

Q. What is a VDU/Workstation?

A. VDU is the abbreviation for Visual Display Unit. VDU is often referred to as DSE; this is the abbreviation for Display Screen Equipment. Your “workstation” is the assembly comprising:

- ✓ display screen equipment/visual display unit,
- ✓ keyboard,
- ✓ software,
- ✓ work chair and work desk,
- ✓ any optional accessories and peripherals, and,
- ✓ the immediate work environment of the display screen equipment

Q. What is a VDU user?

A. You are a VDU user if:

1. You have no choice but to use the VDU to carry out your work
2. You normally use the VDU for continuous periods of more than one hour
3. The VDU is generally used by you on a daily basis

Q. I am a manager/senior manager, is it necessary that I get my workstation assessed?

A. Yes. All employees regardless of position who are defined as VDU users must have their workstation assessed.

Q. I don't suffer any ill effects from working with VDU, can I decline the assessment if I'm satisfied that everything is as it should be?

A. No. The general duties of the employee contained in the Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act, clearly state that the employee has a duty to cooperate. The Regulations also state, that the employer must carry out assessments for all VDU users.

Q. Can I assess my own workstation?

A. No. This is not permitted under the regulations. Your workstation must be assessed by your employer.

Q. Am I entitled to an eye/eyesight test?

A. Yes. Every employee who habitually uses a VDU as a significant part of normal work has a right to opt for an appropriate eye test and an eyesight test, which is made available by the organisation. You are entitled to an eye/eyesight test before you commence work and at regular intervals thereafter. Unless advised by an Optometrist or Doctor, the cost of re-testing will only be covered after a period of two years has elapsed from date of first test. Re-tests will not be done automatically. They will only take place after the employee has requested a further test.

Q. If I need glasses for VDU work, does the organisation have to pay for them?

Where an employee is found to require corrective lenses (or an alteration of existing lenses) for VDU work, the basic cost (**€59**) will be borne by the organisation. If other than the basic frames are requested by an employee, all additional costs resulting from this must be borne by the user. If the Optometrist determines that the employee requires spectacles for normal day-to-day use, the organisation will not cover this cost, and staff must make their own arrangements for these and will be responsible for the full cost.

Q. How often should I take a break from working with Display Screen Equipment?

A. The Regulations set no frequency for breaks, nor do they specify the duration of breaks. However, no single continuous period of work at a screen should, in general, exceed one hour. The key point to remember is that you should take a break before fatigue sets in.

Q. I am pregnant. Do I need to have my workstation assessed again?

A. When your manager becomes aware that you are pregnant, a Pregnant Employee Risk Assessment will be carried out. As part of this risk assessment any additional pregnancy-related risks will be considered. This includes risks posed by VDU work. It may be necessary to re-assess your workstation as your pregnancy progresses. You should raise any concerns that you may have regarding VDU work with your manager, as your pregnancy progresses.

Q. I use a laptop. Is this covered by the regulations?

A. Laptops are not covered by the regulations. However, where a laptop is connected to a separate monitor and keyboard, the workstation is assessed to record whether the workstation meets the requirements detailed in the Display Screen Equipment Regulations. If you use a laptop/notebook, you must not use it for prolonged periods of time.

Q. I find it too hot/too cold when I'm working at my workstation. Do the regulations specify suitable temperatures?

A. In relation to sedentary office work, a minimum temperature of 17.5°C, so far as is reasonably practicable, must be achieved and maintained at every workstation after the first hour's work. There is no maximum temperature specified in the regulations; however, an acceptable temperature for office work lies within the range of 18 to 23 °C. A temperature reading will be recorded at your workstation during the assessment.

Q. What do the regulations say about lighting?

A. As a general rule, a level of lighting which falls between 300 - 500 lux should be appropriate. A lux meter reading will be recorded at your workstation during the assessment. If more light is required for reading documents, local lighting should be used. However, the light from a table lamp etc. must not shine on the VDU or the immediate surrounding area.

Q. There are boxes and other materials stored under my desk. Is this allowed?

A. As a general rule, items should not be stored under your desk. If you have no choice but to store items under your desk, these items must not impact in any way on your posture or comfort.

Q. I have received safety information about my workstation. I have a good understanding of what is required of me already. Do I still have to familiarise myself with the information provided?

A. Yes. Apart from organisational policies and procedures, there is a legal requirement placed on employees under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (General Duties of the Employee) to ensure that they follow all safety instructions, and attend and engage in, all safety training events.