



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

UOW SAFE@WORK

ERGONOMIC EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

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1 Introduction

In this guideline, the term "ergonomic equipment" refers to workplace equipment and furniture, including but not limited to desks, chairs and monitors, provided to assist staff with the performance of work.

There is an obligation on the University to provide ergonomic equipment which is appropriate and suitable for the work being done and safe for the purpose to which it is to be used.

It is the policy of the University that all ergonomic equipment that is purchased, constructed or installed should comply with the relevant health and safety legislation and Australian Standards.

Pursuant to the [University Disability Policy](#) and the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act, 1992, the University recognises that for some people with a disability, the disability creates a difference in the way they do their work, and that this difference may need to be accommodated by adjustment to the work environment. Reasonable adjustment includes but is not limited to such elements as job design; workplace access; provision of equipment; modifying the work area design; and flexible working arrangements. The University will endeavour to make any reasonable adjustments within the spirit of the disability legislation.

2 Scope

The purpose of this guideline is to provide advice to University managers and staff in regard to the installation and maintenance of ergonomic equipment. The aims are to:

- (i) reduce the risk of injuries, such as occupational overuse and back strain, through the provision of suitable ergonomic equipment; and
- (ii) to satisfy the University's obligation under the Work Health and Safety legislation to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

3 Responsibilities

3.1 Injury Management Coordinator

The Injury Management Coordinator will provide advice on ergonomic matters and seek expert opinion where necessary. This advice will principally take the form of workstation assessments and recommendations at the design stage and prior to the acquisition of new ergonomic equipment.

The Injury Management Coordinator will also arrange training programs on safe ergonomic practices as appropriate.

3.2 Supervisors

Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that each workplace and any ergonomic equipment is configured in accordance with this guideline and any guidelines issued under it.

3.3 Facilities Management Division

Facilities Management Division will provide ergonomically approved workstations and seating as required and recommended by WHS. Any repairs or maintenance required to chairs, desks etc, and replacement of unrepairable centrally issued equipment will also be undertaken and may be funded by Facilities Management Division if the product was a WHS recommended item.

3.4 Units

It is the responsibility of Units who undertake refurbishments or modifications to meet any associated costs involving the upgrading or rearranging of ergonomic equipment unless approval has been given in advance to alternative funding assistance from other sources.

4 Definitions

Ergonomics

The [International Ergonomics Association](#) states that: Ergonomics (or human factors) is the scientific discipline concerned with the understanding of the interactions among humans and other elements of a system, and the profession that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimise human well-being and overall system performance.

Ergonomics may be:

- Physical – for example working postures, materials handling, repetitive movements, work-related musculoskeletal disorders, workplace layout, safety and health.
- Cognitive – for example mental workload, decision-making, skilled performance, human-computer interaction, human reliability, work stress and training as these may relate to human-system design.
- Organisational – for example communication, crew resource management, work design, design of working times, teamwork, participatory design, community ergonomics, cooperative work, new work paradigms, organisational culture, virtual organisations, telework, and quality management.

Ergonomic Equipment

Chairs, stools, desks, benches, computers, and other equipment or aids that assist with the interaction of humans and work.

Ergonomist

Person with the training, qualifications skills and competencies to assist with the application of ergonomic principles.

5 Approval of Ergonomic Equipment

Office based ergonomic equipment should be introduced into the workplace according to the [UOW Joinery Elements Design and Space Allocation Standards](#).

Where the need for the equipment deviates from the above standard or Australian Standard consultation is required to occur with the Injury Management Coordinator.

6 Funding of Ergonomic Equipment

The purchase of basic ergonomic equipment is normally provided through departmental funds. Funding for reasonable adjustment for a person with a disability is not covered by this guideline and reference should be made to the [University Disability Policy](#).

The purchase of specialist ergonomic equipment or advice is normally met by departmental funds. The WHS Unit may fund the provision of ergonomic equipment in accordance with SafeWork NSW guidelines. Normally this is when an employee has needs which have arisen through a work related injury. WHS can provide advice on specialist ergonomic equipment requirements.

7 Monitoring of Ergonomic Issues

Units are required to monitor their ergonomic needs. When it is considered that upgrading or additional purchase of ergonomic equipment is necessary, the WHS Unit should be contacted for professional advice or an assessment can be arranged. In some circumstances, the conduct of the assessment may include consultation with or participation by, an accredited external organisation.

Workplace safety inspections will normally include an examination of ergonomic equipment and requirements.

8 Reporting of an Ergonomic Related Issue

Occurrence of any injury involving equipment may be related to ergonomic practices and should be reported and investigated as per the [Incident Management and Reporting Guidelines](#). Corrective actions should be assigned to prevent further injury which may consist of the replacement or purchase of additional ergonomic equipment.

9 Related Documents

- [University Disability Policy](#)
- [Incident Management and Reporting Guidelines](#)
- [UOW Joinery Elements Design and Space Allocation Standards](#)

10 References

The following references may be utilised in assessing ergonomic needs:

- AS/NZS 1680.2.2:2008 Interior and workplace lighting - Specific applications - Office and screen-based tasks
- AS/NZS 4438:1997 (R2016) Height Adjustable Swivel Chairs
- AS/NZS 4442:1997 Office Desks
- AS/NZS 4443:1997 Office panel systems - Workstations
- [Ergonomic Principles and Checklists for the Selection of Office Furniture and Equipment \(Safe Work Australia\)](#)
- [Guidance Note for the Prevention of Occupational Overuse Syndrome in Keyboard Employment \[NOHSC:3005\(1996\)\] \(Safe Work Australia\)](#)
- [Hazardous Manual Tasks Code of Practice \(SafeWork NSW\)](#)
- [Officewise: A Guide to Health & Safety in the Office \(WorkSafe Victoria\)](#)

11 Program Evaluation

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the University, the program will be reviewed regularly by the WHS Unit and relevant stakeholders. Conditions which might warrant a review of the guidelines on a more frequent basis would include:

- Incidents related to ergonomics
- Changes to codes of practice
- Employee concern.

Following completion of any review, the program will be revised and, if necessary, updated in order to correct any deficiencies.

12 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	1996 October	Manager WHS	New document created
2	2003 October	Manager WHS	Document reviewed with minor amendments.
3	2006 November	Manager WHS	Document reviewed with minor amendments.
4	2010 January	Manager WHS	Document reviewed with minor amendments.
5	August 2010	Manager WHS	Document updated to incorporate the Personnel name change to Human Resources Division.
6	March 2012	Manager WHS	Rebrand
7	January 2013	Manager WHS	Document reviewed with minor amendments
8	March 2017	Manager WHS	Rebrand. Minor changes.