Aston University

Policy and Guidance for Working with Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

Policy and Guidance (approved by Health & Safety Committee, April 2011)
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This forms part of the University Health and Safety Policy

Table of Contents

1. Policy 1
2. Objectives of the Policy 1
3. Responsibilities of Executive Deans and Heads of Support Departments 1
4. Responsibilities of Staff 2
5. Safety Office 2
6. Estates and Capital Developments Responsibilities (ECD) 2
7. Information Systems Aston (ISA) 2
8. DSE User Definition 2
9. Minimum Requirements for Workstations 3
10. Training and Information 3
11. Workstation Assessment and Self-Assessment 3
12. Work Routines/Breaks 3
13. Eye Examination and Eyesight Testing 3
14. Laptop Computers 4
15. Specialist Considerations and Referrals 4
16. New and Expectant Mothers 4
17. Postgraduates 4
18. Monitoring and Review 4
19. Further Information 4

Appendix A – Summary of DSE Workstation Minimum Requirements 5
Appendix B – Responsibilities of DSE Assessors 6
Appendix C – DSE Analysis and Assessment Form 7

1. Policy

It is the policy of Aston University to provide a safe and healthy working environment for its staff by complying with legal obligations and implementing best practice. This includes the measures to protect health and safety when they are working with Display Screen Equipment (DSE) as laid out by the requirements under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002).

The main health hazards from intensive work with DSE are Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULD), and Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), eyestrain and headaches, fatigue and stress. It is generally accepted that these can be avoided by:

- Applying ergonomic principles to the design, selection and installation of DSE
- Job design, planning and implementation
- Training
- The design of the workplace

The purpose of this document (and those linked to it) is to provide the arrangements and procedures to implement the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002), with a commitment to reducing DSE work related harm and injuries to Aston University Staff.

2. Objectives of the Policy

Aston University will fulfil its obligations by:

- The provision of suitable work equipment
- The assessment of workstations, using the DSE self-assessment approach supported by trained DSE assessors
- Training on how to use a workstation safely and the recognition of hazards associated with DSE
- Arrangements to ensure that staff take regular breaks from DSE activities
- The provision of eye and eye sight testing for those identified as users, and the provision of corrective appliances where these are required specifically for DSE work

3. Responsibilities of Executive Deans and Heads of Support Departments

Executive Deans and Heads of Support Departments are responsible for ensuring a DSE assessment is completed for each member of staff. They must also ensure that there are individuals identified with responsibility for reviewing the assessment (DSE Assessors).

In addition:

- That workstations meet the minimum standard required to comply with the DSE Regulations
- That user's daily work on DSE is periodically interrupted by breaks or changes of activity
- All DSE users are identified and risk assessments carried out and the recommended actions are implemented and recorded
- Users are aware of this policy and are aware of the risks associated with DSE, through adequate and suitable health and safety training
- That funding is available to provide any peripheral equipment where a risk assessment has identified such control measures as being wholly necessary for the reduction of risk
- Ensure that all DSE users receive an eyesight test on request (and where corrective appliances are required for the sole use of DSE) the cost of a basic pair of single prescription corrective appliances are paid for

- That persons are identified to undertake DSE assessor training to undertake workstation assessments (see Appendix B, Page 6)

4. Responsibilities of Staff

All staff have the responsibility to:

- Attend training on the safe use of DSE and complete a checklist of their workstation
- Adjust their DSE equipment/environment in accordance with the risk assessment or recommendations made by the risk assessor
- Organise their work to include changes in tasks to provide breaks from DSE use
- Report any concerns including health matters to their manager which relates to the use of DSE
- Obtain prior approval from their supervisor before arranging an eye test

5. Safety Office

The University Safety Office is available for assistance and advice, including assessment for users where unusual circumstances prevail eg where the assessment process is complicated by a medical condition, and referred on as appropriate.

6. Estates and Capital Developments Responsibilities (ECD)

ECD are responsible for ensuring an appropriate workstation environment; for example, heating, lighting and relative humidity, advice on window blinds and non-reflective surfaces.

7. Information Systems Aston (ISA)

ISA is available to assist in the set up and adjustment of DSE equipment with particular focus on the software so that it is suitable for the user, and generally user friendly.

8. DSE User Definition

HSE Guidance[1] states: "*It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a user or operator if they:*

(a) normally use DSE for ***continuous or near continuous spells of an hour or more time; or more*** *at a time; and*
(b) use DSE in this way ***more or less daily****; and*
(c) have a ***transfer information quickly*** *to or from the DSE;*

and also *need to apply high levels of* ***attention and concentration****; or are* ***highly dependent*** *on DSE or have* ***little choice*** *about using it; or need* ***special training or skills*** *to use DSE.*"

Further examples of users are available in the HSE Guidance.

[1] HSE-Work with display screen equipment, Health and safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 as amended by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 s.15, 2003

9. Minimum Requirements for Workstations

User workstations must comply with the minimum requirements set out in the DSE Regulations and associated guidance. (See Appendix A, page 5)

Alternative specialist equipment may be provided upon the recommendation of a medical practitioner.

Portable computers including laptops and netbooks should comply with minimum standards if they are used for a prolonged period.

10. Training and Information

All users should have training to raise awareness of the possible risks of working with DSE, how to work safely and the arrangements the University has in place to comply with the DSE Regulations. Training can be booked through the Centre for Staff and Graduate Development.

11. Workstation Assessment and Self-Assessment

The workstation assessment shall be carried out by all staff who use DSE equipment, using the checklist provided. (See Appendix C, page 7 and the HSE Guidance) The results of the assessment will then be reviewed by the appropriate DSE Assessor who will provide assistance to resolve any issues outstanding.

The assessment should be reviewed if the workstation is relocated; if the nature of the work changes or if the health of the user changes.

12. Work Routines/Breaks

Breaking up long spells of DSE work helps to prevent fatigue, eyestrain, upper limb problems and headache. Most staff within the University will have control over their own working arrangements and will be able to organise their work to take this into account.

Where natural breaks in the work activity do not occur, deliberate breaks or pauses must be introduced. For every hour of continuous DSE work it is recommended to break for 5-10 minutes to alternate with tasks away from DSE.

For some users, sessions are frequently interrupted for brief periods by callers, the telephone etc, these will help to relieve fatigue and in some cases may be sufficient to act as a change of activity. The purpose of the change in activity is to prevent the onset of fatigue and musculoskeletal problems.

13. Eye Examination and Eyesight Testing

Under DSE legislation, Aston University is required to provide members of staff identified as users of DSE with an eye examination. Eyesight tests should be carried out by the University's Optometry Clinic. Approval for eye examinations must be obtained in advance from either the Executive Dean/Head of Support Department or other appropriately authorised person.

To ensure that all the requirements of the DSE regulations are satisfied, the optometrist should know from the outset, that he/she is conducting an examination under the DSE regulations.

The School/Department will contribute up to £50 towards the cost of corrective appliances if they are used specifically for DSE use where normal corrective appliances cannot be used.

Evidence from the optometrist will be required to support any claim for additional contribution.

14. Laptop Computers

As the DSE regulations state that the keyboard and the screen must be separate, modifications will be required to laptops that are in prolonged use (eg for periods of an hour or more, and on most days). The following options should be considered:

- Place the laptop on a laptop riser/books and use a separate keyboard
- Use the laptop with a separate monitor
- Use the laptop with a docking station

15. Specialist Considerations and Referrals

Where an individual has been identified as requiring additional considerations to the workstation due to mobility or other requirements, then it may be necessary to contact Occupational Health or recommend a specialist organisation such as 'totalbackcare' or 'Access to Work' to make an assessment. On no account should an assessor make a medical assessment of an employee's condition. The discussion and record will be treated in strictest confidence and any further action will only be taken with agreement of the user.

16. New and Expectant Mothers

The layout of the workstation will need to be routinely re-assessed for the duration of the pregnancy for expectant mothers and upon the return to work for new mothers to ensure that working arrangements remain comfortable.

17. Postgraduates

Postgraduates who have an employment contract with the University will be covered under this policy in the same way as other staff. Where the University provides facilities for use by Postgraduate students then these should be of an adequate standard.

18. Monitoring and Review

Executive Deans and Heads of Support Departments should ensure that there are effective DSE assessment arrangements in place with their Schools and Support Departments.

School and departmental DSE arrangements will be monitored as part of the Safety Audit by the Health and Safety Audit Group (HSAG) to provide the University Council with assurances that the University is complying with statutory requirements.

The content of the policy will be reviewed at least biennially and updated in the light of legislative changes.

19. Further Information

Further information can be found via the Safety Office webpage's.

Appendix A – Summary of DSE Workstation Minimum Requirements

- The display screen should be of well defined characters of adequate size, stable image, easily adjustable brightness and contrast. The screen should be easily tilting and swivelling with no reflective glare
- The keyboard should be tilt-able and separate from the screen
- The mouse (or other non-keyboard device) should be suitable for the task
- The work surface should be sufficiently large to allow for a flexible arrangement of work equipment and to enable the user to achieve a comfortable position and be low reflecting
- The work chair should be stable and in good repair. It should have adjustable seat height, adjustable seat back height and tilt
- Footrest should be available on request
- The lighting should be adequate for the work activity being undertaken with appropriate contrast between screen and background.
- Noise levels should not be excessive to cause distraction or interfere with communication
- The working environment must be maintained at a suitable temperature such as not to cause discomfort
- The software systems must be suitable for the task, and adaptable for the user's capability and knowledge

Appendix B – Responsibilities of DSE Assessors

OVERVIEW

As any part of the body can be affected when working at the computer, it is essential that DSE users are made aware of the risks associated with this type of work. Users are more likely to heed advice if they are aware of the potential consequences of incorrect work practices and poor posture.

In order to achieve this, the University has requested that Schools and Support Departments appoint volunteers from amongst their staff to be trained DSE Assessors who will assist the University in achieving compliance with the relevant regulations by carrying out assessments according to procedures with a view to controlling and reducing the risks associated with DSE work.

The main duties of a DSE Assessor:

- Ensure new and existing users are made aware of the potential hazards and risks associated with the use of DSE
- Ensure new and existing users undergo DSE awareness training and complete the DSE Assessment
- To keep a local register of DSE Users including the dates of their assessments and dates of review
- To inform all DSE Users of the Eye and Eyesight section of the DSE policy
- To make recommendations to managers for the purchase of any control measures as a result of carrying out the DSE User Risk Assessment
- Update the DSE user on the outcomes (including how to use equipment) of the DSE assessment
- To repeat or review the assessment if:
    - major changes are made to equipment or furniture
    - workstations are relocated
    - the nature of the work changes
    - the health of the user changes
    - there is any reason to believe the assessment is invalid

DSE Assessor Appointment

The system of appointing should, where possible, rely upon volunteers; where no volunteers are forthcoming, the School or Department may have to consider directly appointing individuals.

Full training will be provided by the Safety Office, via the Centre for Staff and Graduate Development. The training will equip the DSE assessor with the necessary skills to undertake the role satisfactorily.

Appendix C – DSE Analysis and Assessment Form

To be completed by DSE user in consultation with manager and/or DSE Assessor

Name of staff member	
Department/Location	
Job title	
Brief description of job (data entry, word processing , research etc)	

For Guidance on DSE Setup see **Appendix A, page 5**	**YES**	**NO**
Do you depend on the use of DSE as a key part of your job, with little choice about using the equipment?		
Are you required to transfer information onto or from the screen or need to interpret information on it rapidly and accurately?		
Are you required to exhibit high levels of attention and concentration over a sustained period of time?		
Are you able to control the pace of your work?		
Can you take rest breaks before the onset of fatigue? (A rest break includes undertaking alternative work eg filing/photocopying etc)		
How long in an average day do you spend using DSE (hours)?		
If 3 or more answers are YES; you are a DSE 'user' and the assessment (below) must be completed. If 1 or 2 answers are YES; you are probably a DSE 'user' and the assessment below must be referred to in order to elicit more information to help reduce identified risk.		

RISK FACTORS		
Chair	**Yes**	**No**
Is the chair stable and in good repair?		
Does the chair have five castors?		
Is the backrest adjustable?		
Is the seat height adjustable?		
Is there Lumbar support for the small of the back?		
Is the user able to place their feet flat on the floor without too much pressure from the seat on the backs of the legs or thighs?		
Is a footrest required? (An adjustable footrest should be supplied if requested.)		
When seated comfortably, are the user's forearms horizontal and eye line approximately the same height as the top of the DSE screen when keying in data?		
Comments/Actions required		
Work Furniture	**Yes**	**No**
Is the desk surface large enough for all necessary work equipment, papers etc? (Recommended minimum length 120cms, width 60cms; preferred length 160cms, width 80cms.)		
Is the height of the work surface suitable for use with the particular DSE equipment in use?		
Is there sufficient space below the work surface to enable the user to achieve a comfortable position?		
Is the space below the work surface free from obstacles and trailing cables?		
Comments/Action Required		

Display Screen	**Yes**	**No**
Can the position of the screen be adjusted eg angle or tilt?		
Is it at a suitable height? (If a laptop is used, is there a separate docked screen) (Consider a separate or adjustable base to ensure the screen is approximately at the user's eye level.)		
Is the viewing distance between the monitor and the forehead suitable?		
Are there contrast and brightness controls on the monitor?		
Are characters legible and of adequate size and spacing?		
Are the graphics clear?		
Does the screen flicker?		
Is the screen free of reflections or glare?		
Comments/Action Required		
Keyboards	**Yes**	**No**
Does the keyboard have legible and well defined characters?		
Is the keyboard detached from the monitor? (Also applies to separate docked keyboard for laptop)		
Is the slope of the keyboard adjustable?		
Comments /Action required?		
Workplace Environment	**Yes**	**No**
Is the general or natural lighting adequate for the work activity undertaken?		
Does the general or natural lighting cause too much glare, reflection or eye strain? (Consider eliminating the glare at source by removing light filaments and bulbs and adjusting window coverings/blinds)		
Is the temperature comfortable for the work being performed?		
Is the room free from drafts?		
Is the ventilation adequate?		
Have all sources of excessive or unwanted noise been suitably controlled? (Consider moving noisy equipment to another location, or introduce quieter equipment that does not cause a nuisance)		
Comments/Action required?		

Any other comments

Assessor	**Date of assessment:**
Review required? **Yes/No***	**If yes, date of review:**

* Delete as appropriate