1. OBJECTIVE

This guide explains how to set up your workstation to suit your individual needs and the type of work performed at the workstation. It describes the basic features of a standard workstation set up. It can be used when selecting purchasing and setting up appropriate furniture and equipment for computer-based work. Having appropriate furniture and equipment allows the individual to improve the set up at their workstation, increase their comfort and reduce potential injury.

2. BACKGROUND

The information below is a guide only, and as such individual Colleges/Portfolios may choose to go above the minimum standard. In this case, options need to be discussed with your Operational Leader about the suitability of workstations such as sit/stand desks/units.

3. PROCEDURE / IMPLEMENTATION

3.1. Desk Heights and Fittings
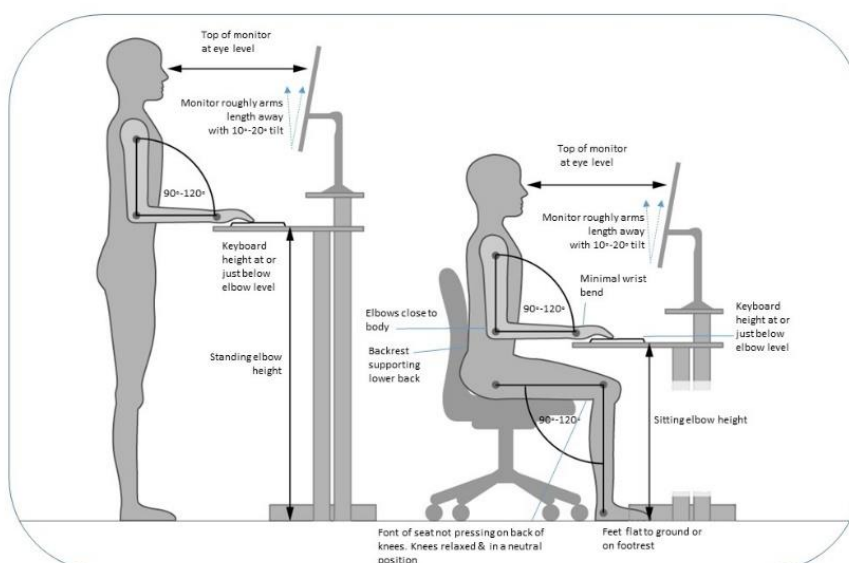
Freestanding fixed height desks
- The recommended range for fixed height desks is between 680mm and 720mm when measured to the top of the work surface.
- You should be able to sit comfortably at your workstation with your feet flat on the floor and elbows level with or slightly above the work surface. If this position cannot be maintained, then either the desk can be adjusted, or a footrest provided.

Freestanding fixed height desks with adjustable keyboard tray
- It is preferable to set the keyboard tray level with the desk and adjust the chair height (providing a footstool if necessary) so that the entire desk is the same height.

Freestanding height-adjustable desks
- Adjust desk height to suit you. These desks are designed to raise and lower the desk surface so that you can work at the most comfortable height.
- The best position for the desk height is when the elbows are level with or slightly above the work surface.

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Rev: 3.0
Page 1 of 6

3.2.   Work Surface Layout

Equipment and objects on the work surface should be laid out according to primary, secondary and tertiary reach zones.

Primary reach zone
- The area of reach from with the elbows beside the body
- The keyboard and mouse should be placed within this zone
- If you use the telephone frequently it should also be within this zone
- Other frequently accessed items such as papers, books, files and a pen may also be within this zone

Secondary reach zone
- The reach distance from the shoulder with the arms stretched out
- Folders that are accessed occasionally can be placed into the secondary reach zone and ideally kept on the desk
- If you use the telephone occasionally, this should also be within this zone

Reference reach zone
- The reach distance when the torso is flexed from the waist and the arms are stretched out
- This should be used for infrequently accessed items such as occasional use folders or books
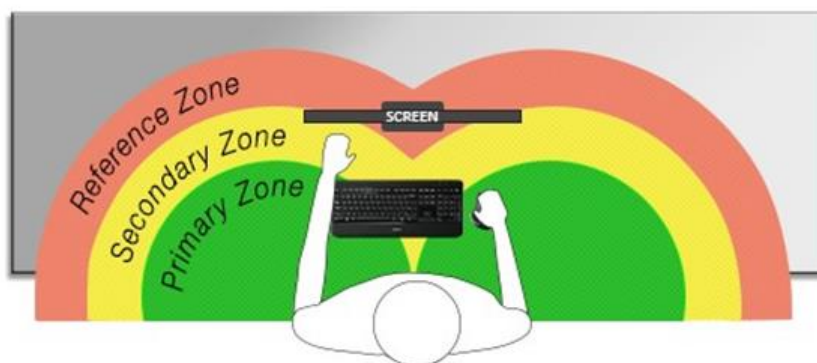
3.3.   Chairs

There are several different style office chairs available at RMIT. For detailed guidance on specific office chairs requirements and seating alternatives please refer to RMIT *Furniture Standard (2021)*.

Alternative chair furniture options must be reviewed/discussed with your Senior Health and Safety Advisor.

3.4.   Specific Workstation Equipment

3.4.1.   Monitors

3.4.1.1.   Monitor height

- Ensure eyes are level with the top of the screen when seated comfortably at workstation.
- Set monitor so that the top toolbar can be comfortably viewed without tilting head backwards.

3.4.1.2.   Viewing the monitor

- The monitor should be positioned at arm's length from the user when seated at workstation.
- Move computer to minimise reflections and glare. Preferably position monitor to the side of window light and/or between overhead lighting.

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Rev: 3.0
Page 2 of 6

- Modify the general lighting by removing or re-positioning light sources e.g. remove one fluorescent light tube from a double light fixture.
- Use blinds to block direct sunlight. Venetian blinds should be angled upwards to best reduce light from outside.
- If using dual screens, determine the percentage use for each screen, and this will determine the positioning in order to minimise neck movement e.g. if the screens are used, at a ratio of 80:20 then the majority used screen should be in line with the user and the other slightly offset.

3.4.2. Mouse

3.4.2.1. Mouse size and shape

- The mouse should fit the user's hand and not cause unnecessary pressure on the wrist and forearm muscles. Ensure the mouse is not too large so that the wrist is in a neutral position during use.

3.4.2.2. Mouse use

- Mouse operation can be moved from left-handed to right-handed use to minimise strain on the one hand. Ensure that the button on the right side of the mouse is always used for primary functions by clicking on start (bottom left side of screen), selecting mouse and changing button configuration to switch primary and secondary buttons. The mouse may also be customised in this area including double click speed, pointer speed and scrolling.
- Set the tracking speed of the mouse to a high setting (access through Control Panel on computer).
- Hold the mouse gently when moving it over the mouse pad or desk.
- Take the hand off the mouse at frequent intervals.
- Use keyboard shortcuts where possible.
- If the task is primarily a mouse activity, move the mouse towards the middle of the desk and push the keyboard back.

3.4.2.3. Mouse placement on desk

- Position the mouse directly to the right- or left-hand side of the keyboard. Line the top of the mouse pad with the top edge of the keyboard as a visual cue to correct placement and always aim to keep the mouse on the mouse pad.
- Sit back in the chair, relax arms then lift the mousing hand up, pivoting at the elbow, until the hand is just above elbow level. The mouse should be positioned somewhere around this point.

3.4.2.4. Mouse alternatives

- Alternatives to the standard mouse are designed to change hand and arm postures and increase efficiency. They include a wide range of operations, including rollers, pens, balls, pads and glide points. The main difference between a mouse and these devices is that the hand and arm remain stationery while the wrist is at an angle and the fingers or thumb stretch. For long periods of use this way may cause finger, thumb or wrist discomfort. Lifting the hand off the keys while operating the pointing devices is preferable.

3.4.3. Keyboards

3.4.3.1. Positioning the keyboard

- The keyboard should be placed directly in front of the body to avoid twisting the neck and torso.
- The keyboard should be positioned in front of the computer monitor with the letters G & H approximately in line with your navel. This is particularly good positioning when doing a lot of keyboard work.
- The keyboard should be positioned according to the distance the forearms extend from the neutral position of the elbows by the side of the body.

3.4.3.2. Keyboard height and slope

- Arms should be parallel to the floor when placed gently on the keyboard. The seated elbow height should be a little higher than the height of the keyboard. Raise or lower the office chair to achieve this position.
- The slope of the keyboard should be as close to the flat position as possible. This is largely determined by what feels comfortable; however, there should be a good straight alignment across the forearms, wrists and hands.
- Providing a keyboard without a numeric pad can reduce the keyboard width and allow the mouse to be operated closer to the user.

3.4.3.3. Using a keyboard platform

- If a keyboard platform is used it should be large enough to accommodate both the keyboard and mouse on the same level.
- If the keyboard platform is not large enough the mouse tends to be placed on the desktop that is higher and further away. This will lead to excessive reaching while trying to operate the mouse.

3.4.3.4. Do not anchor the wrists

- When typing, it is advisable to not anchor (rest) the wrists on the desk or a wrist rest. Resting the wrists while typing may be harmful because it encourages bending and holding static postures. It can also apply pressure to the underside of the wrists. For the same reason, do not rest wrists on a hard or sharp surface such as the edge of the desk.
- A wrist rest is designed to provide support during pauses, when not typing (such as when reading from the screen). If using a wrist rest, ensure that it is the same height as the front edge of the keyboard.
- Where possible, the feet at the rear of the keyboard should be kept in a lowered position to minimise the height and angle of the keyboard.

3.4.4. Footrests

Using a footrest limits mobility so it is preferable to have full adjustability of the desk and chair to avoid the need for a footrest.

The need for a footrest will depend upon whether your desk is at the required height once you have adjusted your chair to suit your needs. If the desk is too high and it cannot be lowered, then raise the height of the chair and use a footrest to raise the height of the floor by the same amount.

In addition, footrests should:

- Have height and angle adjustability
- Be large enough to permit some movement while supporting the feet
- Not be so big that it clashes with the chair base.

3.4.5. Document holders and reading boards

Document holders are designed to hold reference material so that they can be positioned according to the visual needs of the user. Document holders help to keep the head balanced over the shoulders and are useful for work that involves a lot of copying whilst working at the computer. Ideally, the document holder should be positioned between the keyboard and monitor. If this is not possible, position the document holder close to the computer screen at eye level.

3.4.5.1. In-line document holder

- This style of document holder sits in front of the computer monitor and behind the keyboard. It is recommended for use if you are not a touch typist.

3.4.5.2. Side of monitor document holder

- If you are a touch typist, you may prefer to use a document holder that sits to one side of the monitor, at eye level. This position is favoured by those who can touch type, as minimal neck flexion (bending the neck forward) is required.

3.4.5.3. Angle (reading) board

- An angle board enables the angle of a work surface to be adjusted — it is usually placed on top of a desk. It is used to raise the height and angle of documents so that the neck is in a more upright posture while reading and writing for prolonged periods. The angle board needs to be adjustable and large enough to support several documents.

3.4.6. Desktop Telephones

3.4.6.1. Telephone use

- Learn and use the functions of your telephone, such as redial and the storage of commonly used phone numbers.
- Do not cradle the phone between the shoulder and ear.

3.4.6.2. Telephone placement

- When making a lot of calls, it may be best to place the telephone on the same side as the dominant hand so that this hand can comfortably operate the numeric and function buttons. When mostly receiving calls, it may be more comfortable to place it on the non-dominant side.

3.4.6.3. Headsets

- When the phone is used very often or for prolonged periods, a headset should be used.
- A telephone headset is particularly recommended if the user is also required to access the computer during a phone call.

3.4.7. Laptop computers

Laptop computers were designed for short-term or mobile use. The portable nature of the laptop results in them being used in a wide variety of situations and settings where there is limited capacity to adjust the desk.

It is usually more difficult to maintain a good typing posture while using a laptop computer. Hunching over to view the screen and reaching forward to type seems to be a common poor posture adopted whilst using a laptop.

If you use a laptop for more than 2 hours per day, you should either:

- Locate the laptop on a stand to elevate the screen to eye height, with the use of a separate keyboard and mouse; or
- Use the laptop keyboard, separate mouse, and a separate, elevated conventional monitor; or
- Use a full docking station, with a separate keyboard and mouse and elevated conventional monitor.
- A laptop should not be used continuously for more than 30 minutes at a time.

4. Supporting Documents

Lists the supporting and related Processes and Guidance Material, Legislative references, Australian and International Standards etc. that may be useful references for process users

- HR - HSW-PR04 - HSW Records Management
- HR - HSW-PR07 - Consultation & Communication

- HR - HSW-PR30 – Office Ergonomics
- HR - HSW-PR30-CL01 - Workstations Checklist
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI03 - Thermal Comfort Guidance
- RMIT Furniture Standard (2021)

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