

Use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Health and Safety Policy

(Ref: QMHSD_HS_PCY012)

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This Health and Safety Policy establishes the framework for using Display Screen Equipment (DSE) at Queen Mary University of London (Queen Mary). The objective of the Policy is to minimise harm, loss or damage, enable legal compliance, and promote best practice in the use of DSE across the University. The Policy outlines key responsibilities so that appropriate arrangements are taken to ensure the safe use of DSE.

1.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if legislation / Queen Mary circumstances change.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 All employers have a general duty to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees and to anyone else who may be affected by their activity, so that appropriate preventative measures can be identified and implemented. As part of this general assessment, work with DSE must be assessed against the requirements of the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (amended 2002).

3.0 Scope of Policy

3.1 This Policy applies to all Queen Mary staff on payroll who use DSE. The term 'Queen Mary staff' refers to anyone with a Queen Mary payroll number and a Queen Mary [employment contract](#). All individuals falling into this category must complete the online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module and are entitled to a [free eyesight test](#) and DSE spectacles (where applicable).

3.2 Queen Mary Post Graduate Research (PGR) Students who have an employment contract with the University will be covered by this Policy, in the same way other Queen Mary members of staff are. They must complete the online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module and are entitled to a free eyesight test and DSE spectacles (where applicable).

3.3 Queen Mary recognises it also has a 'Duty of Care' for PGR Students who do not have an employment contract with the University and will provide them with the appropriate information and support in relation to their DSE workstation. Therefore, all PGR Students should complete the [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module and where the University provides a computer or workstation for them (whether employed by the University or not), it should be suitable for the task. The University is, however, not obliged to provide PGR students who are not on Queen Mary payroll with a free eyesight test or DSE spectacles.

3.4. Queen Mary Undergraduate (UG) and Post Graduate Taught (PGT) Students are not covered by this policy. However, if an UG or PGT Student reports issues with a DSE workstation, every effort should be made by Queen Mary (e.g. via their course tutor, facility maintainer, student representative or HSD/OHS Teams) to ensure compliance.

4.0 Purpose

4.1 It is the policy of Queen Mary to fully comply with the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended 2002). This policy applies to all Queen Mary staff and their workstations used in the undertaking of University business.

5.0 Definitions

5.1. Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is defined in the Regulations as 'any alphanumeric or graphic display screen, regardless of the display process'. A display screen usually forms part of a computer showing text, graphics or numbers (i.e., desktop, laptop, iPad/tablet or smartphone). The definition also applies to display systems such as microfiche and CCTV.

5.2 A DSE User means any employee who habitually uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work. The Regulations apply to users whether they are employed to work at their employer's workstation, a personal workstation or 'hot-desking'. DSE users whose work involves remote working should also ensure they refer to the [Queen Mary Hybrid Working Policy and Procedure](#). The majority of University employees (including PGR students on Queen Mary payroll, and temporary staff who have an employment contract with the University), will be classed as 'users'. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as a 'user', if they meet the two criteria below:

- Normally use DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; or
- Use DSE in this way more or less daily.

5.3 DSE Operator means any self-employed person or PGR student who does not have an employment contract with the University, who habitually uses DSE as a significant part of their normal work in connection with Queen Mary. This policy applies to 'operators' whether they are employed to work using the University workstations, a personal workstation or 'hot-desking'. It will generally be appropriate to classify the person concerned as an operator if they meet the two criteria below:

- Normally use DSE for continuous or near-continuous spells of an hour or more at a time; or
- Use DSE in this way more or less daily.

5.4 An Agency Worker is a worker supplied by an employment agency that temporarily becomes an employee of Queen Mary whilst under the agency contract with the University.

5.4.1 [Agency workers](#) who have signed an agency employment contract with Queen Mary for less than 12 weeks are not eligible for free eyesight test or DSE spectacles. Those eligible for a free eyesight test or DSE spectacles will be requested to provide an employment letter or suitable document stating their start date with Queen Mary.

5.5 Workstation includes:

- The display screen;
- Chair, work surface / desk, keyboard or other input device;
- Telephone, document holder, printer etc;
- Any optional accessories to the display screen equipment;
- The immediate work environment around the display screen equipment;
- Environmental considerations such as space, heat, lighting, noise and humidity.

6.0 Legislation

6.1 DSE equipment and its operation should conform in general to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and specifically, with the requirements set out in the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 (as amended in 2002).

7.0 Responsibilities

7.1 Responsibility of Heads of Schools, Institutes and Directorates:

7.1.1 Each Head of School, Institute and Directorate should ensure that:

- There is a management procedure in place to assess workstations and reduce risks for staff identified as DSE 'Users'.
- Sufficient resources are available to ensure appropriate equipment is provided so the risk of injury or ill-health from DSE use is reduced, so far as is reasonably practicable.

7.2 Responsibility of Managers / Supervisors:

*7.2.1 IMPORTANT NOTE: If an individual instructs or issues tasks to another individual or group of individuals, then whether a 'designated' line manager or **not**, they become responsible for the health and safety of those they have instructed.*

7.2.2 Managers / Supervisors should ensure that **DSE 'Users'**:

- Complete the Queen Mary online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module to ensure they receive adequate information and training for working with DSE. Particular importance should be given to ensuring users take regular breaks
- Assess their workstations by means of the online self-assessment and that any associated risks identified are reduced as far as possible
- Are provided with workstations that meet specified minimum requirements (for further guidance, please see section 8.7)
- Are informed of the '[Employee Eye Care Scheme](#) for Queen Mary staff'
- Report any accidents / incidents, injury and ill-health relating to the use of DSE equipment and that an appropriate investigation is undertaken as per section 8 below. Any remedial actions identified must be implemented and records maintained
- Seek advice from the [HSD](#) (for non-medical issues) or [Occupational Health Service](#) (for medical issues) if significant issues associated with DSE are identified.

7.2.3 Managers should ensure that for [Agency Workers](#):

- Workstations are assessed by means of self-assessment and any associated risks are reduced as far as possible;
- Workstations meet specified minimum requirements (for further guidance, please see section 8.7);
- Adequate information and training with regard to working with DSE is provided, including the importance of taking regular breaks;
- Information is provided in relation to eyesight testing and DSE spectacles. Where an employment contract with Queen Mary is greater than 12 weeks, the '[Employee Eye Care Scheme](#) for Queen Mary Staff' will apply.
- Accidents / incidents, injury and ill-health involving DSE equipment are reported and investigated as per section 8 below; and any remedial action is implemented and records maintained.
- Advice is sought from the [HSD](#) (for non-medical issues) or [Occupational Health Service](#) (for medical issues) if significant issues associated with DSE are identified.

7.3 Responsibility of all DSE 'Users'

7.3.1 It is the responsibility of the DSE 'user' to:

- Complete the Queen Mary online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module and follow specific requirements outlined for safe working practices. When completing the Workstation (DSE) Assessment, the DSE user should consider all workplaces they use, including workstations on Queen Mary premises as well as those used when working remotely.
- Review the DSE online training module and self-assessment at least every 3 years or in line with the following:
 - When there are changes to the equipment, location, activities, or legislation
 - If the DSE User experiences or reports problems which could be attributed to the use of DSE equipment
 - Where the DSE User is a new or expectant mother
 - Following any DSE-related accidents / incidents reported by the DSE User.
- Report any problems that they may be experiencing while working on DSE to their line manager / supervisor. If accidents / incidents, injury and ill-health occur, they must complete an [Accident / Incident Form](#) with their line manager / supervisor and comply with any remedial action(s).
- Seek advice from the [HSD](#) (for non-medical issues) or [Occupational Health Service](#) (for medical issues) if significant issues associated with DSE are identified.

7.4 Responsibility of all DSE ‘Operators’

7.4.1 It is the responsibility of the DSE ‘Operators’ to:

- Complete the Queen Mary online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module. Please note that the online assessment module is only accessible to individuals who have a Queen Mary email address, so if a DSE ‘Operator’ does not have this, they should follow the general guidance provided on the [DSE Safety](#) webpage.
- Report any problems that they may be experiencing while working on DSE to their manager / supervisor. If accidents / incidents, injury and ill-health occur, they must complete an [Accident / Incident Form](#) with their manager / supervisor, and comply with any remedial action(s) identified.
- Seek advice from the [HSD](#) (for non-medical issues) or [Occupational Health Service](#) (for medical issues) if significant issues associated with DSE are identified.

7.5 Responsibility of Safety Coordinators and/or local Trained DSE Assessors

7.5.1 It is the responsibility of Safety Coordinators and/or local Trained DSE Assessors to:

- Liaise with the [HSD](#) in matters concerning DSE related concerns.
- Ensure that DSE related accidents / incidents, injury and ill health are reported to the [HSD](#) and also [Occupational Health Service](#) (for medical issues) on the appropriate form.
- Advise and assist in promoting and supporting completion of DSE assessments.
- Advise and assist in ensuring that health and safety monitoring is carried out on DSE use, through regular safety inspections (peer review and/or self-inspections) and safety audits, to:
 - Identify unsafe or unhealthy conditions or work practices in relation to DSE use;
 - Share best practice with Queen Mary colleagues.

7.6 Responsibility of Health & Safety Directorate (HSD) and Occupational Health Service (OHS)

7.6.1 The [HSD](#) is responsible for the provision of advice and guidance on DSE 'User / Operator' non-medically related matters. HSD maintains, reviews and updates the Queen Mary DSE Policy, and the Employee Eye-Care Scheme for Queen Mary Staff.

7.6.2 Where a DSE User declares a pre-existing medical condition, such as a musculoskeletal disorder, or they are diagnosed with a condition by a medical practitioner which will impact on their safe use of DSE, a referral to the [Occupational Health Service](#) should be made by their supervisor or line manager. Please note that the Occupational Health Service does not diagnose or treat health conditions, so you should consult with your general practitioner for advice and treatment for all health issues.

8.0 Policy / Operational Arrangements

8.1 Hazards associated with use of DSE equipment and mitigations

8.1.1 Prolonged or improper use of DSE can lead to musculoskeletal disorders (including upper limb problems and back pain), fatigue, and eye strain. Where issues are identified, it is likely that multiple factors will be involved in the evolution of these disorders. Prolonged poor posture is known to cause musculoskeletal problems. This may be because of poor seating or awkward positioning of the hands and wrists due to inappropriate desk height or poor work technique. Inadequate software and high workload may also contribute to musculoskeletal problems and therefore any risk reduction strategy must include attention to environment, training, job design and work planning.

8.1.2 To reduce the likelihood of injury or ill-health occurring from the use of DSE, it is mandatory for all DSE Users to complete the online [Workstation \(DSE\) Assessment](#) module during their induction period at Queen Mary. This should then be repeated at least every 3 years, or if any of the following instances occur:

- There are changes to the equipment, location, activities, or legislation
- The DSE User experiences or reports problems which could be attributed to the use of DSE equipment
- The DSE User reports a DSE-related accident / incident.

8.1.3 Completion of the workstation assessment will provide users with the information they need in order to achieve the correct workstation set up, as well as enabling them to identify any issues or shortcomings. When completing the assessment, the DSE User should consider all workplaces they use, including workstations on Queen Mary premises as well as those used when working remotely.

8.2 Specialist Chairs and Equipment

8.2.1 Once the DSE User has completed their self-assessment, a copy will be sent to their supervisor / line manager as well as to the HSD.

8.2.2 The HSD will provide advice to the User and their line manager on any non-medical issues that are raised in the self-assessment in order to help them achieve a better workstation setup.

8.2.3 Where the user may benefit from a specialist chair and/or equipment, or if medical concerns or issues are identified, the HSD will make a recommendation to the User's line manager for them to make a referral to the [Occupational Health Service](#).

8.2.4 In some cases, a different chair and/or additional equipment may be requested by a DSE User but an Occupational Health Service referral may not be required. Please note that Occupational Health Service or HSD do **not** provide funding for chairs or DSE equipment, therefore, these costs must be borne by the DSE User / Operator's School / Institute / Directorate.

8.3 Special Consideration under the Equality Act 2010

8.3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, an individual may require reasonable adjustments to be made such as alterations to their workstation or additional software / equipment to be provided. In these situations, they should refer to their line manager in the first instance. If further support or guidance is required, the line manager may contact the [Occupational Health Service](#) or the Queen Mary [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#) Team for more information. Please note that if a referral is made to the Occupational Health Service, the individual will need to provide them with a copy of their current DSE assessment. Therefore, if this their assessment is not up-to-date, a new one may need to be completed prior to the Occupational Health appointment.

8.4 Hot-desking and Remote / Hybrid Working

8.4.1 DSE equipment provided in hot-desking environments should be fully adjustable so that every User can set it up to suit their own requirements. All DSE users should, therefore, take time to adjust the equipment prior to use to ensure they are comfortable and sitting correctly.

8.4.2 Where staff work remotely, they should read this policy in conjunction with the [Queen Mary Hybrid Working Policy](#).

8.5 Obtaining a voucher for Eyesight Testing and DSE Spectacles

8.5.1 Queen Mary staff and PGR Students (PGR) who qualify as DSE Users (see 5.2 of this policy for definition), can apply for a voucher by completing the [eye care request form](#).

8.5.2 The full procedure and other benefits of the 'Employee Eye Care Scheme for Queen Mary Staff' is detailed on the [DSE Safety](#) webpage.

8.5.3 Please note safety spectacles for laboratory users are not covered by this policy. For further information please refer to the [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) Policy.

8.6 New or Expectant Mothers

8.6.1 It is recommended that new and expectant mothers review their DSE Assessment with their Line Manager/local Safety Coordinator. HSD are able assist where support is required in terms of issues relating to workstation and DSE set up.

8.6.2 Although there has been considerable concern regarding ill-health among new and expectant mothers using DSE, the results of scientific studies do not show any link between miscarriages or birth defect and working with display screen equipment.

8.6.3 The layout of workstations may need to be routinely re-assessed over the pregnancy period for new and expectant mothers to make working arrangements more comfortable.

Repetitive twisting movements should be avoided to prevent back and shoulder ache and an increase in breaks away from the workstation may be required.

8.7 Minimum requirements for workstations

8.7.1 Workstations and equipment must comply with the minimum requirements outlined in the DSE Regulations. The minimum requirements for workstations apply to all elements of the workstation including furniture, software and environmental factors. Inspections should be carried out by DSE Users in conjunction with Managers/Supervisors and/or trained DSE Assessors if required. Further advice on inspections can be obtained from the HSD team.

8.8 Daily work routines of users

8.8.1 Whenever possible, jobs using DSE should be designed to consist of a mixture of screen-based and non-screen-based work to prevent fatigue, eyestrain, musculoskeletal conditions such as backache and mental demands. Breaks or changes of activity must be included in working time. It is advisable to take short, frequent breaks rather than occasional longer breaks: for example a 5-10 minute break after 50-60 minutes continuous screen and/or keyboard use will be more beneficial than a 15-20 minute break every 2 hours. If possible, breaks should be taken away from the DSE workstation, to allow the user to stand up, move about and change posture. Most Queen Mary employees have control over their own work and will be able to organise their time to ensure that they take sufficient breaks.

8.9 Managers reporting incidents, injuries or ill health associated with DSE

8.9.1 If a DSE 'User / Operator' informs their Line Manager that they have had an accident / incident, sustained an injury or suffer ill-health that might be associated with DSE work, the Line Manager and DSE User / Operator must complete an [accident / incident report](#). The Line Manager should also advise their local Safety Coordinator. The Line Manager may also need to refer the individual to the [Occupational Health Service](#).

8.10 Reporting of DSE related incidents, diseases, injuries and ill health under RIDDOR

8.2.1 Some DSE-related physical / medical conditions are reportable to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR). The HSD is responsible on behalf of Queen Mary for reporting significant workplace accidents and incidents, injuries and work-related ill health to the HSE. Therefore, Line Managers must ensure all DSE-related accidents / incidents, injuries and ill-health are reported to HSD via the Queen Mary [accident / incident reporting system](#) without delay.

8.2.2 In most cases, DSE-related incidents, diseases, injuries and ill-health will need to be diagnosed or verified by a medical practitioner, such as a GP. Therefore, evidence of this may need to be provided by the DSE User / Operator.



9.0 Further Information

9.1 Further information in relation to working safely with Display Screen Equipment can be obtained as follows:

- [Queen Mary HSD DSE Topic Page](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)

- [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) DSE Topic Page](#)
- [Queen Mary Hybrid Working Policy](#)
- [Queen Mary Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Document Control

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