

1. OBJECTIVE

This process has been developed to assist RMIT in minimising the risk of injuries and incidents relating to office ergonomic layouts and practices from occurring in the work and learning environment by:

- Identifying risk factors in work design and office ergonomic layout;
- Providing a process for ergonomic evaluation and assessment; and
- Controlling ergonomic hazards or risks.

This procedure has been established in accordance with RMIT's risk management methodology.

2. BACKGROUND

N/A

3. SCOPE

This process applies to RMIT globally.

It also applies to:

Flexible work arrangements – where staff may work from various locations across the campus or remote work/learning locations, as agreed with their manager/supervisor; and

Hybrid work arrangements - where staff may work from a combination of on campus and from home, as agreed to by the staff member and their manager/supervisor.

Where third parties are doing work on RMIT premises, RMIT is responsible otherwise the Primary Employer is responsible.

NOTE – Referenced legislation applies to Australian jurisdictions only. RMIT campuses in other jurisdiction must refer to local applicable legislation, where available.

4. WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?

The expected outcomes – known as 'what must go right' – will be that:

- All leaders, staff, students, researchers and third parties have been educated on workstation set-up and ergonomic principles.
- Leaders have assessed and controlled ergonomic risks in their work and learning environment and ensured staff, students, researchers and third parties are provided with the appropriate tools and equipment to perform their work safely.
- Staff, students, researchers and third parties are aware of their duty to report work related injuries and concerns relating to ergonomics to their leader.

5. PROCEDURE / IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. *Working on campus, flexibly or from home*

Working on campus at a designated and regular workstation allows for relatively easy identification and control of ergonomic hazards. Working flexibly across campus work environments introduces some limitations. Nevertheless, suitable adjustments can be made in most cases.

Working from home (hybrid work arrangements) does pose greater challenges when needing to make adjustments to the work environment, particularly adjustments to furniture. However, the ergonomic principles are the same and adjustments should be made which follow these principles.

5.2. *Identifying ergonomic hazards*

Leaders are to identify office ergonomics related hazards within the work and learning environment in consultation with staff, students, researchers and third parties, the Health and Safety Representative (HSR) and the Senior Advisor, Health and Safety (as required).

Ergonomic related hazards and risks may be identified through the following means:

- Consultation with staff, students and third parties and the HSR
- Workplace observations, inspections and audits
- Hazard and incident reporting
- Pre-planning for new work activities, locations or equipment
- Review of incident, injury, hazard and claims data

5.3. *Ergonomic risk assessment*

A well-designed work and learning environment that has been adjusted correctly can reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and improve overall comfort and productivity.

Leaders are to assess ergonomic related hazards, risks and management needs in the work and learning environment.

This assessment process should take place when new staff commence their employment as a part of the induction / on-boarding process.

The risk management approach involves the following four steps:

- Identifying the hazards that could result in work-related injury or illness;
- Assessing the type, severity and likelihood of injuries and illness;
- Providing the appropriate controls; and
- Reviewing the effectiveness of controls on a regular basis or where circumstances change.

5.4. *Process for ergonomic assessment*

New staff commencing employment or staff changing desks or relocating to another office are required to complete the e-learning module '**Ergonomics**' available on the staff and student learning platform to ensure their workstation is set up correctly.

Staff are required to complete a self-assessment of their workstation. This can be done via:

- The on-line **Workstation self-assessment checklist** (for on campus workstation) or
- The **HSW-PR30-CL01 – Workstation Checklist** form (for on campus workstation) or
- The **HSW-PR30-CL02 – Home Workstation Self-assessment** form (for hybrid work at home)

If there are any unresolved issues following completion of the e-learning module, please notify your leader and log a ticket on **Service Connect** to request a workstation assessment with a member of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.

If any equipment or ergonomic aids are required refer to RMIT Office Supplies catalogue or the RMIT **Furniture Standard (2021)** for approved equipment.

5.5. *Persons with identified medical issues or injury*

Where a staff member has made known to RMIT a particular medical condition or injury they are advised to contact a member of the HSW team for further advice or assistance.

On occasion it may be necessary for a staff member to receive a professional assessment and / or training by an external professional such as an Ergonomist or Occupational Therapist following an injury to prevent any aggravation and / or re-occurrence. The costs associated with any external professional assessment and / or training is the responsibility of the School or Department.

5.6. *Implementing effective office ergonomics*

Leaders and staff are responsible for implementing effective office ergonomic controls to manage identified hazards, risks and address any staff, student or third-party concerns or complaints.

5.7. *Purchase of equipment*

Any office equipment or ergonomic aids required will need to be purchased by the local college/portfolio (for on campus workstation).

Staff are required to purchase office equipment or ergonomic aids for their home workstation. Costs may be claimed on tax return. Staff should seek advice from their Tax Agent prior to making any purchases.

5.8. *Workstation design*

The core components of an office workstation include a desk, a chair and the equipment used to perform office tasks. Other furniture may include reception desks, paper storage, collation benches and workbenches next to office equipment such as photocopiers, faxes and printers.

In the design of office workstations, flexibility and adjustability are the key design issues. Staff can then control how their workstation is set up and organised to meet the changing demands and variety of the tasks they are required to perform. **HSW-PR30-WI01 Workstation Guidance** 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 and can be used when selecting, purchasing and setting up appropriate furniture and equipment for computer-based work.

5.9. *Desk adjustments*

If there is a requirement for an adjustment to a fixed-height desk, the staff member, student, researcher or third party is to advise their leader who will then escalate to the RMIT HSW team, via a Service Connect request. In the instance an RMIT team member identifies the need for an adjustment; arrangements will be made in consultation with the leader.

The leader will submit a property service request with the relevant information (Desk #/Location, Cost code and desk adjustment required). No formal report is required for a desk to be adjusted.

5.9.1. *Flexible working*

It may not be possible or practicable to adjust fixed-height desks when working flexible. In such cases, consider an alternative desk which suits your height.

5.9.2. *Hybrid working*

It may not be possible to adjust fixed-height desks when working from home. The options available are:

- Purchase a desk of suitable height or height adjustable desk. The cost of a new desk is your responsibility and may be claimed on tax (check with your Tax Advisor).
- Adjust your chair height to meet the principles detailed in **HSW-PR30-WI01 – Workstation Guidance**.

5.10. *Sit / Stand desks and units*

Sit/Stand desks allow the user to alternate between sitting and standing throughout the working day. Sitting or standing for prolonged periods of time is unhealthy. Ensure prolonged sitting or standing is broken up by periodic movement throughout the day, preferably 2-3 minutes every 20 to 30 minutes. Frequent micro breaks improve your level of comfort, work performance, and reduces the risks of musculoskeletal injuries. Ensure you are alternating between sitting and standing every 1-2 hours if you have the functionality to do so.

5.10.1. *Flexible working*

Follow the above recommendations when working flexibly. It is critical that prolonged sitting is broken up by periodic movement throughout the day, preferably 2-3 minutes every 20 to 30 minutes if only a fixed-height desk is available.

5.10.2. *Hybrid working*

Follow the above recommendations when working from home. It is critical that prolonged sitting or standing is broken up by periodic movement throughout the day, preferably 2-3 minutes every 20 to 30 minutes if only a fixed-height desk is available.

Consider:

- Using books or boxes to raise your laptop to a height which allows you to stand and work
- Purchasing a sit/stand unit which sits on top of your desk. The cost of such a unit is your responsibility and may be claimed on tax (check with your Tax Advisor).
- Purchasing a height adjustable desk. The cost of a new desk is your responsibility and may be claimed on tax (check with your Tax Advisor).

It is critical that prolonged sitting or standing is broken up by periodic movement throughout the day, preferably 2-3 minutes every 20 to 30 minutes, particularly if only a fixed-height desk is available.

5.11. *Minimum standards for sit / stand desk*

RMIT requires the staff member or third party, in consultation with their medical specialist, to produce written documentation indicating consideration by RMIT into the purchase of a Sit/Stand desk/unit for on campus use.

Examples of medical specialists (Minimum of undergraduate degree) include:

- General Practitioner (G.P)
- Physiotherapist
- Orthopaedic surgeon
- Rheumatologist
- Rehabilitation physician
- Others at the discretion of the College or Portfolio

5.12. *Work environment*

Environmental conditions are important factors that should be considered when implementing and managing workplace ergonomics. Staff wellbeing can be impacted when environmental conditions such as inadequate ventilation or lighting do not meet workplace standards.

5.13. Lighting quality

Glare and reflections may develop in higher luminance areas. Workstations directly adjacent to windows or directly positioned under overhead lighting should be aware of potential increased exposure to these issues. At times of direct sun glare, blinds may be used to control sunlight. Furthermore, locating workstations directly under overhead lights should be avoided.

It is desirable from a psychological perspective to retain an external view and to maintain natural light. The overall level of illumination required for computer work is generally less than for clerical duties.

5.14. Thermal comfort

Thermal comfort is a condition of mind which expresses satisfaction with the thermal environment. Please refer to **HSW-PR35-WI03 Thermal Comfort** which provides information on factors affecting thermal comfort and recommendations for optimising indoor thermal comfort.

5.15. Injury prevention

5.15.1. Rest breaks

These are short breaks (1-5 mins) that provide an opportunity for muscles that have been active in keyboard or mouse use to rest and recover and muscles which have been fixed such as shoulder muscles or leg muscles to move.

Short Pause Break activities include:

- Collecting a document from the printer
- Getting a cup of tea or glass of water
- Visiting a colleague rather than phoning or emailing them
- Stretching

5.16. Monitoring and evaluation

Leaders are responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of risk controls in consultation with staff, student or third party and their HSR's.

Existing measures must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised:

- If new or additional information becomes available;
- In the event of an Incident Notification form / P.R.I.M.E report, incident or injury;
- In relation to any incident notifiable to the Regulator;
- Where for any reason the measures do not adequately control risk; and
- Following a reasonable request from a member of staff, student, contractor or HSR.

Other methods and forums for periodic review and consultation include but are not limited to:

- Direct discussions with relevant staff, students, contractors or members of a designated work group;
- Staff meetings;
- Health and Safety committee meetings; and
- When conducting health and safety reviews and audits (including third party).

5.17. Information, instruction and training

Office ergonomics information, instruction and training must be given to staff as a part of their Health and Safety induction and area orientation.

Identified hazards will be communicated with staff through existing consultation forums and as a part of the control / management process.

5.18. Records

All records of hazard identification and risk assessment, information, instruction and training must be maintained in accordance with the **HSW-PR04 Records Management** process.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Operational Leaders

- Ensure staff, students and third parties are provided with appropriate tools and materials for office work duties.
- Ensure staff, students and third parties receive appropriate training on the correct usage of ergonomic equipment at the commencement of work through the use of
 - The on-line **Workstation self-assessment checklist** (for on campus workstation) or
 - The **HSW-PR30-CL01 – Workstation Checklist** form (for on campus workstation) or
 - The **HSW-PR30-CL02 – Home Workstation Self-assessment** form (for hybrid work at home)
- Implement this process in their area of control.
- Review performance against this procedure on a regular basis.

6.2. Staff, students, researchers and third parties

- Ensure they complete a workstation assessment as detailed in procedure.
- Cooperate with leaders and other staff in maintaining a safe work and learning environment in line with ergonomic guidelines.
- Follow this process and all reasonable instructions relating to HSW and ergonomic principles in the work and learning environment.

6.3. HSW Team

- Facilitate ergonomic assessments where required.
- Regularly review this process in consultation with relevant staff.
- Develop and report on KPIs relevant to this process.
- Monitor compliance with this process and report on outcomes.

7. Definitions

Defines any key terms and acronyms relating to the process where they apply.

Term / acronym	Definition
DWG	Designated Work Group: A group of employees of the employer at one or more workplaces. The particulars of the DWG are determined by negotiation between the employer and the employees and should take into account the number of employees, the location and the types of activities conducted in the workplace. A DWG is formed for the purpose of electing an HSR.
Ergonomic Assessment	Ergonomic assessment of individual or group workstations is defined as the assessment of a potential or existing work area and or workstation using a recognised

	assessment tool or audit to meet RMIT requirements in compliance with appropriate Standards.
Ergonomics	The science of designing tasks, jobs, information, tools, equipment, facilities and the working environment to enable staff to perform tasks in a safe, effective, productive and comfortable environment.
Executive Leaders	Leaders on RMIT council and in the highest positions of influence at RMIT, including Directors, Deputy Directors, COO, VP, VC and Deputy VCs.
Flexible work arrangements	A combination of working from various locations across the campus or remote work/learning locations, as agreed with their manager/supervisor
HSW	Health Safety & Wellbeing
Hybrid work arrangements	A combination of working from campus and working from home, as agreed to by the staff member and their manager/supervisor
Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD)	An injury, illness or disease of the musculoskeletal system affecting the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, intervertebral discs or nerves that arises in whole or in part from manual handling in the workplace, whether occurring suddenly or over a prolonged period of time but does not include an injury, illness or disease that is caused by crushing, entrapment or cut resulting primarily from the mechanical operation of plant.
Operational Leaders	Any staff member of RMIT who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans, organises or supervises the activities of other staff, contractors, students or visitors on behalf of RMIT; or Designs or organises the design, maintenance or refurbishment of facilities on behalf of RMIT <p>This includes all managers, senior accountants, senior administrators, course coordinators, team leaders, industry fellows, research fellows, teachers, senior educators and lecturers.</p>
Senior Leaders	This includes leaders within schools and department, and includes senior school managers, heads, deans and their deputies, program director, assistant directors, discipline heads, senior managers, professors and associate professors.

8. 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-PR09 - HSW Risk Management
- HR - HSW-PR30-WI01 - Workstations Guidance
- HR - HSW-PR30-CL01 - Workstations Checklist
- HR - HSW-PR30-CL02 – Home Workstations Self-assessment
- RMIT Furniture Standard (2021)
- HR - HSW-PR34 - Manual Handling
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI03 - Thermal Comfort Guidance