

University Health & Safety Arrangements: Chapter 34



Display Screen Equipment

Key word(s) :	Display Screen Equipment, DSE, DSE assessment, Occupational Health screening for DSE users, visual display unit (VDU)
Target audience :	All staff and students using Display Screen Equipment, Heads of Schools, line managers, School Safety Advisors, DSE assessors

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Note. “Senior Managers” are responsible for health and safety within their organisational unit, specified areas or as a consequence of their activities, and for any additional activities as agreed and delegated to them (e.g. where they accept responsibility for day-to-day safety arrangements for staff who have other line managers, for reasons of geographical or other convenience). They may be Deans, Heads of School, Directors of Institutes, Directors and Heads of Service in non-academic areas, the University Librarian, the Directors of the Manchester Museum and The Whitworth, and their equivalents.

Introduction

1. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992¹ place a duty on the University to analyse workstations, and to assess the health and safety risks to those users. The regulations date from before the use of mobile devices, and relate mainly to a “traditional” workstation at a desk, with screen, keyboard and desktop computer.
2. However, the basic principles and practices laid out in the Regulations are applicable to the use of mobile technology and a wide range of working environments and work patterns. Use of mobile devices and work practices should be included in DSE assessments.
3. The Health and Safety Executive have confirmed that the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations apply to workers who:
 - work at home on a permanent or long-term basis
 - or routinely split their time between their workplace and home (sometimes called hybrid working)
4. A Display Screen Equipment (DSE) user is defined as an employee who “habitually uses display screen equipment as a significant part of his or her normal work”. DSE use has become so commonplace that the presumption should be that an employee is a DSE User unless their work involves very little (less than 1 hour per day) or no use of DSE. This will therefore include large numbers of administrative, academic, technical and support staff.
5. The Regulations cover workstation analysis, requirements for workstations, daily work routine, eyesight, training and provision of information.
6. The University’s operates a system of self-assessment to ensure compliance with the requirement to assess individual workstations, administered locally by appointed Display Screen Assessors (“DSAs”).

Responsibilities

7. **Senior Managers** should appoint an appropriate number of DSAs for their area, and ensure that the appointees undertake appropriate training. Detailed arrangements will vary; some schools/directorates may choose to appoint several assessors; others may wish to appoint someone who has the resources to co-ordinate assessments for the whole school/area. In some cases, the School Safety Advisor (SSA) may be able to carry out the role; in others, an

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1992/2792/contents/made>

administrative officer may be more appropriate. General advice can be obtained from your University Safety Co-ordinator (USC).

8. **Senior Managers** should also ensure that:

- each DSE User within their area of responsibility is identified, given information on the health risks associated with such work, and is provided initially with the means of carrying out a self-assessment (i.e. signed up for the on-line assessment or issued with a hard copy), and given guidance on how to complete it;
- the self-assessment forms are collated and checked by the line manager with assistance from a DSA, and that steps are taken to address any residual risks found as a result of the assessment;
- completed assessment records are kept, with reference to the University's [records retention schedule](#)²;
- DSE Users are informed about the arrangements for DSE related eye and eyesight tests prior to employment and at regular intervals thereafter, and know what to do if they experience a problem with their eyesight;
- where the results of the eyesight test indicate a requirement for a specialist eye examination and/or a requirement for corrective lenses specifically for DSE work, reasonable costs are met towards the costs of an eye examination and/or corrective lenses;
- DSE users are informed about the arrangements to report any health issues relating DSE use.

9. Senior managers could receive assurance about how these responsibilities are being discharged on their behalf, via reporting at the local health & safety committee.

10. Where a member of staff raises a matter related to health and safety in the use of DSE, **the line manager** should:

- ensure that all necessary steps to investigate the circumstances, including involving the local DSE assessor and referring the individual to Occupational Health if further action is required
- ensure corrective measures are taken where appropriate or where advised; and

² For DSE assessments, this is normally until superseded + 5 years.

- advise the member of staff of the actions taken to resolve the matter and ensure that the user is asked to review the assessment, to record the action taken.

11. **Display Screen Equipment Assessors (DSAs)** role may vary according to local circumstances but should include:

- undertaking any necessary training required to fulfil the role;
- identifying any DSE Users, and provide each person with guidance and information about setting up their workstations
- providing assistance to ensure that self-assessment forms are collated and seen by the line manager;
- examine DSE assessment results, clear up any doubtful points, provide feedback to users and make sure problems are put right, for example by changes to the DSE or work-station;
- ensuring that completed assessment records are kept, with reference to the University's [records retention schedule](#)³;
- where issues are identified in self assessments, develop an action plan which and send to line managers and DSE Users;
- providing advice and guidance to individuals identifying issues in their self-assessments, using the University's guidance checklist at the work station site (Note: site visits will not be made by DSE assessors to individual's homes where issues arise working from home);
- assisting Display Screen Equipment users in making their own self-assessments.

12. **Members of staff** should:

- complete their DSE assessment(s) when requested, for both their office and home workstations
- follow appropriate guidance in setting up their workstation(s)
- take regular short breaks from working with their display screen equipment
- where a problem arises in the use of DSE, inform their supervisor / line manager
- in the case of an adverse health condition arising from the use of DSE, advise the University's Occupational Health Service and their General Practitioner.

³ For DSE assessments, this is normally until superseded + 5 years.

Workstation analysis

13. With assistance from line managers (and depending on the exact local arrangements), the DSAs should identify any DSE Users, and provide each person with guidance and information about setting up their workstations, either with the University's guidance or [guidance](#) available from the HSE⁴.
14. Most DSAs will wish to use the University's on-line self-assessment method as the starting point for staff carrying out their assessments. On-line self-assessments are set and managed up locally by the DSA using the [template](#) provided by Safety Services. The self-assessment is designed to be used without special training, as guidance is provided within the questionnaire.

Requirements for workstations

15. Managers procuring components of any workstation should always take into account the fundamental requirement to provide equipment that can be adjusted to suit the individual DSE User, rather than making the DSE User adapt uncomfortably to the limits of the equipment. A good example is seating; most office chairs sold now are capable of being adjusted in several ways including seat height, backrest height and tilt.

Health issues relating to DSE work (including eyes and eyesight)

16. There is no evidence that DSE use can cause disease or permanent damage to the eyes. Only a small proportion of people who use DSE experience health effects, and these usually do not last, but in a few cases they may become persistent. Health problems commonly associated with DSE use may include musculoskeletal problems such as back pain or upper limb aches, or visual problems such as blurred vision, sore eyes or headaches. These are usually due to muscle tiredness.
17. The Regulations include the requirement for the employer to provide:
 - appropriate eye and eyesight tests to DSE Users on request; and
 - special corrective appliances (glasses) where the test(s) indicate they are necessary.
18. If required, DSE users should obtain a sight test (as defined by the Opticians Act) from a registered ophthalmic optician or optometrist, or a registered medical

practitioner with suitable qualifications. The DSE user may choose an optician/optometrist of their choice. The purpose of the eye test by an optometrist is to decide whether the user has any defect of sight which requires correction when working with a display screen.

19. The University will be responsible for the cost of the test for DSE users and for any glasses required specifically for DSE use, if the test shows an employee needs special glasses prescribed for the distance the screen is viewed at. If an ordinary prescription is suitable, employers do not have to pay for glasses.
20. DSE Users should be aware that the cost contribution is intended to cover the sight correction required for DSE use (only); it does not cover the cost of other sight corrections. The University's contribution to the cost is restricted to payment of the cost of a basic appliance i.e. glasses of a type and quality adequate for the user's work. More information about this can be found on Occupational Health's [website](#).
21. In order to claim back the cost of eyesight tests, DSE users should obtain a receipt from their optician/optometrist and claim this back through the expenses system.
22. In order to claim back the cost of any necessary DSE glasses, DSE users should obtain written advice from their opticians/optometrist, clearly stating that the glasses are required for DSE work and claim this back through the expenses system.
23. DSE users experiencing significant musculoskeletal or visual problems impacting on their ability to work with DSE should be referred to Occupational Health to ensure that necessary medical advice is given in relation to the presenting health issue.

Musculoskeletal disorders

24. Where a member of staff raises a matter related to their health in the use of DSE, either via the on-line assessment or at any other time, their line manager should:
 - investigate the circumstances and review the assessment, involving the DSA as appropriate;
 - take corrective measures including referral to Occupational Health or, in possession of supporting medical evidence, the University's Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)
 - advise the member of staff of the actions taken to resolve the matter.

Provision of information to DSE users

25. Managers of new DSE Users and those setting up new workstations or equipment should ensure that they provide them with information and instruction on how to set up workstations in a manner that will not adversely affect their health.
26. Further guidance is contained in the Safety Services [DSE toolkit](#) and [Occupational Health webpages](#). Information leaflets are also available as free downloads from [the HSE's webpages](#).
27. All new starters will complete an online office safety module, helping them understand how to adjust and set up their workstation and maintaining good posture and the risks involve in not doing so.

Training for display screen assessors

28. DSAs should complete the online DSAs course in the University's training catalogue: [HSST191 Display Screen Equipment Assessor course](#).
29. The requirement for DSA refresher training should be decided on a case by case basis; the decision may be informed by factors such as the DSA's experience and case load profile (numbers, frequency, and complexity), the extent/pace of change in current thinking and best practice with DSE assessment issues.
30. Approaches to refresher training should be individually tailored and may take the form of: competency discussions at P&DR or with Safety Services personnel; repeating the online course; reviewing current guidance in the Safety Services [DSE toolkit](#); reflecting on personal practice or attending problem solving workshops, or any combination of these approaches.

Monitoring and review

31. DSE assessments should be reviewed if significant changes occur, if the DSE User reports any adverse symptoms, or if the original assessment is no longer valid. Significant changes could include:
 - a new piece of furniture (desk, table);
 - an office rearrangement or relocation;
 - provision of a new or replacement computer or major new software;
 - a change in lighting;
 - an injury or health condition experienced by the DSE User; and/or

- a change in work pattern leading to more intense and prolonged DSE use.

32. It is also good practice to review the assessments periodically (e.g. every two years) to pick up less significant or unreported changes.

Assessment of mobile devices, shared workstations, work patterns and environments

33. Although the current Regulations cover mobile and touch screen devices used away from formal workstations. A formal DSE assessment is only required where these devices are used for long periods, however the principles of using good posture and making adjustments also apply in these scenarios.

34. By applying the basic DSE assessment principles, raising awareness, making dynamic assessments, and referring to other specific Safety Services guidance (e.g. [Homeworking](#), [Generic and Dynamic Risk Assessments](#),) the risks involved should be addressed.

35. Where provision is made for DSE users to share workstations (sometimes known as "hot-desking") it is sufficient for each workstation to be assessed initially by the DSE assessor, to ensure that the equipment available complies with the requirements of the regulations in terms of adjustability and will accommodate the needs of all potential DSE users.

36. It is not necessary for individuals to carry out a DSE assessment of each shared workstation they use, or each time they use it. They only need carry out one assessment of a sample workstation, on one occasion, in line with HSE advice: "workers should carry out a basic risk assessment if they change desks regularly".

37. Once provided with training staff should have the knowledge to make any necessary adjustments to the shared workstation, in line with the principles of good practice. This message could be reinforced by the use of posters displaying good practice and by periodic observations to be made by DSE assessors or line managers, to ensure good practice is being followed.

38. Where specific equipment is required for staff with disabilities, this should be made available and made exclusive for their use where necessary in shared workstation settings.

Further guidance and advice

39. Further advice and guidance is included in safety services [DSE toolkit](#). This includes a flowchart showing the process for DSE assessors, line managers and staff in responding to DSE assessments and some frequently asked questions relating to DSE.

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