

# ***University College Dublin***



## ***Office Safety Handbook***

***Rev 1. Issued September 2015***

***UCD Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance***

***(SIRC) Office***

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

**Table of Contents**

1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Computer Workstations / Visual Display Units .....	4
2.1 Poor Posture.....	4
2.1.1 Workstation Equipment .....	4
2.1.2 Working Practices .....	6
2.1.3 UCD Workstation Set Up Checklist .....	6
2.2. Visual Discomfort .....	8
2.2.1 Eye Comfort .....	8
2.2.2 Eye Tests and Glasses .....	8
2.3 Laptop Use .....	9
3.0 Manual Handling .....	11
3.1 Introduction to Manual Handling.....	11
3.2 Manual Handling Risk Reduction Measures.....	12
4.0 Office Equipment Safety.....	14
4.1 Photocopiers .....	14
4.2 Shredders .....	14
4.3 Guillotines .....	14
4.4 Portable Heaters .....	14
4.5 Cooling Fans / Towers .....	15
5.0 Office Chemicals .....	16
6.0 Office Housekeeping .....	17
7.0 Fire Safety In The Office .....	19
8.0 Electrical Safety In The Office .....	21
9.0 Pregnant Employees.....	23
10.0 Lone Working / Out Of Hours Working .....	24
11.0 Office Kitchens / Tea Making Areas.....	25
12.0 Appendices .....	26
12.1 Appendix 1. UCD Display Screen Workstation Assessment.....	26

**Revision History**

- Revision 0: July 2007. Is an original document
- Revision 1: September 2015 - Updates to document

## **1.0 Introduction**

While office work may not be considered as a high risk activity by many workers, unsafe work systems and poor office layouts can and do result in accidents and injuries to office workers.

Common office hazards include:

- Slips, trips and falls
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Collision with poorly positioned furniture or other items
- Exposure to chemicals used in the office
- Fire
- Electricity
- Office kitchens and tea making areas

This document is intended as a guide to University College Dublin employees who work in office environments and is designed to offer basic advice on safe working in such environments.

Queries about any of the information contained within this guide or any other safety issues within University College Dublin should be forwarded to [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie)

Further information can be found at [www.ucd.ie/sirc](http://www.ucd.ie/sirc)

## **2.0 Computer Workstations / Visual Display Units**

The potential hazards associated with the use of Computer Workstations / Visual Display Units are as follows:

- Poor Posture
- Visual Discomfort
- Laptop Use

### **2.1 Poor Posture**

Poor posture or workstation layout or design can give rise to serious and significant musculoskeletal / physical complaints in persons utilising computer workstations. To minimise the risk of poor posture, the correct equipment must be used and this equipment must be set up in an appropriate manner.

#### **2.1.1 Workstation Equipment**

##### ***Chair***

The chair used for sitting when working at a workstation must comply with minimum standards which include:

- Both the seat height and the backrest of the chair must be adjustable
- The base of your spine should be supported by the back of the chair
- The chair seat should reach to within a hand width of the back of your knees
- Arm rests are optional but if they are present they should be adjustable to ensure that the chair can get close to the desk
- You should be able to place your feet flat on the floor when sitting; if you are not able to do this then a foot rest is required
- There should be sufficient knee and thigh clearance beneath the worktop to comfortably allow you to get your upper legs under the desk.

##### ***Monitor Position***

To make sure that your workstation monitor is set up in the optimum position to ensure good posture you should ensure that:

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

- The monitor is positioned directly in front of you
- Your eyes should be level with, or just below (5-8cms), the top of the screen
- The monitor should be as far away from you as possible – arms length is ideal
- If a document holder is in use it should be within 100mm of the screen, at the same height as the screen and on the side of your dominant eye. Alternatively place a landscape document holder between the keyboard and monitor
- The monitor should have a swivel and tilt facility.

**Screen Characteristics**

As well as the monitor being posited correctly, it is also essential that the screen is functioning correctly and is not contributing to poor posture or eye fatigue.

- There should be no screen flicker
- The screen should be clean
- Images on the screen should be sharp
- The screen brightness / contrast should be adjusted by the user, depending on their preferences
- The monitor should be positioned so there is no glare from any other source on the screen. You may need to close window blinds and / or tilt the screen down slightly
- Screen characters should be sharp and in focus

**Keyboard**

- The keyboard should be tiltable (i.e. have little 'legs' underneath to allow you to raise it to an angle)
- The keys should be easily readable
- Keep a 10cm space in front of the keyboard for resting wrists

**Desk**

- The workstation desk should be large enough to comfortably accommodate all computer hardware; paperwork; document holder; desk lamp; telephone and any other material that has to be positioned on it
- All materials placed on the desk should be positioned so as to allow a comfortable position to be adopted
- The desk should be high enough to allow you to get your thighs comfortably underneath when sitting

- Adequate space should be maintained to the front of keyboard, in order to allow your hands and wrists to rest on the desk top

### **2.1.2 Working Practices**

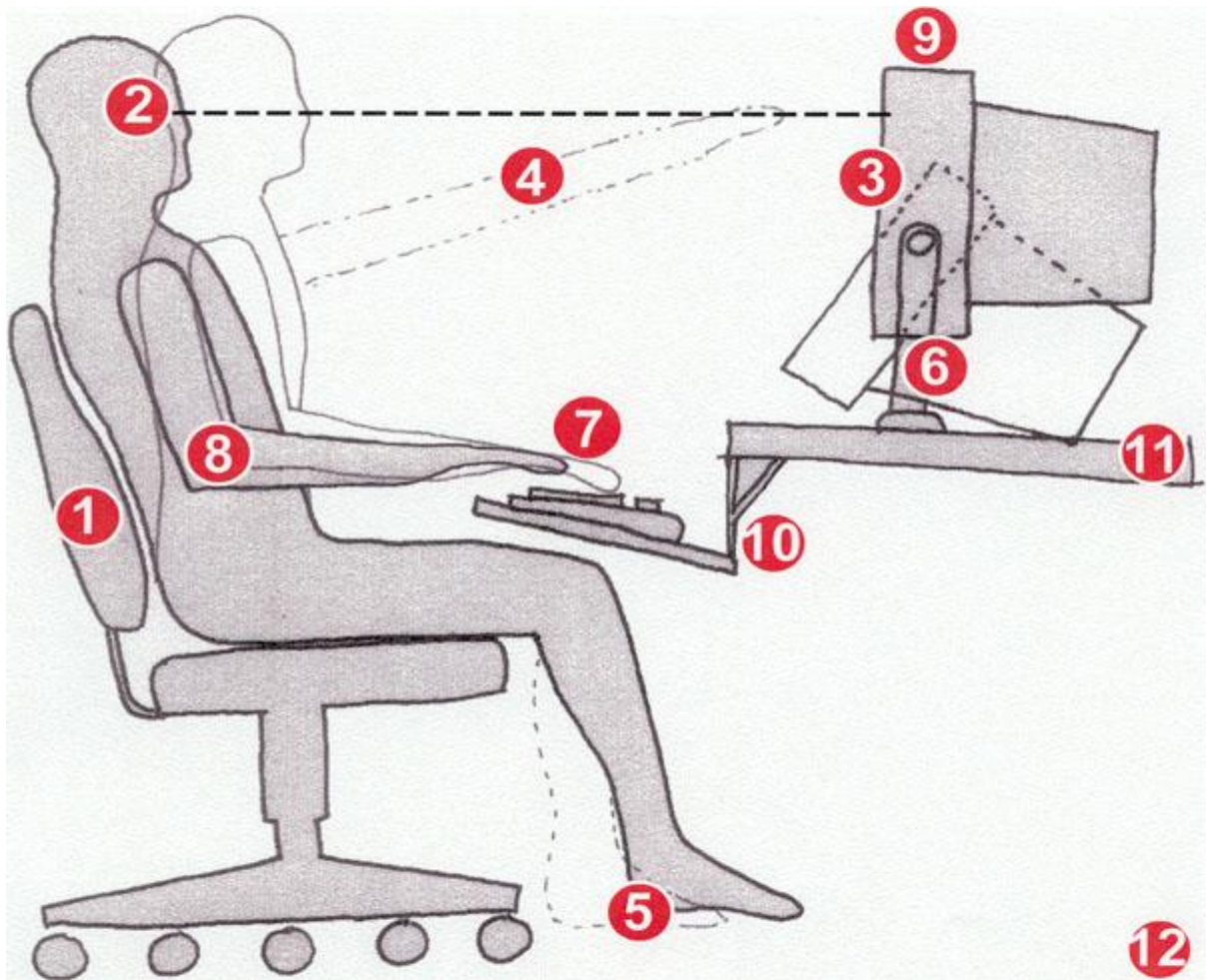
In addition to the use of the appropriate equipment, it is also essential that working practices are designed to reduce the risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders. As a guide the following should be adhered to:

- Keep your wrists flat and straight in relation to your forearms in order to use the keyboard and the mouse
- Keep your arms and elbows relaxed and close to your body
- Centre the monitor and keyboard in front of you
- Keep your wrists straight while typing
- Avoid sharp edges pressing on your forearms or bending your wrists upwards when typing or using the mouse
- Do not grip the mouse tightly
- Do not overreach to the mouse
- Use a footrest if necessary to support your feet
- Do not cross your legs or ankles as this puts pressure on the lower back and is also bad for circulation
- Take frequent short breaks from working at the display screen
  - Micro breaks: **10** seconds every **10** minutes. Look far away (at least 20 feet refocusing your eyes on a distant object)
  - Mini-breaks: 1 - 2 minutes every hour. Stand and stretch and do eye exercises.

### **2.1.3 UCD Workstation Set Up Checklist**

The University SIRC Office has developed a checklist to aid workstation assessments (refer to Appendix 1). Staff are encouraged to review the checklist and workstation setup in Appendix 1. An assessment of your workstation can be provided by SIRC office personnel by contacting [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie)

Figure 1 below shows sample Workstation setup guidelines



1. Use an adjustable chair
2. Top of monitor casing 5-8 cm approximately above eye level
3. Ensure no reflections or glare on screen
4. Sit at arms length from monitor
5. Place feet flat on floor or footrest
6. If using a document holder keep in-line with the computer screen
7. Keep wrists flat and straight in relation to forearms to use keyboard and mouse
8. Keep the arms and elbows relaxed and close to the body
9. Centre the monitor and keyboard in front of you
10. Use a tiltable keyboard
11. Use a stable work surface
12. Take frequent short breaks (microbreaks)

## **2.2. Visual Discomfort**

Visual discomfort may be due to a number of factors, including:

- i. user eyesight problems
- ii. screen glare
- iii. inadequate lighting in the work area
- iv. screen brightness
- v. poor clarity of characters on the screen

All persons using computer workstations and similar type devices are at risk from the hazards specified above.

### **2.2.1 Eye Comfort**

Working at a display screen can also give rise to eye problems including eye fatigue, drying of the eyes, etc. Blinking is an automatic function which we do on average 12 to 15 times per minute under normal circumstances. However, we blink less frequently when reading or concentrating thus allowing our eyes to become relatively dry. It is therefore important that when working at a display screen that users 'remember' to blink. In addition to this, frequent 'eye' breaks should be taken. Micro breaks should be taken every 10 minutes for 10 seconds at a time. When taking micro breaks, look far away (at least 20 feet) in order to refocus your eyes. Mini breaks should be taken every hour for at least 1 to 2 minutes and should involve standing and stretching and frequent refocusing of the eyes on distant objects.

### **2.2.2 Eye Tests and Glasses**

The University SIRC Office offers eye and eyesight tests for University staff who use a display screen for more than one hour continuously during their normal working day. There are two options open to qualifying staff to avail of this scheme. These are:

1. You may attend your own optician and forward the receipt along with a signed T4 form ([www.ucd.ie/bursar](http://www.ucd.ie/bursar)) to the University SIRC Office. The cost of the eye and eyesight test plus a contribution towards VDU glasses up to a maximum amount will be reimbursed. For current contribution rates contact [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie).
2. A voucher for a chain of high street opticians can be requested from the University SIRC Office.

Under normal circumstances only one claim per 24 month period will be processed.



### **2.3 Laptop Use**

The use of laptops is not covered under the Display Screen Equipment Legislation. The use of laptops for extended periods of time should be avoided whenever possible. When laptops are used in the office environment they should be linked to a 'docking station' and a full size monitor, keyboard and mouse utilised.

When working with laptops away from the office, or when docking stations are not available, then the following guidance should be adhered to:

- Always use a chair that gives you good lower back support. In a mobile computing environment, consider propping a pillow, rolled-up towel or other soft object against the back of your chair. Sitting on a soft object such as a cushion is an easy way to adjust an otherwise non-adjustable chair such as those typically found in a kitchen or hotel room.
- Keep your forearms, wrists and hands in a relaxed, neutral position. This can be accomplished by adjusting the height of either the work surface or your chair.
- Keep your thighs parallel to the floor and your feet flat on the floor or a footrest. In a mobile computing environment consider placing your feet on a book, briefcase or other solid object.
- Keep your head in a comfortable position. A 15-degree downward viewing angle is optimal.
- Maintain a comfortable viewing distance, 50 – 75cm is optimal.
- Position your display so as to avoid glare or reflections from overhead lighting, outside sources of light, or even reflections off of your own shirt. Consider closing blinds, turning off some overhead lights and / or orienting the display perpendicular to the light source.
- Keep your display screen clean and set the contrast and brightness to levels that allow you to see the screen clearly. Remember that LCD displays are not as bright as standard displays.
- Frequent short work / rest breaks are especially important in a mobile computing environment. In addition, it is especially important to listen to your body and take a work / rest break when the first signs and symptoms of discomfort arise. You may also want to try some basic stretching exercises.

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

*Whilst in a meeting room:*

If there is a table available, adjust your chair height so that your elbow is slightly higher than the table top. You can always put your feet on any available solid object. If a table is not available, use your briefcase or a similar thin object as a flat surface to rest your laptop computer on while typing.

*Whilst in the car:*

If you absolutely must use a laptop computer in a car, pull to the roadside and move to the passenger seat. Consider using your briefcase or a similar object as a flat surface to type on.

*Whilst on an airplane:*

If you need to use your laptop computer on an airplane try to choose a bulkhead seat or, as a second choice, an exit row. Bulkhead seats are not limited by a seatback reclined in front of you. Exit rows provide more seat-to-seat spacing and will allow you to keep your arms to a more neutral position.

*Whilst in a hotel:*

While most hotel desks and chairs may not provide the optimal mobile computing environment, you can make yourself more comfortable:

- Use a rolled-up bath towel or pillow to support the lumbar (lower) region of your back.
- Use a bath towel or pillow as a padded seat cushion.
- While it is not advisable to use your laptop computer in bed, if you need to do so pay close attention to your posture and ensure that the lumbar region of your back is properly supported. In addition, try to sit up straight so as to avoid neck, shoulder and back discomfort. Use pillows to support your lower back and head.

### **3.0 Manual Handling**

#### **3.1 Introduction to Manual Handling**

Manual handling is defined as the transportation or supporting of a load by one or more persons, and includes lifting, putting down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving a load.

Office workers may not consider that manual handling is a risk in their workplaces but manual handling injuries are suffered by workers in all working environments. It should be borne in mind that even light objects can cause significant back injuries if incorrect lifting methods are used. Similarly, lifting a light weight on a regular or repeated basis can also give rise to manual handling issues. In the office environment workers may be required to lift document boxes, files, bins, computer equipment, etc.

The main injuries associated with incorrect manual handling are:

1. Back strain and slipped discs
2. Hernias
3. Lacerations and crushing of hands and fingers
4. Musculoskeletal disorders
5. Injured feet
6. Various sprains and strains

These risks are exacerbated when:

1. Incorrect methods of lifting are used
2. Excessive weights are handled
3. Loads with sharp or awkward edges are handled
4. Loads are lifted in confined spaces

The selection of persons to carry out manual handling tasks must be made on the basis of physical capabilities and the level of training received by that person. Every person has a different ability to undertake manual handling tasks and this must be borne in mind at all times.

All employees who regularly engage in manual handling tasks must be trained in safe Manual Handling Techniques. Employees requiring Manual Handling Training must inform

their manager in order to arrange training. Training can be arranged through the University SIRC Office - e-mail [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie)

### **3.2 Manual Handling Risk Reduction Measures**

The principle means of protecting yourself from manual handling injuries is to avoid the manual handling of loads whenever possible. Office workers should design their work processes so that the requirement for manual handling is minimised. However, this is not always possible so whenever manual handling of loads is essential then working systems must be designed to prevent prolonged manual handling and the measures outlined below be taken into account whenever possible:

- Before you lift any load, assess its characteristics. Consider the size, weight, shape, condition, contents and position of the load to be handled. If deemed unsafe to handle a load, an individual employee may decline to do so. If you feel that the load is too heavy or awkward for you to lift, then do not do so.
- Whenever they are available, mechanical aids such as trolleys should be used when transporting loads. If you consider that a trolley or similar would be useful in minimising manual handling in your workplace then inform your manager.
- Loads of greater than 15kg should never be handled without help or the use of mechanical aids. Alternately, the load should be broken down into smaller units.
- When handling loads, which by the nature of their shape, loading or unstable contents pose a risk of injury, assistance must be obtained e.g. water cooler bottles.
- Whenever possible, do not carry loads down stairs unless the loads are very light and small in size. Use a lift or break the load down into smaller component parts.
- If necessary, wear gloves when handling loads with sharp edges.
- If needed, put on a disposable apron over your clothes before lifting dusty or dirty loads; if you try to lift a dusty or dirty load, without it dirtying your clothing, you will not be able to lift safely. Unsafe lifting, such as holding the load away from your body, may give rise to a significant risk of injury.
- Use mobile platforms or steps when manipulating loads at a height.
- If required, non slip flooring or mats should be provided in areas where there is a risk of slipping.
- All spillages must be cleaned up immediately so that they do not pose a slip hazard to those involved in manual handling. If you spill something, clean it up immediately.
- Persons should avoid bending over or stooping in their work for long periods.

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

- Materials should be stored in such a way that the heavier material is placed in a position where ease of access for removal is guaranteed and that all material is easily accessible. The storage of any materials under desks and in confined spaces is to be avoided. Adequate space must be maintained in areas where lifting occurs to ensure sufficient room for safe manual handling. This should be borne in mind when selecting areas for the storage of materials, especially those materials of a relatively heavy weight.
- There must be sufficient lighting levels in areas where manual handling occurs to ensure adequate visibility.
- All work areas must be kept tidy and free from obstructions at all times to reduce the risks of slips, trips and falls.
- Pregnant employees should not engage in manual handling tasks unless a Pregnant Employee Risk Assessment has recently been carried out.

For Manual Handling tasks deemed to be of excessive risk, a specific '[UCD Manual Handling Task Risk Assessment](#)' must be carried out to identify suitable risk control measures. High risk manual handling activities include those which increase the risk of stooping and twisting of the spine and those involving the handling of relatively heavy items (>20kg). The [University SIRC Office](#) should be contacted to arrange such an assessment.

See also [General Manual Handling risk assessment](#) and [Lab Manual Handling Risk Assessment](#) for further details.

## **4.0 Office Equipment Safety**

### **4.1 Photocopiers**

**When using photocopiers the following must be adhered to:**

1. Photocopiers must be positioned in adequately ventilated areas.
2. The photocopier should not be used when the lid is open.
3. When opening the copier doors to clear a paper jam, be aware that there are hot surfaces inside the machine.
4. If a paper jam requires you to place your hands deep into the machine, then the power must be turned off and the machine allowed to cool.
5. Do not try to manoeuvre a photocopier on your own.

### **4.2 Shredders**

When using shredders the following must be adhered to:

1. Do not place fingers inside the shredder.
2. Turn off the power supply when clearing blockages or emptying bags.
3. Be aware that loose clothing can catch in the shredder and be especially careful of ties and loose sleeves.

### **4.3 Guillotines**

When using paper guillotines the following must be adhered to:

1. Do not use guillotines for extended periods of time.
2. If any tingling in the fingers, hands or arms occurs then stop use immediately. If tingling does not cease contact the [University SIRC Office](#).
3. Always ensure that the guard is in place when using a guillotine. Do not operate if guard is missing.
4. Always return the guillotine to the 'safe' position when not in use, i.e. the position in which the blade is not exposed.

### **4.4 Portable Heaters**

1. Fan heaters must not be used in University offices.
2. Oil filled heaters / radiators must be used when additional heating is required.
3. Do not use portable heaters for the drying of any clothing or other materials.

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

4. Turn off all portable heaters overnight. Do not depend on the internal timing mechanism for shutting down the heater, always manually turn it off.

**4.5 Cooling Fans / Towers**

1. Turn off all cooling fans and towers at night.
2. Do not depend on the internal timing mechanism for shutting down the fan / cooling tower, always manually turn it off.
3. Do not obstruct the fan / tower outlets.

## **5.0 Office Chemicals**

Within the office environment, small quantities of hazardous chemicals are found in inks, toners, cleaning chemicals and correction fluids. Hazardous chemicals can cause injury through contact with skin and eyes, swallowing, or the inhalation of vapours.

Office chemicals must never be allowed to come into contact with the skin and eyes, be ingested or be inhaled.

Office workers must observe good hygiene practices at all times. Persons should always wash their hands after changing toner or print cartridges; using cleaning agents or handling inks and correction fluids. If required, gloves should be worn when handling these agents.

Any employee who develops a reaction to a substance at work, e.g. skin irritation, breathing difficulties, etc. must desist from using that substance and inform the [University SIRC Office](#) immediately.

If in doubt as to the safety of any office chemical, contact the [University SIRC Office](#) for further advice.



## **6.0 Office Housekeeping**

Poor housekeeping poses a variety of risks to the health and safety of workers. Workers may slip, trip, or fall over material and / or they may collide with inappropriately placed material. The obstruction of exit routes by poorly stored material can result in delayed escape in an emergency, whilst improper stacking of objects can lead to objects falling on persons. Inadequate and infrequent disposal of combustible materials can also represent a fire risk.

To help guard against these hazards in the office the following should be adhered to:

- All furniture, fittings and equipment should be arranged so that staff can move about without collision with desk corners, filing cabinets, etc. Edges that are frequently collided with should be cushioned.
- Filing cabinets should be arranged so that their drawers can be fully opened when in use.
- Only one drawer of a filing cabinet should be opened at any one time. All drawers must be closed after use.
- Electrical or telephone cables must not trail unprotected across the floor. Where required cable covers or ramps should be used or the [University Estate Services](#) (internal extension 1111) should be requested to install additional sockets in a suitable location.
- Chairs, desks or drawers should never be used to access shelving or any other elevated area. Stepladders or kick stools must always be used.
- All items stored above head level must be positioned properly to prevent falling.
- The mains power supply must be disconnected before attempting to move electrical equipment.
- All damaged floor coverings, furniture equipment or other office equipment should be removed from use if required and replaced or repaired as necessary. Where necessary contact the [University Estate Services](#) .
- Defects in lighting fixtures must be reported to the [University Estate Services](#) immediately.
- All signs of vermin should be reported at once to the [University Estate Services](#) .
- Floor areas must be kept clear of materials and litter.
- The areas around workstations must be kept tidy.
- All spillages must be cleaned up immediately. If you spill any liquids e.g. coffee, clean it up yourself immediately.
- Sufficient refuse bins should be provided in office areas and emptied on a regular basis.

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

- Dangerous wastes, e.g. broken glass, must be carefully disposed off.
- No staff member may attempt to repair or modify any equipment for which they have not received the proper training.
- All walkways, exit routes and emergency exit doorways must be kept free and clear from obstruction.
- All equipment supplied must be used and maintained as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Articles must not be placed at a height in a location, as they may fall and strike persons below.
- The stacking of goods must be done so that the risk of items falling is minimised. Material must not be stacked except where absolutely necessary. In such cases, stacked material must not be higher than 1.5 metres and must involve light materials only.
- All employees are reminded that under current legislation they have a statutory obligation not to endanger the safety of themselves or their co-workers whilst at work, through any act or omission that they may make including poor workplace housekeeping.

## **7.0 Fire Safety in the Office**

There is always an ever-present risk of fire occurring in all workplaces. Common fire hazards in the office environment include improperly stored combustible materials, faulty electrical equipment, the build up of combustible wastes in the workplace and smoking in undesignated areas.

The University is committed to providing a fire safety programme that guards against the outbreak of fire in all areas and also makes provisions for the safety of all persons in the event of a fire. The University would like to reiterate to all staff at this point that every employee has a responsibility to guard against the outbreak of fire in their workplace through the implementation of good fire safety practises and where applicable the adherence to the control measures outlined below.

To guard against the outbreak of fire in the office the following must be adhered to:

- Smoking is prohibited in all indoor workplaces within the University.
- Employees should make themselves familiar with the location of fire alarm activation points and escape routes in their working areas.
- Employees must not attempt to repair any electrical equipment unless they are competent to do so.
- The amount of combustible materials stored within every workplace should be kept to a minimum.
- It is prohibited to disengage a fire detection device or remove a fire extinguisher from its designated location without the express permission of the [University SIRC Office](#).
- In the event of an evacuation, all persons must leave the workplace without exception and assemble at their designated assembly point. You should know where your local assembly point is.
- Employees must adhere to any instructions given by University Campus Services staff or emergency services personnel in the event of an emergency.
- Persons must not fight workplace fires unless they have been trained to do so and it is safe to do so.
- It is the responsibility of all University employees to ensure that escape routes and emergency exits in their working area are kept free from obstruction.
- No individual may obstruct or remove from service an escape route or emergency exit without prior arrangement with the [University SIRC Office](#).

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

- In the event that employees have a concern regarding means of escape, then they must contact their manager. Urgent concerns can be conveyed directly to the [University SIRC Office](#).
- All employees are reminded of their statutory obligation to protect their own and their co-workers safety by guarding against the outbreak of fire in the workplace through the use of safe systems of work.

## **8.0 Electrical Safety in the Office**

The main hazard from electricity in the office environment is electric shock, which can lead to electrical burns, shock, asphyxia and death. Electricity is also a major cause of fire. Electrical wiring can also present a trip hazard.

To ensure safe working with electricity in the office all persons should adhere to the following precautions:

- All faults concerning electrical equipment and wiring must be reported to your supervisor or the [University Estate Services](#) on internal extension 1111 immediately.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Where electrical wiring must run across floors, it should be protected by saddles, conduit or armouring. Extension cables, when used, must be routed so as not to cause tripping hazards.
- Only CO<sub>2</sub> or dry powder fire extinguishers can be used to fight electrical fires (red cylinders with black or blue labels respectively).
- All electrical equipment should be turned off when not in use and overnight, unless this is not possible for safety or operational reasons. Electrical sources powering equipment that cannot be turned off under normal circumstances, for safety or operational reasons, must be clearly signed as such at the power supply point.
- Under no circumstances must untrained employees attempt to effect repairs to electrical equipment.

In the event of an electrocution, the victim must not be touched until the power supply has been disconnected. Alternately, the victim and the power supply may be separated by using

**University College Dublin**  
**Office Safety Manual**

an insulating rod, i.e. a wooden pole. All electric shocks, no matter how small, must be reported to the [University SIRC Office](#) immediately.

## **9.0 Pregnant Employees**

On occasion University employees may become pregnant and it is possible that tasks assigned to them may pose a risk to their safety or that of their unborn child. For the purposes of health and safety, the term pregnant applies to all gravid women and breastfeeding mothers up to six months after parturition.

In the interests of their own health and safety and that of their unborn / nursing child, all pregnant and breastfeeding employees are strongly encouraged to report their pregnancy / breastfeeding to their manager or the [University SIRC Office](#) as early as possible so that a [Pregnant Employee Risk Assessment](#) can be carried out. The purpose of this risk assessment is to ensure that the working conditions of the employee do not pose a risk to her or her unborn / nursing child's health and safety.

If a risk to the safety of the mother or the unborn / breastfeeding child is identified during the risk assessment, then modification of the employee's working conditions may be required.

The contents of every [Pregnant Employee Risk Assessment](#) are confidential.

## **10.0 Lone Working / Out Of Hours Working**

Lone working is defined as working in an environment in which if rendered incapacitated or unconscious, a person cannot reasonably expect to be found within 15 minutes. The main hazard in lone working is, that in the event of an accident that incapacitates them, a person will not be able to contact or summon help. Lone Working Risk Assessments and Lone Working Risk Assessment Templates are available t

The risk from lone working is dependent on the nature of the work undertaken whilst working alone. General office based activities or 'paperwork' type activities, are classified as being low to medium risk, are acceptable under normal conditions.

[Lone Working Risk Assessments](#) and [Lone Working Risk Assessment Templates](#) are available from the [UCD SIRC website](#).

Office workers working alone are strongly encouraged to inform a responsible third party of their whereabouts and their expected time of finishing work, with an agreement to contact the responsible person upon exiting the workplace. In the event that the lone worker does not make contact at the prearranged time, the responsible person should be informed that they should begin to search for the lone worker and if required inform the emergency services.

Any activity with the potential to cause significant to severe personal injury or material damage is not an acceptable lone working activity.



### **11.0 Office Kitchens / Tea Making Areas**

Kitchen areas and tea / coffee making facilities are present in a number of University buildings. Kitchen facilities can exhibit a range of hazards, including hot surfaces; the presence of hot liquids; spillages of material leading to slip hazards; and fire risks from kitchen equipment.

To help reduce the risk from office kitchens and tea making facilities the following should be adhered to:

- Kitchens / tea making areas must be kept in a clean and tidy condition at all times. If required, managers should make provisions for facility cleaning on a regular basis.
- Persons using such facilities must not allow electrical appliances to become wet.
- Persons must ensure that kettles left to boil are placed away from counter edges.
- All persons using kitchens and tea making areas must be wary of hot surfaces and fluids, in and around kettles and coffee machines. It must not be assumed that spillages observed in these areas are of cold liquids.
- All spillages must be cleaned up immediately.
- Fridges must be kept in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Electrical appliances must not be left unattended when in use, particularly toasters and hot plates.
- Electrical flexes must be kept away from hot surfaces, especially those on toasters and hot plates.
- Appliances must be disconnected from the power supply if possible when not in use.
- Chairs and tables must be positioned so that there is ease of movement around kitchen and tea making areas. Exit routes must not be obstructed by such furniture.
- Appliances must be unplugged when being moved.
- Kitchen appliances should be used in designated areas and not in individual's offices.
- Where kitchen facilities interfere with a building's fire alarm causing false alarms or are not adequately equipped with detection, the responsible School / Unit will be asked to make the necessary modifications or additions.

## **12.0 Contact Details and Further Information**

Safety, Insurance, Operational Risk and Compliance (SIRC) Office website: [www.ucd.ie/sirc](http://www.ucd.ie/sirc)

SIRC Office Contact Number: 8768/8771

SIRC Office E-mail: [sirc@ucd.ie](mailto:sirc@ucd.ie)

Information on the following topics can be obtained by clicking on the below links:

[Office Safety](#)

[Manual Handling](#)

[Workstation Ergonomics and Visual Display Units](#)

[Pregnant Employees](#)

[Lone Working](#)

[Office Risk Assessments](#)

## **13.0 Appendices**

### **13.1 Appendix 1. UCD Display Screen Workstation Assessment**

**Appendix 1.**  
**UCD Display Screen Workstation Assessment  
Record**

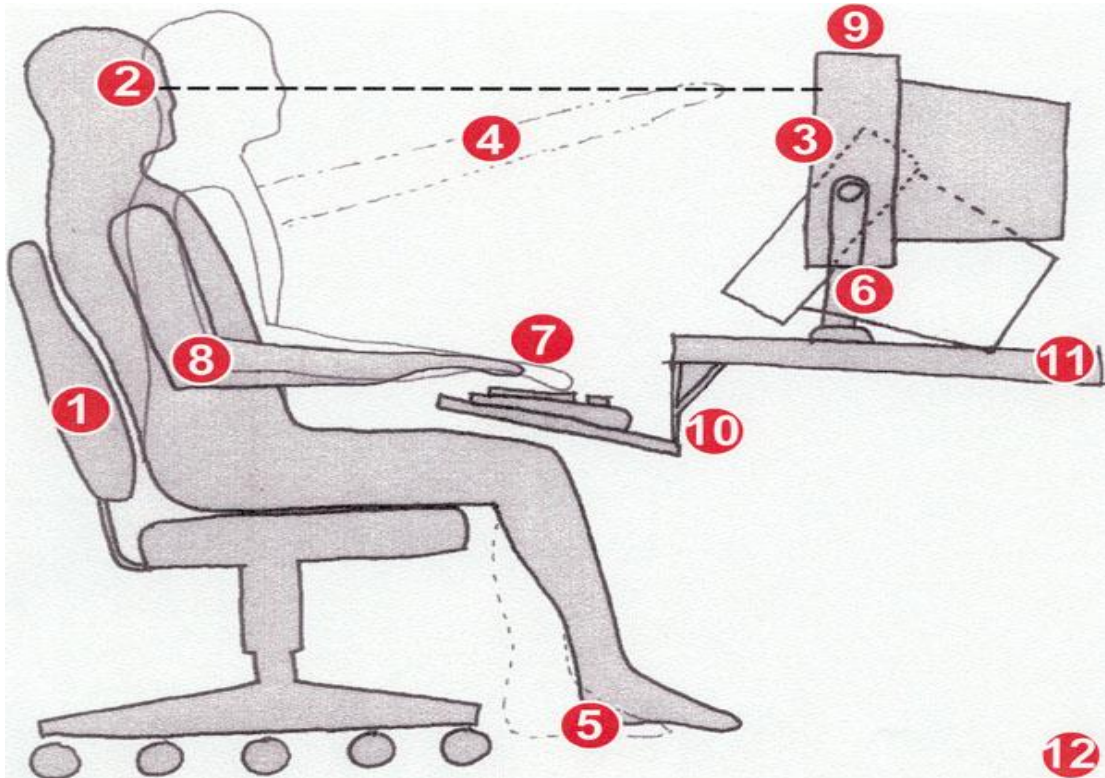
**University College Dublin  
Office Safety Manual**

<b>Ergonomic Assessment Checklist</b>				
ITEM	CHECKLIST	COMPLIANT?		COMMENTS
		Yes	No	
<b>DISPLAY SCREEN</b>	Does it swivel and tilt?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is screen separated from keyboard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are text characters clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the image size adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the image flicker free?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Brightness and contrast working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the screen free of glare?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are eyes at same height as top of VDU?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>KEYBOARD</b>	Tiltable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	of employees elbow between forearm and upper arm in range	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	least 10cm? (to support hands and arms during use)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are the key characters clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is mouse within easy reach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>WORK DESK/SURFACE</b>	Low reflectance surface?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Of adequate size to allow flexible arrangement of screen, keyboard and documents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is there a document holder present/available if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Does the workstation allow ease of postural changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are corners and edges of workstation smoothed off?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Area underneath desk clear to allow adequate knee and thigh clearance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are the thighs positioned approx in a horizontal position, with the lower legs vertical and the seat height at or a little below knee height?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the lighting in the workstation area adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**University College Dublin  
Office Safety Manual**

ITEM	CHECKLIST	COMPLIANT?		COMMENTS
		Yes	No	
WORK CHAIR	Is the chair easy to adjust?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Does the chair support the spine?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the chair back adjustable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the seat height adjustable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are the castors working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the swivel working?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Does the backrest clear the lower back; have support in the mid lumbar region and end below level of shoulder blades?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	If armrests are present, do they impede comfortable posture?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	If armrests are present, do they prevent the chair sliding under the desk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ENVIRONMENT	Are windows fitted with adjustable covering to reduce glare and reflections from daylight?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are VDU's positioned directly under overhead lights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are any cables trailing across the floor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Are the cables long enough to allow movement of the equipment easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
EMPLOYEE/ COMPUTER INTERFACE	Is the software suitable for the task?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Has the employee had sufficient training in the use of the software?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Is the software easy to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Does the employee have sufficient breaks away from the VDU?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Does the employee complain of any eye or muscular strain associated with their work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	Has the employee undergone an eye exam within the last 12 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Guidance on setting up your workstation is given below:



1. Use an adjustable chair
2. Top of monitor casing 5-8 cm approximately above eye level
3. Ensure no reflections or glare on screen
4. Sit at arms length from monitor
5. Place feet flat on floor or footrest
6. If using a document holder keep in-line with the computer screen
7. Keep wrists flat and straight in relation to forearms to use keyboard and mouse
8. Keep the arms and elbows relaxed and close to the body
9. Centre the monitor and keyboard in front of you
10. Use a tiltable keyboard
11. Use a stable work surface
12. Take frequent short breaks (microbreaks)