

University College Dublin



Guidelines on Home Working and Working Outside Of the Office Environment.

Rev 1. Issued July 2014

*University College Dublin Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and
Compliance (SIRC) Office*

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Revision History:

- Rev 0: Issued Jan 2009
- Rev 1. Issued June 2014: Significant rewrite and update.

1. Introduction

University College Dublin is committed to providing a safe place of work for all of its employees. This extends to persons working from home. Home workers are those employees who carry out work at home on an ongoing and regular basis under a formal agreement with their Manager / Head of School; or who work at home because of formally agreed arrangements with their managers. Staff members who occasionally work at home on an informal basis (also with their manager's agreement), are not deemed to be home workers; nevertheless such staff may find this guidance note helpful.

The Head of Unit / School is responsible for ensuring that the activities undertaken within the Unit / School are carried out in a safe manner without undue risk to the health and safety of University employees, students or any third parties. This duty extends to home workers. The Head of Unit / School may seek advice in this area from the University Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance (SIRC) Office (sirc@ucd.ie)

All employees have a duty to cooperate with the University in all matters of health and safety at work and not to endanger the safety of themselves, their co-workers or any other parties through any act or omission that they may undertake. This cooperation is essential to the effective management of safety within the University. In accordance with safety legislation the University expects all employees to take responsibility for their own safety whilst at work and to perform their duties in a safe manner and in accordance with all relevant safe working procedures. This extends to those employees who may be engaged in home working.

2. Risk Assessment

It is the aim of *University College Dublin* to identify hazards in the workplace and to control the risks from those hazards in so far as is reasonably practicable. 'Hazard' is defined as the potential to cause harm, while 'risk' is defined as the potential of the hazard to cause harm under the actual circumstances of use. The assessment of risk from the hazards identified is based on the linkage of the probability of occurrence with the severity of injury or material loss (the hazard effect) resultant from that occurrence.

The majority of the work duties carried out while working from home are of an administrative or desk based nature, which are generally deemed to be low risk. A number of risk assessments for office type work can be found on the [UCD SIRC Office website](#) along with a guidance handbook on office safety. These should be consulted by persons engaged in home working for advice and guidance.

All home working must be subjected to a risk assessment. This risk assessment can be completed by the home worker themselves in conjunction with their Head of Unit / School. A home working risk assessment checklist is provided in Appendix 1. If however a staff member deems this checklist to be insufficient for their needs or indeed if they need assistance then they can contact sirc@ucd.ie

3. Identification of hazards

The risk assessment for a home worker will be specific to that person, due to his/her personal circumstances, home/work location and nature of the work intended to be carried out. Therefore the following considerations may or may not be relevant to the home worker's activities but can be used as a guide:

3.1. Working Area

The area set aside for working from home needs to be a designated area that is deemed to be an acceptable workspace and the employee must have a clear delineation of when they are working and not working.

When choosing a location for working at home:

- Try to pick a spot away from sources of glare such as windows, overhead lights, and reflective surfaces.
- Ensure that the ambient temperature is suitable for working in.
- The immediate area should be clear of obstructions and in a tidy condition.
- Cables should not be allowed to extend across the floor.
- There should be sufficient space to move about comfortably.
- There should be sufficient ventilation.
- The furniture in use should be suitable in so far as is reasonably practicable.

3.2. Visual Display Unit (VDU)

Monitor should be positioned:

- At an arm's length from user
- Eye level should be at the top of the monitor
- Aligned directly in front of user, to avoid twisting of torso

The prolonged use of laptops should be avoided where possible. Employees are strongly encouraged to utilise desktop systems or a separate monitor and a separate keyboard attached to the laptop for periods of prolonged use.

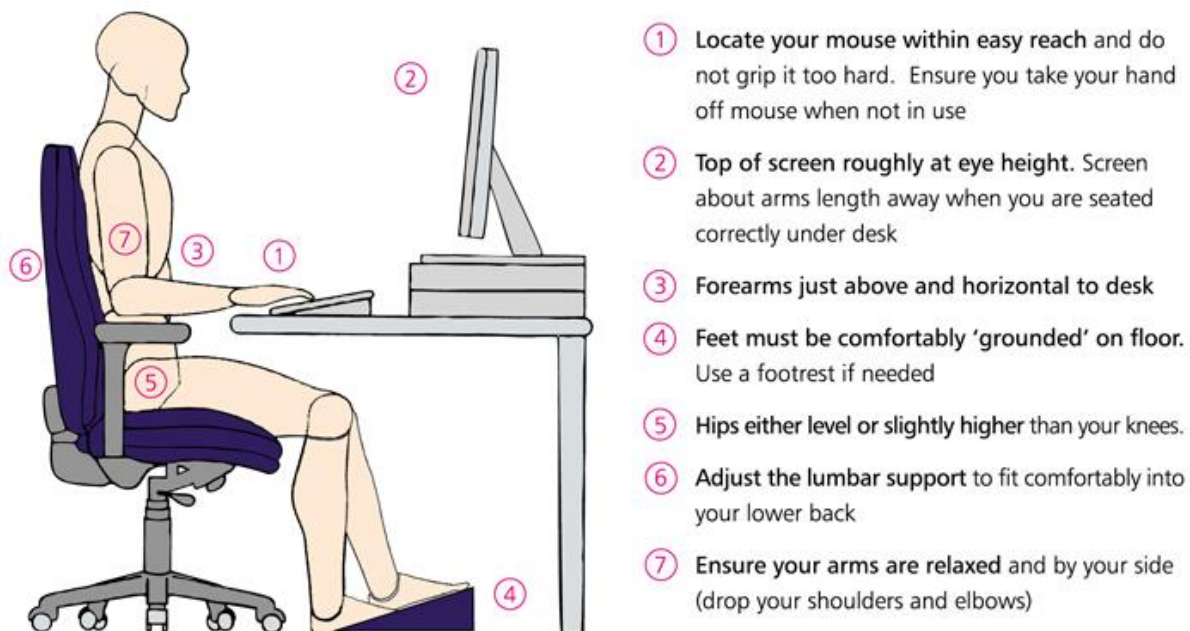
3.3. Work Surface

- A sturdy work surface will be needed to support your computer / laptop.
- The monitor should be located directly in front of the keyboard and positioned so the top of the screen is at or slightly below seated eye level.
- If you wear bifocals a lower monitor height may be necessary to avoid an awkward neck posture. Most people find 45-63cm to be a comfortable viewing distance.
- There should be at least 10cm of free space in front of the keyboard in order to allow hands and wrists to rest on the worktop.

3.4. Chair

The chair must have a solid base, be adjustable in seat height, seat back height and support the back from the lower back to just beneath the shoulder blades.

Raise your chair to provide a more comfortable arm angle (an approximate 90 degree angle between upper and lower arm is recommended); shoulders should be relaxed at all times. Raising your chair may also require you to use a footrest. The feet should be capable of being placed flat on the floor whilst working.



3.5. *Manual Handling*

- If the need for manual handling training has been identified in the home working risk assessment then this can be obtained via sirc@ucd.ie
- The principles of safe lifting should be adhered to at all times.
- In addition to this the hazards unique to working in the home should be considered, e.g. the presence of children, the presence of household objects, etc.
- When moving work equipment in the home care must be taken to ensure that the way is clear and that there are no obstacles in place.
- If carrying display screen be sure to hold the screen to your body, i.e. the heaviest side closest to you.
- Do not carry any equipment by the electrical flex.

3.6. *Fire Safety*

Fire precautions should include:

- If possible ensuring that your working area / home is fitted with a smoke detector
- Reducing the risk of outbreak of fire by not covering vents on electrical equipment, not using damaged equipment, keeping work area clear of clutter and storing away any combustible material etc.

3.7. *Electrical Hazards*

- In the case of an electrical fault, equipment should be powered off and disconnected from the power supply if safe to do so.
- Damaged cables, sockets and plugs must be removed from service immediately.
- All cable connections must be properly made. Under no circumstances must insulation tape be used to protect any repair or join in extension cables.
- Electrical equipment must not be pulled or lifted by the cable; the connections may become broken and create a hazard.
- All electrical equipment must be fitted with the correctly rated fuse.
- The use of multi socket boxes is to be avoided wherever possible.
- The mains power supply must be disconnected before attempting to move electrical equipment.

- All electrical cables shall be neatly tied off where necessary so as not to present a trip hazard. Where such wiring must run across floors it must be protected by saddles, conduit or armouring. Extension cables, when used, must be routed so as not to cause tripping hazards.

3.8. Pregnant Employees

The University is statutorily required to carry out a pregnant employer risk assessment for pregnant employees as soon as it becomes aware of the employees pregnancy. This applies to those persons working from home as well as those based in UCD. Any staff member requiring a pregnant employee risk assessment should contact sirc@ucd.ie

4. Insurance

The university extends no insurance cover to any property held in an employee's home irrespective of whether or not home working is engaged in.

The individual home worker is advised to check with their contents insurance provider and mortgage lender, if appropriate, to ensure that home working does not invalidate the terms and conditions of any policy.

5. Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents and incidents related to home working must be reported to your line manager immediately and also to the SIRC Office on an official incident report form. Contact sirc@ucd.ie for copies of said forms.

Appendix 1.

UCD Home Working Risk Assessment Checklist

UCD Home-Working Risk Assessment Checklist

Employee Name	
School/ Unit	
Type of work activity:	
Date of assessment:	

Hazard Checklist

Area where home-working takes place	
Is there sufficient ventilation / can windows be opened without risk to employee or others?	
Is there sufficient lighting for the task?	
Is there sufficient heating?	
Is there sufficient space for all the furniture & equipment used?	
Is flooring in good condition and free from trip hazards?	
Is there sufficient safe & secure storage space for equipment and documents used?	
Electrical safety	
Is the fixed electrical system in good condition e.g. no signs of sparks, flashes, arcing, etc.	
Are there sufficient numbers of sockets to prevent overloading?	
If extension leads are used are these the fused and switched type?	
Are visual checks of electrical equipment to identify any obvious faults such as worn or damaged leads or plugs undertaken regularly?	
Safe Posture	
Has the employee received training/information on how to set up their workstation to avoid poor posture?	
Does the chair used provide sufficient lumbar support?	
Can the chair be adjusted in seat height, seat back height and seat back tilt	
Is the work surface of a sufficient size?	
Is the sufficient space in front of the keyboard for the employee to rest their hands in between keying?	
Does the employee have to read/refer to/copy from documents placed flat on the desk? <i>(This is likely to lead to awkward neck movements and should be avoided by using a document holder.)</i>	

Can the employee's feet rest on the floor or do they need a footrest?	
If the employee has to use a laptop do they use a docking station?	
Is the employee likely to regularly use the telephone whilst using the keyboard or mouse? <i>(If yes, a headset should be provided).</i>	
Is the employee aware of the importance of taking regular breaks from computer based work before fatigue sets in?	
Has the employee experienced pain or discomfort when using the computer at home?	
Visual fatigue	
Is the screen positioned at the correct height and viewing distance? <i>(The employee's line eye-line should be just below the top of the screen and the screen should be positioned directly in front of the user at approximately an arm's length away).</i>	
Is the screen free from glare or reflections?	
Has the employee had a recent eye-sight test?	
Has the employee suffered from headaches or visual discomfort when working at the computer at home?	
Manual Handling	
Is there a need for manual handling training?	
Stress	
Is there sufficient segregation from disruptions e.g. children, pets, other family members?	
Are there arrangements for keeping in contact with the home worker?	
Are there arrangements in place to conduct regular supervision/ personal development reviews with the home worker	
Is support / advice readily available to the home worker to deal with either IT problems or other specific work queries?	
Does the home worker have access to sufficient training, information & instruction to enable them to undertake their work safely?	
Emergency arrangements	
Does the accommodation used for home working have a smoke alarm?	
Has the home worker identified what they will do in the event of a fire? <i>(They should plan their escape route and what they would do if the route was unavailable do to fire/smoke, e.g. having to tools to break double-glazed windows etc.)</i>	
Has the home worker got access to a first-aid kit?	

Action taken by employee to address any issues raised

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Action taken by The Unit / School Head to address any issues raised

Risk Assessment
<p>ASSIGN A RISK RATING TO THE HOME WORKING ONCE ALL OF THE MEASURES IDENTIFIED ABOVE HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED</p> <p>RISK RATING: _____(1-5)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Trivial Risk: No further action needed Acceptable Risk: No additional risk control measures required Moderate Risk: Implement further risk control measures if possible Substantial Risk: Further control measures must be implemented. If this is not possible then work must be strictly managed to ensure safety. Intolerable: Work must be prohibited until further control measures are implemented.

Signature of Person Completing Assessment
