

**SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON**

**POLICY FOR THE USE OF  
DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT**

This policy sets out SOAS's responsibilities and procedures for ensuring the safe use of display screen equipment in accordance with current legislation.

Next review due: Feb 2020 (or as dictated by changes in regulation or incident)

## **Introduction**

SOAS recognises its responsibilities towards users of display screen equipment under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulation 1992 (as amended 2002) and aims to fulfil these obligations by application of this policy.

The Health and Safety Commission states that there is no scientific evidence that use of a computer, or other Display Screen Equipment (DSE / Visual Display Unit [VDU]), if used sensibly, will be injurious to health. Nor is there any evidence that computing equipment emits harmful radiation. The use of DSE may, however, exacerbate any pre-existing medical conditions and can lead to muscular and other physical problems (see section below on Health Risks). By following the guidance laid out in this policy problems may be eliminated or reduced resulting in a better working environment for all staff working with display screen equipment.

The main DSE related illnesses and injuries are back and neck problems as well as WRULD (work related upper limb disorder), efficient management in accordance with the DSE regulations can significantly reduce these issues. This will have a positive effect on productivity and negate the need to employ temporary staff and the costs associated with this. While DSE is not one of the more severe risk areas in the work place it can be the cause of painful conditions and discomfort for users, which can ultimately lead to them being absent from work. However good management and the taking of some simple precautions should ensure that on the whole we achieve a comfortable and productive working environment for our staff.

## **Definitions**

### **Display Screen Equipment**

This includes any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, plasma screens, closed-circuit television and non-electronic display systems, e.g., microfiche.

### **DSE User**

The regulations define a user as someone who habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of their normal work. In general, a person should be classified as a user if all or most of the following criteria apply:

- The work often requires the continuous use of DSE for periods over one hour.

- The display screen is in use, more or less, daily as a significant part of normal work.
- The worker has no discretion as to the use or non-use of the DSE
- High levels of attention/concentration are required.
- The worker is highly dependant on DSE to carry out their role.

### **Workstation**

This includes the DSE and any optional accessories to the DSE plus items such as; telephone, desk, chair, work surface, document holder. It includes the immediate work environment around the DSE.

### **Application**

This policy applies to all SOAS employees classified as a display screen equipment user, including those based at home and at another employer's workstation, and all temporary workers.

### **Health Risks**

The health risks associated with DSE work are:

- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) which includes postural problems such as low back pain, neck ache.
- Work related upper limb disorders (WRULD) which includes pains in the arms, elbows, wrists, hands and fingers. These are sometimes known as repetitive strain injuries or RSI.
- Visual problems which includes eyestrain and temporary eye fatigue. (This does not include eye damage, there is no medical evidence that DSE use damages eyes). This in turn may lead to sore and/or dry eyes and headaches.

### **Eye and Eyesight tests**

Where a member of staff is classified as a user then they are entitled to an appropriate eye and eye sight test paid for by SOAS. Where a test indicates that corrective glasses are required specifically for working with DSE a £40 payment towards the cost of these glasses will be made on receipt of a completed form along with all relevant documentation/receipts.

Application for reimbursement of these costs must be made through the Human Resources Department. The form is available on the intranet and can be seen in appendix 1. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/hr/forms/payexpenses/>

### **Work Routine of Users**

Daily work on DSE must be planned so that it is periodically interrupted by breaks or changes of activity through a mixture of screen based and non-screen based activities. Natural breaks such as answering the telephone or picking things up from the printer are sufficient to minimise the above health effects.

Research has shown that short, frequent breaks are more beneficial than one long break, e.g., a 5 to 10 minute break after 50 to 60 minutes of continuous DSE use is likely to be more beneficial than a 15 to 20 minute break after 2 hours of use.

Where the intensity of the DSE work does not allow natural breaks line managers should design the task with their staff to allow a 10 minute break at least once every hour which involves a non-DSE work-based activity.

### **Laptops**

Laptop computers are subject to the DSE Regulations if their use is for prolonged periods of time. Laptops by their design are not very ergonomic making it difficult to achieve comfortable working positions.

Any laptop being used for a significant amount of a person's time at work should be set up using a docking station with a separate keyboard and mouse. Docking stations avoid many of the ergonomic disadvantages of laptops.

Where it is not possible to use a docking station due to location longer and more frequent breaks or changes of activity are necessary to compensate for the poor working environments.

The use of laptops involves a risk from manual handling. This risk can be reduced by:

- Not carrying unnecessary papers and equipment
- Using a lightweight backpack or a wheeled bag to carry the laptop
- Selecting a laptop with as low weight as possible (3kg or less) and keeping accessories few and light weight.

Selection of a carrying case that does not have a computer manufacturer's branding on it can help to reduce the likelihood of theft.

### **Workstation Assessment**

All staff can request a workstation assessment at any time by completing a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment form (appendix 2) available on the intranet ([www.soas.ac.uk/healthandsafety](http://www.soas.ac.uk/healthandsafety)) and returning it via internal

email to the Health and Safety Manager or by email to [healthandsafety@soas.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@soas.ac.uk).

Where a member of staff is experiencing discomfort or pain in using their workstation, the following procedure should be followed:

- Initial referral to the Health and Safety Manager requires completion by the staff member of the DSE self-assessment form. This can be submitted either via e-mail or internal mail.
- The Health and Safety Manager will then arrange to visit the staff member and carry out a workstation assessment and make any necessary recommendations and adjustments to the workstation.
- The Health and Safety manager will write a follow up summary of their consultation with the member staff, this will include the issues they are having, along with any adjustments and recommendations made. A copy of this summary will be sent to the staff member and in addition, a copy will also be retained by the Health and Safety Manager.
- The member of staff is responsible for complying with any recommendations suggested.
- If there has been no improvement/resolution, then the staff member should arrange to see their GP and may also be referred to Human Resources who will contact the School's Occupational Physiotherapy consultants and/or Occupational Health as appropriate for a formal assessment.
- The Health and Safety manager will also recommend that the schools Occupational physiotherapy consultants and/or Occupational health advise, if a member of staff has an underlying issue, and the advice of a medical professional may be more appropriate.
- The Occupational Physiotherapy consultants or Occupational Health will report back to the staff member and Human Resources with confirmation of:
  - a) any diagnosis
  - b) any recommendation for treatment/other action (including a recommendation that ergonomic equipment may be required), an assessment for which should be arranged
  - c) whether the Equality Act (2010) applies.
- Where applicable: funding will generally be from the central budget held for the purchase of any necessary equipment
- Where the Equality Act (2010) applies staff may be entitled to funding through Access to Work (please see Human Resources for further details) Staff will need to assist in any application for funding under the scheme

## **Training and Information**

### **STAFF**

All new staff will undergo a formal training session on DSE awareness delivered by the Health and Safety Manager as part of their induction training, as arranged by staff development.

## **STUDENTS**

All new students will receive information on DSE awareness as part of orientation week.

An information leaflet containing guidelines on how to set up a workstation is available on the intranet ([www.soas.ac.uk/healthandsafety](http://www.soas.ac.uk/healthandsafety)) and can be seen in appendix 3.

Further information can also be found on the Health and Safety Executive's web site ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) in the free leaflets section:

Aching arm (or RSI) in small businesses – HSE leaflet INDG171

Working with VDUs – HSE leaflet INDG36

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

*EYE TEST FORM*

I claim reimbursement for the eye test incurred (set out below) in respect of:

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DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
<b>TOTAL</b>		

Please note that the School will reimburse £40.00 towards the cost of your glasses, plus the fee charged for your eye test. Please ensure that you attach written confirmation from your optician stating that you need the glasses for VDU work.

Name (please print): .....

Address/Department: .....

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.....

Post Code: .....

**Bank Details:**

Bank Name: .....

Bank Address: .....

.....

Post Code: .....

Sort Code: ...../...../..... Account No: ..... .....

Roll No (if applicable) .....

**Signed:** .....

**Date:**.....

## SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

### ASSESS YOUR OWN WORKSTATION

(Please print)

Name ..... Department: .....

Room: ..... Date ..... Telephone Ext:.....

**Seating and Posture** *When you use the keyboard you should adjust your chair so that you are at the right height for keying - wrists reasonably straight, forearms approximately horizontal, elbows by your side, upper arms hanging comfortably and shoulders relaxed. Your feet should be comfortably on the floor or a footrest.*

Is your chair stable and comfortable?	Yes ___ No ___
Can you set the seat height and back tilt to a comfortable position?	Yes ___ No ___
Does your chair provide adequate lumbar support?	Yes ___ No ___
When keying are you able to keep your back supported by the back rest?	Yes ___ No ___
When keying are you able to place your arms close to your sides?	Yes ___ No ___
When keying are you able to relax your shoulders?	Yes ___ No ___
When sitting are your thighs parallel or at a slight angle downward to the floor?	Yes ___ No ___
Do you need a footrest?	Yes ___ No ___
Do you need a document holder?	Yes ___ No ___

**Display screen** *The screen should be positioned in front of you and visible without excessive twisting or extension of your head and neck.*

Is the top of the display screen at your eye level?	Yes ___ No ___
Is your screen free from reflections with clear stable images?	Yes ___ No ___
Can you adjust brightness and contrast easily?	Yes ___ No ___
Is your screen approximately at arms length away from you?	Yes ___ No ___
Is it situated to permit a comfortable position for your head and neck?	Yes ___ No ___
Any screen problems? (If yes, describe overleaf)	Yes ___ No ___

**Keyboard** *Arrange your desk so that you can perform the tasks you do most frequently without twisting or stretching. If you use a keyboard a lot, position it directly in front of you and in line with the display screen during use.*

Is the keyboard comfortable to use?	Yes ___ No ___
When keying are you able to have your wrists straight?	Yes ___ No ___
Are key symbols clear and legible?	Yes ___ No ___
Is there sufficient space to use the mouse?	Yes ___ No ___
Are you able to use the mouse without reaching?	Yes ___ No ___
Do you need a wrist rest?	Yes ___ No ___
Any keyboard or mouse problems (If yes, describe overleaf)	Yes ___ No ___



**Work surface** *The work surface should provide adequate space for you to organise your equipment, documents etc. to enable you to carry out your tasks flexibly.*

Do you have sufficient clear desk space? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Is there space and legroom for you to sit comfortably? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

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**Work organisation, software and systems** *Discomfort and stress may be affected by the nature of your work. Organise your work to incorporate breaks and changes of activity for comfort and performance.*

Are you able to use the phone easily without stretching and twisting your body? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Do you have the opportunity to take breaks? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Do you find the software/systems easy to use? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Any other software or system problems? (If yes, describe overleaf) Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

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**General environment**

Do you find the lighting suitable? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Do you find the temperature and air quality comfortable? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Are you distracted by excessive noise? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Are there problems with trailing cables? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Any health and safety problems? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

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**Symptoms of fatigue and discomfort** *Put a tick in the most appropriate column to describe any symptoms of fatigue, aches, pains and pins and needles you experience during or after screen work.*

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Frequently</i>
Headache	—	—	—
Irritated eyes or difficulty reading (screen or papers)	—	—	—
Discomfort or pain in arms	—	—	—
Discomfort or pain in wrists or hands	—	—	—
Discomfort or pain in the back	—	—	—
Discomfort or pain in the neck or shoulders	—	—	—
Discomfort or pain in the legs/feet	—	—	—

Signed.....

**Please use the space below for any additional comments. Thank you for your help and co-operation.**

Please return the completed form by internal mail to Health and Safety or by email to [healthandsafety@soas.ac.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@soas.ac.uk)

**SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES**

**DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT (DSE)**

**LEAFLET**

The Health and Safety Commission states that there is no scientific evidence that use of a computer, or other Display Screen Equipment (DSE / Visual Display Unit [VDU]), if used sensibly, will be injurious to health. Nor is there any evidence that computing equipment emits harmful radiation. The use of VDUs may, however, exacerbate any pre-existing medical conditions.

This leaflet is designed to remind you of the correct way to set-up your chair, workstation and display screen equipment.

- Adjust your chair seat height and back rest position to achieve effective support of the curvature of your lower back, and recommended arm and pelvis/thighs position as shown on the attached diagram.
- Ensure that the chair is at a height that makes your wrists reasonably straight when keying. Your shoulders should be relaxed, your upper arms hanging comfortably and forearms about horizontal.
- Check if your feet can be placed flat on the floor. Some people will need a footrest to support their feet and to stop the underside of their thighs being compressed by the front of the chair. Avoid slouching forward or leaning too far back.
- Clear any items, such as files, waste bin etc., from the space underneath your desk. Keep this clear to allow you to move your legs freely.
- Don't sit in the same position for long periods. Our bodies are built to move so make sure you vary your posture and take opportunities to move around. Take regular breaks from keyboard and screen work (10 minutes every hour is ideal).
- Place the screen at a comfortable reading distance (approximately arms' length away is comfortable for most people).
- Angle your screen so that you can view it without excessive twisting of your head and neck, and to reduce glare from windows and lights.
- Check the height of the screen so that you can view it without hunching your shoulders, leaning forward, or looking up. (The top of the actual screen should be approximately at eye level when your chair is set to the correct height for you). If wearing bifocal glasses, adjust the monitor height so that

your head does not tilt backwards. (Telephone directories can make ideal footrests & monitor stands!)

- Place your work materials within easy reach and, if appropriate, use a document holder (at the same level and viewing distance as the monitor) to avoid repeated head movements.
- Adjust the screen brightness and contrast to suit the lighting.
- The monitor screen should be free from flicker and the characters easy to read.
- Keep your screen clean.
- Use the blinds, if fitted, to cut down sun and sky glare and reflections from the windows.
- Position your keyboard directly in front of you during use. Use the space in front of the keyboard to rest your arms and wrists when not keying. Try not to rest your wrists on the desk when you are keying.
- When using a mouse keep your shoulders and upper arms in a relaxed position and close to your body. Make sure you have plenty of space to use your mouse on your work surface beside your keyboard.
- If you are left-hand, place the mouse on the left if this is more comfortable for you (you can switch the button function using your software).
- The telephone handset should be positioned to avoid the need to stretch and twist to use it. It is usually best placed on the non-dominant side. Avoid tilting your head to one side to brace the phone between your ear and shoulder.
- Please use this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eo5enlj9XfU&index=2&list=PLu5N3H0MdrAvloJc-QPRfr-qHwOSZgiVL> for a video containing for some useful exercises that can help alleviate tension and strain while at your desk.

It should be noted that the same requirements for workstation design apply to staff working at home or elsewhere away from SOAS and that much domestic furniture and equipment is not necessarily appropriate for work use.

