**HOMEWORKING ADVICE AND GUIDANCE**

**Introduction**

During the COVID-19 pandemic more staff and students will be working from home. Noted below is some advice to enable you to achieve the best possible working environment within your home so that you can look after your own health and wellbeing.

**Location**

Find an area within your home with adequate space to set up a suitable working zone if possible. Ensure there is sufficient light, ventilation and no trailing cables. Avoid using a sofa or bed.

**Equipment**

Check your electrical equipment is safe to use. Do not overload sockets or daisy chain extension leads.

**Contact with colleagues**

Keep regular contact with your line manager and Team to keep them informed that you are safe and well. Use Skype for Business, Microsoft Teams etc. to keep in touch. It is quite normal to feel anxious during this situation. Contact your line manager or the [employee assistance programme](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/pro-counselling/) provider for confidential assistance and support if required.

**Incident Reporting**

Incidents, near misses and ill health should still be reported in the usual way using the University’s [Incident Report form](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/formssignsandtemplates/)

**Workstation set-up advice**

**Working from a home office:**

If you have a home office with a desk, chair and personal computer please try and follow the [DSE Self-Assessment](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/safetyguidance/dse/#tab2) checklist as far as you possibly can and try and achieve the ideal sitting position (see image below). If you can’t achieve this you could try implementing some of the measures suggested in the rest of this document where relevant.



**Working from a kitchen/dining table with a laptop/tablet:**

Refer to the ideal sitting position (see image above) and try to replicate this as much as possible.

**Chair**

Try and keep your knees below your hips and an open 100 degree hip angle (see image above). As it is unlikely that you will have an adjustable chair you can try to get into an ideal sitting position using a cushion or pillow to sit on and a rolled up towel against your lower back for lumbar support. These measures will help to take the strain and load off your spine but only use them if they feel comfortable. Make sure that your feet are placed firmly on the floor. If you can’t do this use a biscuit tin, Tupperware container or similar as a footrest. If you have a footrest at work and can take it home please do so.

**Screen height**

If you have a laptop or tablet stand, use this to raise the height of the screen. If you do not have one of these, raise your laptop/tablet up using books, biscuit tins etc. as best you can. You may not achieve the ideal position but aim to raise your laptop/tablet by a minimum of 15 cm. Your eyes should naturally be aligned with the top third of your screen when you are looking straight ahead. Even a small height adjustment will help. The aim is to avoid dropping your head as much as possible to try and avoid neck and shoulder strain.

**Mouse and keyboard**

If you are raising up your laptop/tablet use an external keyboard and mouse so that you are not working with your arms too high. Take your keyboard and mouse home with you if possible, particularly if you already have ergonomic ones. Make sure that you have enough USB ports to connect these. Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position (flat). This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and pulling your neck muscles.

If you can’t attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on the table rather than raising it up but you **must take more frequent breaks**. Try and stand up and move around every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).

**Working from a lounge chair:**

Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle, tucked closely to your body, and your wrists should be in a neutral position (flat). This posture helps keep you from rounding your shoulders and straining your neck muscles.

If you can’t attach an external mouse and keyboard, leave your laptop in place on your lap or a tray on your lap. **You must take more frequent breaks,** try and stand up and walk around every 15 minutes (more on taking breaks and exercises below).

**Screen Glare**

If you can, try not to put your laptop/tablet directly underneath a bright artificial light. Try and use natural light as much as possible.

**Taking Breaks and Exercise**

Regardless of your set up, the best way to look after your health and wellbeing is to take regular breaks and to move around as much as possible.

The more ‘makeshift’ your set-up, the more important it is for you to move. If you have a good home office set-up, take a break for 5-10 minutes every hour. For other set-ups take a break every 15-20 minutes.

Here are some tips to help you to move more:

* Stand up every time you use the phone
* Try and do more activities away from the screen e.g. reading paperwork
* Set up a reminder e.g. a timer on your phone. You can also install apps such as Break Reminder on your computer that allow you to set reminders (see example on the [DSE website](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/safetyguidance/dse/#tab4)).

There is a link on the DSE website where you will find workstation exercises you can do in your micro breaks.

**Additional Help and Support**

You can find more advice and guidance on the [Homeworking](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/employment/leave/flexibleworking/staff/ps/homeworking/)  and [DSE](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/safetyguidance/dse/#tab1) websites. If you have any questions contact safety@exeter.ac.uk or the Occupational Health Service via occupationalhealth@exeter.ac.uk and a Health and Safety or Occupational Health Advisor will be able to offer further advice.

**Don’t forget to take your laptop charger and other chargers as well as other equipment that you require home with you.**