

OTAGO POLYTECHNIC MANAGEMENT POLICY		Number: MP0407.03
Title:	Computer Health and Safety	
ITPNZ Standard:	4 Staff Selection, Appraisal and Development	
Chief Executive Approval:	Approval Date: 25 Jan 10	Effective Date: 25 Jan 10
Previous Policy Number:	na	Review Date: as required
Contact Authority:	Director: Organisational Development	Status: Current

Purpose To provide training, guidelines and appropriate equipment to support the comfort and wellbeing of staff while working with computers.

Background Staff at Otago Polytechnic often work intensively with computers and their comfort and wellbeing can be well managed with correct work organisation, work processes, individual work methods and appropriate equipment.

Statutory Compliance Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 and Amendment Act 2002, associated Regulations and Amendments.

National Guidelines The Approved Code of Practice for the use of Visual Display Units, published by the Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health 1995, provides best practice guidelines.
ACC Guidelines on Preventing Discomfort, available online
<http://www.habitatwork.co.nz>

- Policy**
1. All staff are responsible for the prevention of computer related discomfort and strain.
 2. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff who will be, or currently are, using computers attend a Computer Health and Safety training session.
 3. Individuals are responsible to ensure that they follow good practice and ensure risk factors that may cause discomfort or strain are eliminated, isolated or minimised.
 4. Laptop or portable computers, if used for more than two hours in one sitting, should have a separate keyboard and mouse for use.
 5. Individuals are responsible to immediately report any discomfort or pain believed to be resulting from computer work to their Manager and complete an Incident/Accident Report form to allow appropriate follow up.
 6. Staff must be provided with a workstation and fully adjustable chair which comply with the standards set out in the Approved Code of Practice for Visual Display Units. Workstation keyboard trays must be of sufficient size to ensure they allow for mouse placement at the same level as the keyboard. There should be room for paper copy. Where the desk is not height adjustable, footstools must be available.
 7. Managers and individuals must plan work to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to workload management to ensure that computer risk factors are minimised.

Procedures

1. **Computer Setup**
Prior to the introduction of computers to a work area, or alteration of an existing setup, the following issues must be addressed:

1.1 Facilities Planning



- Staff working space must be allocated so that the tasks, the equipment used, storage needs and environmental factors are all considered.
- Where possible, the computer screen should be positioned so that it is at a 90° angle to windows and lights so as to avoid glare and reflection. Windows should be fitted with curtains or blinds to control the amount of light entering the room and lights should be fitted with diffusers.
- Trunk cabling and wiring should be sited so as to avoid creating trip hazards.
- Management should consult with staff to ascertain their workstation needs and Human Resources can be contacted for an individual workstation assessment if required.
- Otago Polytechnic has equipment supplier relationships which allow for equipment to be provided on a trial basis to ensure it is appropriate for the staff member and their tasks.

1.2 Work Organisation

Work organisation has a correlation with computer use and health. Managers are responsible to plan for the following situations with staff and will ensure that:

- There are enough people to do the job.
- Work is scheduled to avoid recurrent deadlines.
- Peak workload periods are anticipated and planned for.
- Workload levels are discussed with staff.
- Staff are encouraged to take tea/refreshment breaks and to not work through these – thereby avoiding maintenance of persistent/static postures while they drink their tea/coffee, and dine at their computers.
- Workload situations when staff are absent are assessed.
- When staff return from leave (holiday or sick leave), or are new to a position, work loads/speed are built up gradually.

2. Breaks

- Staff will take opportunities for “muscle-moving breaks’. A *change of activity* away from the computer for 10 minutes within each hour is recommended. Tea and meal breaks will be taken.
- Carry out micro pauses/muscle relaxation for 5-10 seconds and briefly look away from their screen every few minutes.

3. Training

- Computer Health and Safety training sessions are compulsory for staff working 0.3 FTE and over who use computers. Sessions are regularly held though the year - details are available on Insite.
- Staff must understand how to adjust their chair and workstation so that it is set up correctly.
- Staff must be trained in safe work practices and the prevention of discomfort and strain.



4. Laptop/Portable Computers

These generally are not designed for, and should not be used for, prolonged or continuous use in a place of work. If use is likely to be for longer than 2 hours at a stretch, a separate keyboard and mouse is strongly recommended, and the laptop screen should be elevated.

5. Home Computing

- With a blurring of the interface between the work and home environment, it is important that all staff ensure that their home workstation is correctly set up and that healthy and safe work practices are followed.
- Where work for Otago Polytechnic at home is approved by their Head of School/Director: Organisational Development and Director: Learning Environment, the health and safety requirements are covered in MP0450 Enabling Off Site Work.

6. Discomfort or Pain

Should staff experience discomfort or pain they must immediately report to their manager and review:

- Workstation design
- Worker posture and individual work techniques
- Work organisation

Early reporting of symptoms and intervention is a key factor in preventing discomfort and strain. The Health and Safety Advisor is available to advise staff on interventions and if necessary, treatment options.

7. Vision

Employees who are using computers for most of their working days or are doing highly intensive visual work for shorter periods will be entitled to a vision assessment (see MP0409 Vision Safety).

Referral Documents

The Approved Code of Practice for the use of Visual Display Units published by the Department of Labour, Occupational Safety and Health
MP0409 Vision Safety
MP0450 Enabling Off Site Work

Delegation of Procedures

Approved by Chief Executive
Date: 25 January 2010

