curtains can be fitted to reduce glare. If the lighting in the chosen room is insufficient, it can be augmented with task lighting.

b) Flooring

Older homes may have uneven floors that could cause desks to be unstable. This problem can be overcome with a height adjustable desk or adjusting the feet on the desk if fitted.

A chair mat may be required to allow chair castors to roll easily over deep carpet or glides or lockable castors or castors designed for solid floors may be needed on hard wood or shiny flat flooring.

c) Furniture and storage

The underside or footwell of the workstation should not be used to store files and/or equipment as free movement shouldn't be restricted in any way.

Furniture can be chosen that fits with the domestic setting and should include ergonomic seating, a desk with appropriate leg clearance and all the accessories required such as writing slopes and document holders, to help avoid aches, pains and strains.

d) Computers

These should be positioned in such a way that children cannot interfere with them and cables do not trail across a room where they could cause a hazard. Where cables cannot be tucked away, cable 'covers' should be used to protect trailing leads. Make sure that screens are adjusted properly at the correct height, angle and distance. Clean your screen regularly to reduce dust.

The use of laptops, etc. in the home should be used in a workstation environment, e.g. using a dedicated keyboard, mouse, docking station and a separate monitor that has been risk assessed.

Where it is not possible to have a dedicated workstation environment, the user needs to ensure that the screen can be adjusted, the lighting is correct, the seating position is comfortable and supports the right posture and the work area/surface is adequate. Care should be taken that a built-in mousepad is not used for prolonged periods.

e) Regular breaks and health issues

Regular breaks should be taken. For example, 5 mins every hour. This can simply be a tea-break or toilet-break just to get regular movement and or distraction from sitting at a computer and potentially getting eye strain or posture problems. Prolonged use of a computer can cause eye strains, stress and tiredness and problems with posture. The repeated striking of keys or mouse clicks can cause repetitive strain injury (RSI). Early diagnosis is important to obtaining swift treatment, so medical advice should be sought if discomfort is felt in the arms and wrists when working.

10. Pregnancy

When you notify your School/Service that you are pregnant, your School/Service should carry out a pregnancy risk assessment including assessing your workstation to ensure you are sitting comfortably. You should also complete the Essential Skillz eLearning Workstation package (Apps Anywhere – Essential Skillz - Library).

Over time as your tummy expands your sitting position should be monitored to ensure you are maintaining a good sitting posture. You will need to take more breaks to cope with increased fatigue.

Refer Appendix C: Pregnancy guidance

11. Mobile working

New smaller and more portable devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones are supposed to make work easier, more accessible and therefore make us more productive. However, because it is harder to find a good posture to use these devices, the risk to the user of discomfort, fatigue and therefore reduced productivity is increased and needs to be managed.

Laptops

The increased usage of laptops in the workplace increases the risk of injury for employees not using this device correctly. Laptops require additional equipment so that employees can work comfortably with them for long periods

All users should have a separate keyboard and mouse with either a laptop riser or separate monitor. These items should be available to users for as much of the time they spend using the laptop as possible and in particular in the places they use the laptop most frequently and for the longest durations. Choice of peripherals is important. Monitors are not portable so they will only be of benefit where they're situated. The use of laptop risers instead so that the laptop can be set up correctly in more of the locations should be considered.

To reduce the risk of manual handling injury, make sure employees who travel a lot with their laptops are provided with appropriate bags to carry them in. The bags need to house any peripheral equipment and other items they need to perform their role. Users should also be advised to minimise

how much they carry with them. Staff should only be carrying the items essential for work but the items they pack should include their peripheral equipment if they are going to be using the laptops for long periods wherever they are going.

Users should ensure when working with laptops that they do not adopt a hunched posture and the following unhealthy trends:

- Flexion in the neck as they look down to see the screen
- A rounding of the back
- Bending of the wrists to use the keyboard and touchpad
- Resting the wrists on the edge of the laptop

Users should not work for long periods with their laptop:

- On their lap
- In comfy furniture such as a sofa
- In bed
- Just before they go to sleep

Handheld electronic devices

Task specific handheld electronic devices are increasingly being used on campus. In order to use them safely the following points should be considered. The main risk when working with handheld electronic devices on campus is that the user may concentrate so much on working with the equipment they will become less observant of their surroundings and fail to recognise hazards and changes in working conditions taking place around them.

Use of handheld devices may also mean that individuals are more likely to work by themselves. While this is permitted, users must make sure that others are close by, are easily contactable and are aware of where they are at all times.

- a) It is prohibited to use any such devices when working with plant and equipment or carrying out any safety critical operation.
- b) Users should carry out a pre-use inspection on the device. If there is damage then this must be reported to the person responsible for maintenance of the equipment.
- c) Persons working individually must inform others of their intended works, period of work, and locations.
- d) Prior to use the user must check the area, including above and below, where they will be working, for hazards and operations that may interfere with their work and/or the work of others.
- e) Users are to regularly check the work area for changes in conditions.
- f) Where conditions change and hazardous operations enter the area then the user must cease work and reassess the situation.
- g) Users are to stand still when using handheld devices.
- h) If working at height, handheld devices must be suitably restrained from being dropped, e.g. by using a strap or tether.

- i) Devices are to be turned off, set on stand-by' or Silent Mode before moving to another location.
- j) The user must move to a dedicated place of safety to use handheld devices.
- k) When not in use, devices must be turned off, switched to 'stand by' or Silent Mode, and stored in the pouch/bag/case where provided.
- l) At completion the device must be turned off and returned to secure storage for charging.

Tablets

Tablets are best used as supplementary devices for travelling or specific tasks such as browsing, emails and note-taking.

Tablets are very difficult to set up to work comfortably and the screen is too small to be used as a main computer. Tablets are often held closer to the face than usually recommended and therefore can cause visual fatigue. Many users use their tablets just before bed to check emails and browse the internet. This practice can have a negative effect on sleep as using the tablet stimulates the brain. Because a tablet's data input is via a touch screen this makes finding a good posture difficult.

Using a tablet flat on the desk encourages the user to adopt a curved spine and flex the neck down to see the screen. Using a case/riser to angle the tablet for a better viewing position tends to make the user bend the wrist when inputting. This is another unhealthy posture that potentially puts the user at risk of developing a WRULD (Work-Related Upper Limb Disorder).

Peripheral devices to make tablets safer to use are available. Some tablet designs resemble laptops. Recreating the laptop is better for typing tasks but this is not enough. As we have already seen, laptops need further peripheral equipment for comfortable working.

Tablets are extremely useful for employees who work away from a desk or who need to input information standing up. Research has shown that when using the tablet standing up, the supporting arm becomes fatigued when inputting data. In fact, some tablet users have experienced pain in the elbow and forearm after just 30 minutes of continuous use.

When using a tablet away from a desk and where no peripheral equipment is available the user should:

- Vary the hand they hold the tablet in
- Vary the position of the hand on the tablet and the way the device is held
- Not use the device for too long at any one time

Tablets are not suitable as a main device for long periods of DSE work. They are best used as supplementary devices for travelling or specific tasks such as browsing, emails and note-taking.

Smartphones

Portability makes smartphones an extremely high-use device but their size and method of operation do not lend themselves to long term comfortable working. Unfortunately, their many and varied functions encourage prolonged usage among smartphone enthusiasts. Smartphones are responsible

for very intensive stress on small tendons and muscles. Users try to use these devices in one hand, putting a large workload on their thumbs.

Good practice advice states that a smartphone should be held in one hand and operated using the fingers on the other hand. Many users try to use the device while walking. With their concentration focused on the phone the possibility for an accident massively increases.

Drivers of University owned, leased or hired vehicles must not use a handheld mobile phone or similar device whilst driving. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in disciplinary action and revoking of University Authorised Driver status. Hands-free kits are also banned.

Adjust and relax

Flexible and mobile working can bring great benefits to our work and personal lives, but to gain these benefits it is important that you are working comfortably. It is always worth taking some time to adjust the equipment and work area to suit you.

Making adjustments and taking regular breaks are the most important things you can do to help yourself work comfortably when using mobile devices.

Whatever the future holds, following the good practice set out here should allow you to use the technology in a comfortable and safe manner.

Refer Appendix D: Mobile working

12. Stretching exercises

Do each exercise five times and, ideally, repeat every hour to stretch muscles, tendons and nerves. The whole process will take only a couple of minutes.

- a) Hold out both hands with palms down. Clench and then stretch the fingers and thumbs slowly.
- b) Bring one hand up to the shoulder, then stretch the arm out straight in front of you (with the palm uppermost) until you feel a slight pull on the forearm. Repeat with the other arm.
- c) Shrug the shoulders by pulling them up towards the ears then relax.
- d) Bring one hand to the shoulder with the elbow out to the side and draw a circle in the air with your elbow. Repeat with the other arm.
- e) With the head level, turn it gradually as far to the left as you can, then to the right.
- f) Keeping the back straight with chin tucked in, clasp hands behind your back and raise straight arms - four times holding full stretch for a count of three.

Refer Appendix E: Stretching exercises

13. Common questions about effects of DSE

a) Does DSE give off radiation?

Like other common electrical devices (irons, toasters, TVs, fluorescent lights, etc) DSEs can produce some kinds of radiation. This radiation, when detected, is within safety guidelines, and the amount is no more than normal background levels in the UK.

b) Does radiation from DSE increase as the DSE gets older?

As DSE ages, it is more likely to develop faults such as drift and jitter of the images on the screen. It is also possible that the brightness control will need to be turned up but this does not mean that there will be any increase in the other, non-visible, radiations. Machines should be serviced regularly if the visual image deteriorates but there is no need for periodic radiation checks.

c) Do I need any protective devices against the radiation from DSE such as special spectacles, screens, aprons etc?

No. There is no authoritative independent evidence which indicates that they are needed.

d) Can the radiation from DSE be harmful to health?

Most of the radiation emitted by DSEs is very much less than that from natural environmental sources such as the sun and is well below the levels considered harmful by responsible expert bodies such as the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) in the UK.

e) If I become pregnant, could the radiation from DSE harm my unborn child?

The National Radiation Protection Board does not consider that the emissions from DSE will put either you or your unborn child at risk. They advise that even if you work full-time at DSE during your pregnancy you will receive radiation which in effect is no higher than the natural background level. However, it is appreciated that some people can become very anxious, especially if they have had difficulties with pregnancies in the past. Talk to your doctor if you have any doubts.

f) Is using DSE any different from watching television?

Yes. Although the display may use the same technology, DSEs are usually manufactured to higher standards than TV sets. Because you sit more closely to DSEs and look at them more intently, as the images tend to be smaller and made up of words rather than pictures, it is important to get the environment right and ensure that DSE is adjusted properly.

g) Can my eyes or eyesight be damaged by working with DSEs?

There have been several studies on whether working with DSE can affect a user's eyes. None of them has found any evidence to suggest that DSEs cause damage to the eye or eyesight, or make existing eye defects worse.

h) Should I have my eyes tested before using DSE?

Not necessarily. There is no medical evidence that using DSE has a long term effect on either eyes or eyesight. Nor is DSE work necessarily visually more difficult than other office work. However, some people find that reading from DSE screen is tiring even when other precautions to minimise eyestrain have been taken. If you are in doubt, you should consult your line manager.

i) How do I use bi-focals with DSE?

You may want to arrange the equipment differently from those who do not wear bi-focals. You may even find it more convenient than working with paper because you can place the screen at a

suitable reading distance. However, if you find that you have to sit in an uncomfortable position to see what is on the screen, you may need a different pair of spectacles and should consult your optician.

j) There is nothing wrong with my eyesight but I get headaches and eye strain when I work with DSE. Why is this?

Any work in which you stay in the same position and concentrate for a long time is likely to cause these symptoms. Problems may also arise if the DSE is badly positioned or if the workplace is poorly lit or noisy. Drifting, flickering or jittering images can be very tiring and should be corrected immediately.

k) Can DSE cause epilepsy?

DSE work does not cause epilepsy and there is no reason why any individual who may have experienced an epileptic attack should be prevented from undertaking DSE work. However, some people who are susceptible to a rare form known as photosensitive epilepsy could risk experiencing a seizure, but most individuals who have this susceptibility experience their first attack between the ages of 10-14 years and usually whilst watching television. The likelihood of the onset of this form of epilepsy being associated with DSE usage is extremely low. If you have already experienced such an attack and as a result cannot watch television etc. for any length of time, please advise your line manager accordingly.

l) Is there a limit to the amount of time I should work on DSE?

Most types of continuous or sustained work may lead to a build-up of fatigue. In many jobs there are natural breaks when you can move about or do something different. Jobs should be designed to allow such changes in activity but if this is not possible, short, frequent breaks prevent fatigue.

m) Sometimes, particularly when I have spent long periods at the DSE keyboard, I get pains and discomfort in my arms, shoulders, neck or hands.

These symptoms are usually the product of a badly designed workplace or a job which you have to work at continuously. Either may cause you to sit in a fixed position for long periods or make awkward or rapid repetitive movements of the head, body or arms. Most people find that the symptoms quickly disappear when they stop work, but in some cases the effects may be more serious. It is very important that both the job and the workplace be designed to minimise such movements. Remember, there are many causes for aches and pains. Headaches are not necessarily associated with eye problems and may be caused by other factors, such as poor posture, muscle tension, etc. If you have any health problems that you think may be connected with your DSE work, you should contact your doctor or advise your line manager.

n) Are there any other health problems connected with working with DSEs?

There have been reports of users who have complained of itching skin or redness of the face and/or neck. Often these symptoms were simply coincidental and nothing to do with the DSE.

o) Medication

Certain drugs may slow down eye movement for the period during which they are taken and this may cause additional fatigue. If at any time your doctor prescribes a course of drugs, mention that your work involves operating DSE and ask whether or not there might be any minor reactions, just as drivers may enquire in relation to their capability to drive whilst taking a course of treatment.

p) General Note

Where, for health reasons, you are advised by your doctor to avoid working with DSE, either permanently or temporarily, you should inform your line manager immediately.

14. Further information

Backcare:

<http://www.backcare.org.uk>

Health & Safety Executive:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/>

Free HSE publications:

Working with display screen equipment - offers basic advice for people who use VDUs at work.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg36.pdf>

HSE priced publications

Work with Display Screen Equipment: Guidance on regulations

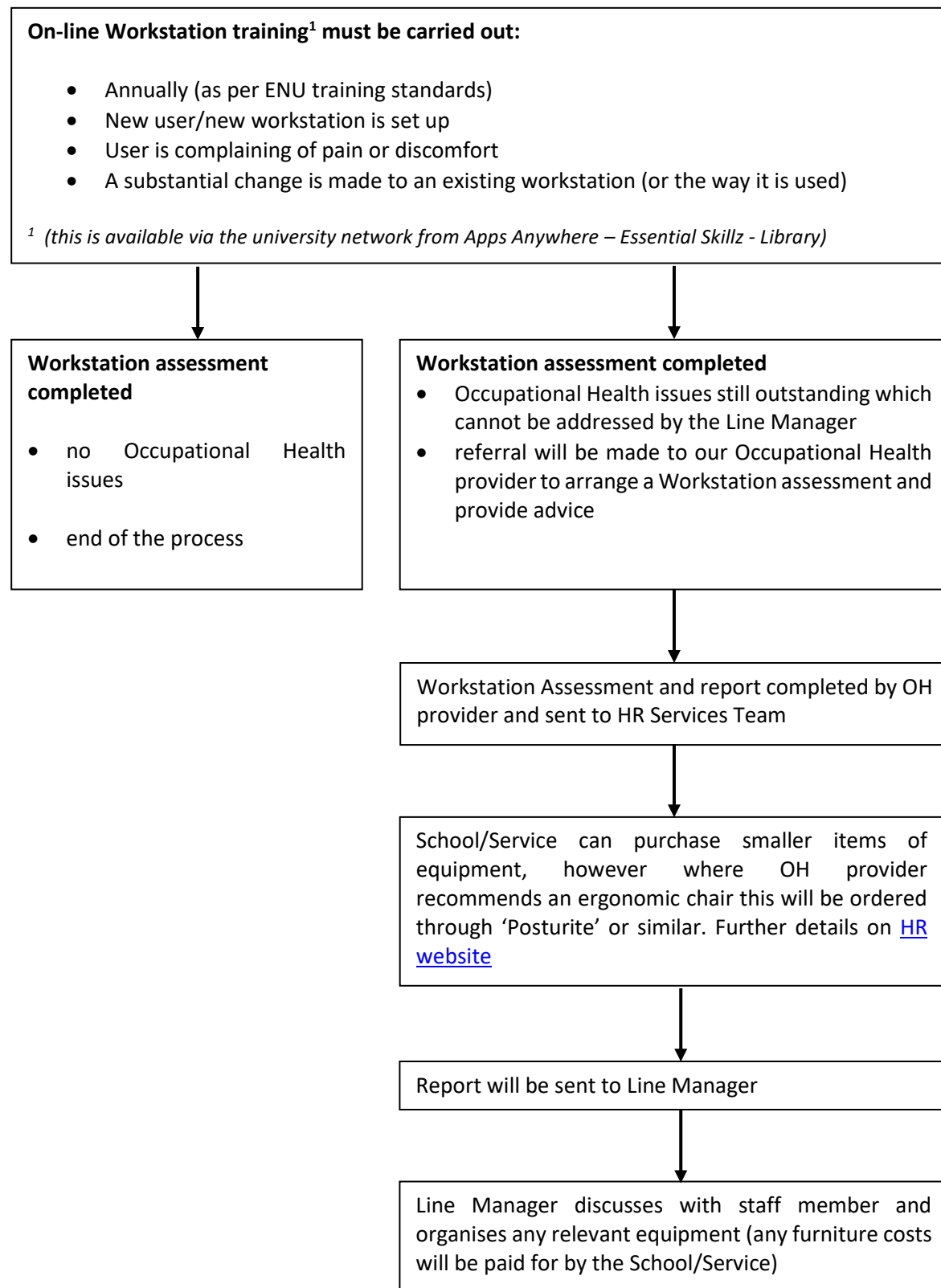
Ref. L26. ISBN 9780717625826.

Gives detailed legal guidance and includes the text of the regulations.

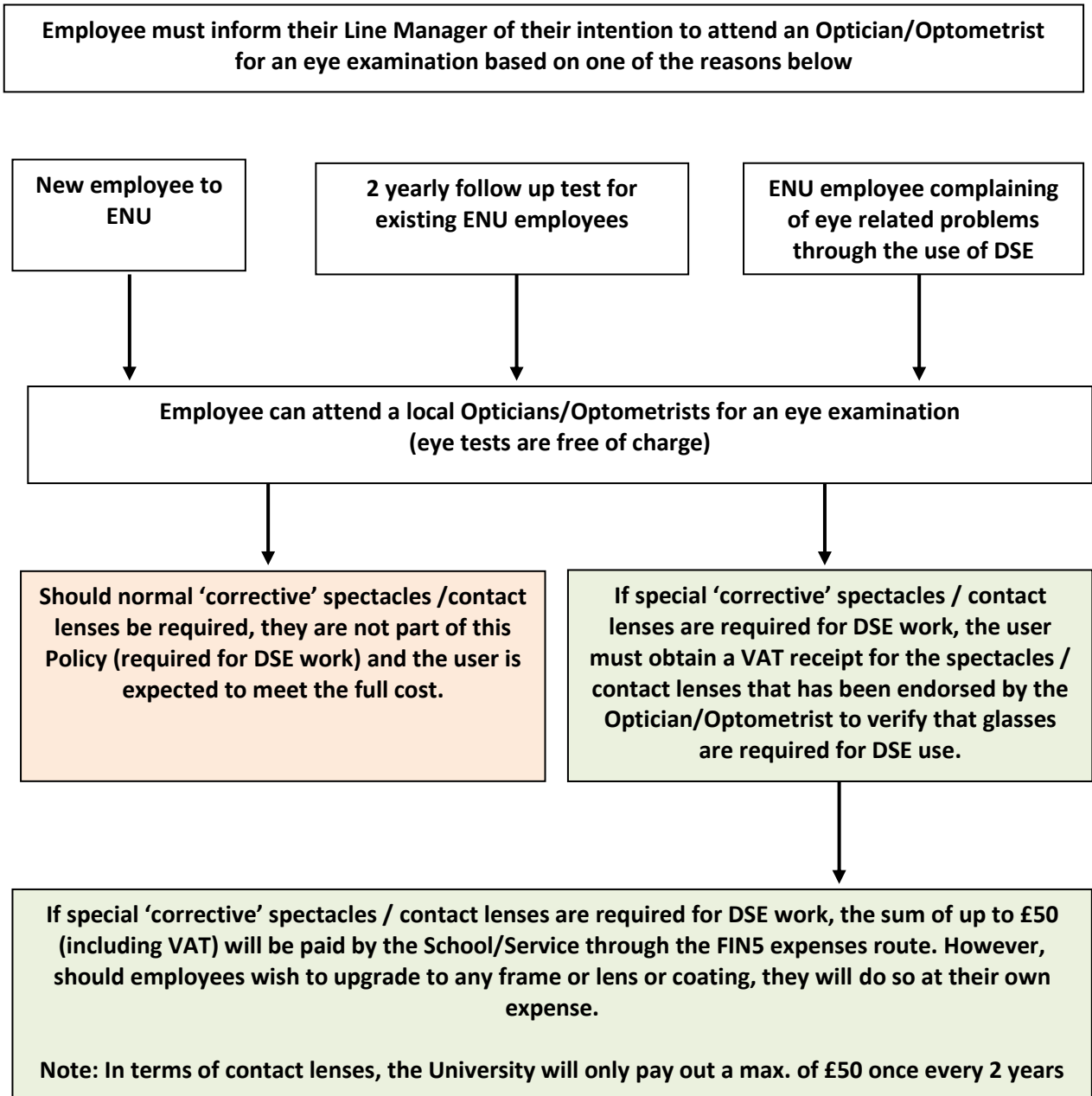
Laptop ergonomics (YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLwIP8cBaWA>

Appendix A: Workstation Assessment Flowchart



Appendix B: Eye Test Flowchart



Appendix C: Pregnancy guidance



The body shape changes as time progresses, the centre of gravity shifts putting extra strain on back, extra pressure on thighs, legs and tummy under bump. Backache is common as the tummy enlarges forcing the mother-to-be to sit further back from the desk causing problems with reaching and stretching.



Leaning forward puts additional strain on back and pressure on thighs and tummy under the bump.



You should re-adjust the chair as your size increases. The seat slide should be in the forward position to support the back of the legs and tilted forwards about 5 degrees to relieve pressure on thighs. The back should be tilted slightly back to relieve pressure under bump. This could place more pressure on the buttocks which should be relieved by regular breaks for exercise.

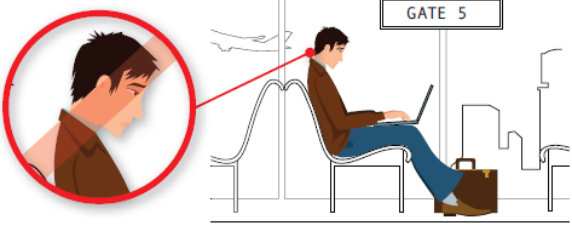
Make sure you maintain back support.

Appendix D: Mobile Working



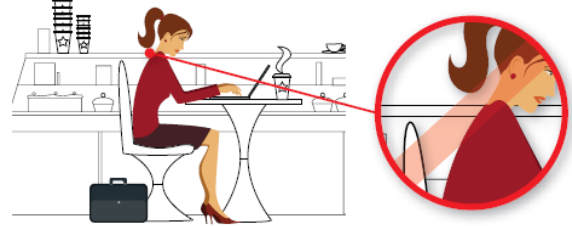
On the train
Under pressure

- ✗ Seat too low relative to the table; ensure forearms are not leaning on the edge of the table for long periods which can lead to discomfort.
- ✓ Position laptop so you can reach it comfortably, without leaning forwards.
- ✓ Take regular breaks every 30-40 minutes.



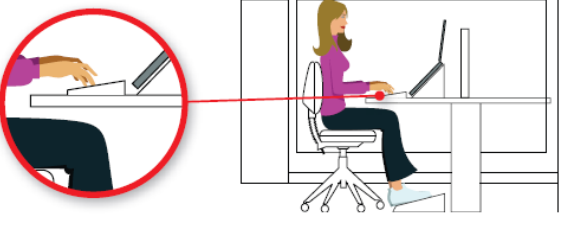
At the airport
Pain in the neck?

- ✗ Neck has to be inclined to look at the screen – could lead to discomfort.
- ✓ Take regular breaks from this, as the screen is likely to be too low for comfortable viewing.
- ✓ Place something (e.g. files, magazines etc) between your laptop and knees to protect from the heat of the laptop and bring it to a suitable height for keying; wrists should be straight when typing.



In a coffee shop
Watch your back

- ✗ Screen too low: uncomfortable neck position.
- ✓ Be careful about resting arms on the edge of the table, as high pressure on the forearms can cause discomfort.
- ✓ Consider using a cushion, rolled up towel or item of clothing to support the small of your back.
- ✗ Don't leave your bag unattended: mobile equipment can be a target for theft.







Borrowing a desk in another office
Sitting pretty

- ✓ Good posture, with upper arms by body and forearms horizontal, without resting on the desk, and back supported.
- ✓ Connect a separate keyboard and mouse to the laptop so you can position them independently of the screen.
- ✓ If you use the laptop screen, place it on something (e.g. a stand) so it is a comfortable viewing height and distance.

Appendix E: Stretching exercises

How to help avoid injury whilst using DSE - with 8 daily, useful exercises

By simply following these 8 daily exercises you can help avoid injury whilst using DSE. Remember to take short frequent breaks when using DSE if it is being used for long periods of time.

<p>1. Your back area and neck: Raise your hands behind your head. Move your head in a forward motion, slowly stretching the upper part of the neck, breathing calmly. Keep your back and shoulder areas in a level position to stretch all your muscles at the back of the neck. Maintain this position whilst breathing deeply five times.</p>	
<p>2. Side neck: Place the base of your palm just above your right ear. Tilt your head position to the left, slightly stretching the side of the neck. In this position breathe deeply three times. By doing this the muscles on the side of your neck will stretch. Do the same principle on the right side of the neck.</p>	
<p>3. Upper back and shoulders: Stand vertical to a wall. With your elbow kept straight, place your right hand on the wall, and move your feet close together. Whilst in this position breathe deeply four times. Repeat this exercise with your left hand. This will help stretch the sides of your muscles in the spine.</p>	
<p>4. Backward shoulder stretch: Place your hands behind your back. Reach backwards behind the chair, expanding the chest. Slightly bending your back, lift your hands. This enables you to stretch all those muscles in the chest.</p>	

5. Wrist and forearm stretch: Expand your arms outwards, stretching the forearm muscle by positioning the base of the left hand across the back hand. Maintain this position for five deep breaths. Do again for the right hand.



6. Wrist stretch: Position the base of your hands together in an upwards position with your elbows raised upwards. Your fingers should be positioned level with the breastbone, pressing the base of the hands together. Continue this exercise for 5 slow breaths, enabling your wrist and arm muscles to stretch.



7. Fingers and palms: Position your hands in front of you, stretching all your fingers outwards. Maintain this position through four deep breaths. This will ensure your hand and finger muscles stretch.



8. Chair twist: Place yourself onto a chair, crossing your right thigh over the left and slightly turn the upper body, pushing the right thigh against your left arm. Continue with this exercise for four breaths and do the same exercise on the other side. This will result in the muscles of the lumbar region being stretched.

