



HEALTHY VDU WORK POLICY

Adopted by resolution no. 2022-145055 of the Executive Board on 6 December 2022

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to provide an accurate translation. However, the official text is in Dutch; any differences arising from the translation are not binding and have no legal effect.

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Introduction

The Healthy VDU Work policy replaces the policy as formulated in the Arm, Neck and/or Shoulder Complaints Memorandum (KANS)¹ and establishes the statutory principles and basic conditions needed to ensure that employees can work comfortably and healthily at a computer screen and prevent health issues and absenteeism. The policy provides the necessary frameworks for correct configuration of the VDU workstation and organisation of information provision, instruction and supervision activities. The policy also ties in with existing policies such as the VDU glasses reimbursement scheme and Risk Assessment & Evaluation. Finally, the policy provides a framework for the allocation of home workstation equipment.

VDU work is defined as the aggregate of display screen equipment, optionally including a keyboard or data input device and/or human-machine interface software, optional accessories, ancillary equipment, telephone, modem, printer, document holder, chair, work table or work surface as well as the immediate working environment.

VDU work can cause a wide range of health issues. The most common and familiar issues are referred to as RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) or arm, neck and/or shoulder complaints. These include complaints affecting the hand, wrist, elbow, shoulder and/or neck due to incorrect posture, repetitive movements, or the lack of movement (static posture). Eye problems are also common.

1. Objectives

In line with our commitment to good employment practices, the policy aims to effectively promote pleasant and healthy VDU work and correct unhealthy VDU practices among employees working either at a UvA location or from home.

2. Basic principles

Hybrid working requires a set of basic principles for the allocation of workplace facilities, especially those that are fundamental to the permanent home workplace.

- As an employer, the UvA is responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace for all its employees and contractors.
- Any employee (employed or contracted) who spends at least 2 hours a day doing VDU work is entitled to an ergonomically designed VDU workstation.
- Employees who perform VDU work for more than two hours a day and work for the UvA as an ancillary activity² or on a temporary basis for a maximum of one year with no prospect of renewal will perform this VDU work at a UvA location (unless otherwise agreed) and use the workstations provided for that purpose.

3. Health & safety laws and regulations

The Working Conditions Act, Working Conditions Decree, Working Conditions Regulations and Working Hours Act provide employers with the necessary legal framework to ensure that their employees can work comfortably and healthily at a computer screen and prevent health issues and absenteeism.

¹ Adopted by resolution no. 2012cb0157 of the Executive Board of 7 May 2012

² Ancillary activities are defined as work performed in addition to the principal employment relationship (including retirement) or studies, or in the form of a temporary assignment performed by an independent contractor

The employer's duty of care is established in the Working Conditions Act (Article 3) and Dutch Civil Code (Article 7:658). The Working Conditions Decree establishes regulations for 'site-independent work'. Provisions on the requirements for VDU work are set out in the Working Conditions Decree (articles 5.4 and 5.7 to 5.12) and Working Conditions Regulations (articles 5.1 through 5.3).

4. Basic requirements

4.1 Ergonomic requirements

Working Conditions Regulations Chapter 5 VDU work - Art. 5.1 Equipment and office furniture, Working Conditions Decree Art 5.4, 5.12, Working Conditions Policy Rule 5.1

Any employee (employed or contracted) who spends at least 2 hours a day doing VDU work is entitled to an ergonomically designed VDU workstation, defined as:

- an adjustable office chair that is well-suited to the user's physical measurements;
- a height-adjustable desk large enough to perform sedentary work;
- if the desk is too high and cannot be lowered, a footrest must be provided. Desks that are too low will need to be raised;
- a display that is easily adjustable and is large enough to simultaneously display as much as possible of the required information on screen;
- if a laptop is being used, a laptop stand or separate monitor (in combination with a port replicator) with a separate keyboard and mouse must be provided;
- if the work involves a lot of document handling, a suitable document holder should preferably be provided.

4.2 Ergonomic facilities

The following facilities will be provided to employees working from home and at a UvA location, subject to the approval of their supervisor.

- Adjustable desk chair
- Adjustable sitting desk
- Screen or additional screen
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Laptop stand³
- Footrest
- Headset
- Port replicator⁴

Employees are obliged to use the VDU workplace in a healthy way and alternate VDU work with other types of activities or take (short) breaks for exercise at regular intervals. It is also important that employees pay close attention to their own physical and mental health and proactively discuss any problems with their supervisor.

³ Also for use as a document holder.

⁴ A port replicator is a device designed to connect your laptop to various peripherals, such as an extra monitor, keyboard or mouse.

4.3 Additional ergonomic facilities and break reminder software

Employees may request special and/or additional ergonomic facilities based on the recommendations of the occupational health and safety coordinator⁵ and subject to the approval of their supervisor. This could include a customised office chair, customised mouse or keyboard or a sit-stand desk that allows you to alternate VDU work with sitting and standing. Employees are also provided with Work&Move break reminder software, designed to help them take regular breaks and exercise.

4.4 Information and Instruction

Working Conditions Act, Art. 8 Information and instruction and Working Conditions Act Art. 11 Employee obligations

- Supervisors will inform current and new employees about the risks of VDU work and related measures for the prevention of health issues, referring them to the information on the UvA website.
- Employees can contact the occupational health and safety coordinator to request a workplace assessment.⁶ Based on the outcomes of this assessment, they will then be offered information and tips on the proper adjustment of their VDU workstation, healthy working practices and effective task organisation.
- and must be observed by all employees.

4.5 Oversight

Working Conditions Act, Art. 8 Information and Instruction

- The supervisor will instruct the employee to evaluate their home workplace on the basis of a home workplace checklist (see Annex 1) to ensure that their workstation is being used and configured properly. The employee will communicate the outcome to their supervisor. The employee can also ask the occupational health and safety coordinator to review their home workplace remotely online⁷.
- The supervisor will periodically meet with the employee to discuss their experiences working from home and identify any potential improvements to their workplace or situation.
- If the supervisor is uncertain whether the home workplace meets ergonomic requirements, they will not allow the employee to spend 2 hours a day or more working from home.

4.6 Eye examination and computer glasses

Working Conditions Act, Art. 44 Costs and Working Conditions Decree Art. 5.11 Measures to protect eyes and eyesight

- Employees who need computer glasses are eligible for (partial) reimbursement of their purchase. This right is established in the Computer glasses reimbursement scheme.
- Employees can contact the Occupational Health and Safety Service's occupational health nurse to arrange an eye examination.

⁵ Where necessary: consultations with the occupational physician in relation to the employee's sustainable employability and/or facility services in relation to office furniture maintenance. The occupational physician at the Faculty of Humanities will provide advice on the use of an electric sit-stand desk.

⁶ At the Faculty of Humanities, these instructions are provided by prevention officer

⁷ At the Faculty of Humanities, this is the responsibility of the prevention officer.

5. Risk Inventory & Evaluation

Working Conditions Act Art.5 RI&E and Working Conditions Decree 5.9 RI&E

The Decentralised Occupational Health & Safety Policy, Workplace & Environment and Psychosocial Workload RI&Es devote specific attention to hybrid working.

- The Decentralised Occupational Health & Safety Policy RI&E reveals the extent to which the Hybrid Working Directive on safe and healthy working practices is being effectively implemented.
- The Workplace and Working Environment RI&E provides insight into the risks associated with VDU work and the extent to which the employee's working environments at the UvA location and home can be deemed healthy.
- The Psychosocial Workload RI&E offers insight into the risks of hybrid working in terms of mental health, working and rest times, working methods and task organisation.

6. Policy assurance

We ensure the effectiveness of our policies by publishing them online, communicating about them and providing support to supervisors and employees through our occupational health and safety coordinators, Facility Services, ICTS and Administration Centre. We conduct evaluations once every three years - or sooner if necessitated by new insights and/or updated laws and regulations - and implement the improvement measures outlined in our Risk Inventories and Evaluations to ensure that policies remain up to date and top of mind.

Annex 1 Home workplace checklist

Tool to assess your home workstation and make improvements if needed

How to use the checklist

For each question, check whether the (ergonomic) facilities/conditions are in order. If you answer ‘yes’ in the second column, this means the component is in order and you can go to the next question. If you answer ‘no’ in the third column, you should try to improve your workstation using the measures provided. Then indicate whether this has worked for each component. If you answer ‘no’ in the last column, your home workstation is not (or cannot be) optimally configured. To prevent physical complaints, it is not a good idea to work from home for more than two hours a day if you have answered ‘no’ to one or more questions. In that case, discuss the completed checklist with your supervisor and/or the occupational health and safety coordinator to make agreements about working from home.

Component	Yes	No	Measures to improve the home workstation	In order?	
				Yes	No
Workspace					
Are you generally able to work quietly and concentrate at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Create a separate space so that any housemates cannot disturb you when you work. Otherwise, only work from home at times when you can work quietly and concentrate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office chair					
Are you using an office chair from the UvA, or do you have an office chair with the following features? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a swivel base with five wheels; • an adjustable seat height, seat depth, backrest and lumbar support; • short adjustable armrests. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Answer the following question to check whether you can sit in an ergonomically correct position. Is an ergonomically correct position not possible? Ask your supervisor for permission to purchase an office chair. You can request this via the Self-Service Tool.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you adjusted the chair so that you are sitting in an ergonomically correct position? This means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your knees are at a 90° (or slightly larger) angle, and your feet are flat on the ground; • your thighs have sufficient support, but there is still space behind your knees; • your lower back is supported; • your shoulders are relaxed, your arms are at a 90° angle, and your 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust your settings so that you are sitting in an ergonomically correct position (see also: <i>Tips for an ideal workstation</i>) and/or contact the occupational health and safety coordinator for personalised workstation assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Component	Yes	No	Measures to improve the home workstation	In order?	
				Yes	No
elbows are lightly supported by the armrests.					
Worktop					
Is your worktop at a height that allows you to work with your shoulders relaxed and is the angle of your elbows approximately 90°? If so, the worktop height should be equal to or slightly lower than the armrests of your chair, provided you have set up your chair correctly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check which situation applies to you and ensure the correct working height. Is your worktop adjustable? Adjust the height. Do you have a non-adjustable worktop that is too high? Raise the seat height and use a footrest to elevate your feet. You can request a footrest via the Self-Service Tool. Do you have a non-adjustable worktop that is too low? Ask your supervisor for permission to purchase a height-adjustable worktop. You can request this via the Self-Service Tool.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the worktop, including the supporting structure at the front, thinner than 5 cm? (This is often not the case with dining tables)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check whether this causes you to hunch your shoulders because the thick worktop prevents you from adjusting your chair high enough. Are you hunching your shoulders? Ask your supervisor for permission to purchase a height-adjustable worktop. You can request this via the Self-Service Tool.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Screen					
Are you using a separate height-adjustable monitor, or have you raised your laptop and are you using a laptop stand and a separate keyboard and mouse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Request a separate monitor via the Self-Service Tool or raise your laptop with a laptop stand and use a separate keyboard and mouse. You can request a laptop stand, keyboard and mouse via the Self-Service Tool.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the (main) screen directly in front of you and, if applicable, is the second screen at a slight angle to the left or right?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Place the (main) screen directly in front of you. If you are working with two screens, place the second screen at a slight angle to the left or right of the main screen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the monitor or laptop at a comfortable distance, so that you can read the information on the screen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The screen should generally be between 50 and 80 cm away from you. However, this distance should be determined by feel since	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Component	Yes	No	Measures to improve the home workstation	In order?	
				Yes	No
without difficulty?			it strongly depends on various factors (the size of the screen, the size of the font, the screen resolution and the age of the user). If you are still having trouble reading, check whether you might be eligible for computer glasses.		
Screen					
Is your chin horizontal when you look at the screen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust the top edge of your screen to eye level. If you have multifocal lenses and look through the bottom of your glasses to see the screen, the lower the screen a bit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Light					
Is your screen free of reflections and/or disturbance caused by the light?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Move your screen away from the bothersome light source and/or place your screen perpendicular to the windows. If that is not possible or you are still having trouble, use window coverings such as slats or sun blinds (not reimbursed by the employer).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>