Manual handling and ergonomics procedure

1 Manual Handling

1.1 Purpose

This procedure describes the process for identifying, assessing and controlling hazardous manual handling to reduce the number and severity of musculoskeletal disorders associated.

1.2 Application

This procedure applies to all staff, students, contractors and other personnel at workplaces under the management or control of the University of Melbourne.

1.3 Definitions

Manual handling

Any activity requiring the use of force exerted by a person to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or otherwise move, hold or restrain any object;

Hazardous manual handling

Hazardous manual handling includes:

a) manual handling having any of the following characteristics—
   i) repetitive or sustained application of force;
   ii) repetitive or sustained awkward posture;
   iii) repetitive or sustained movement;
   iv) application of high force being an activity involving a single or repetitive use of force that it would be reasonable to expect that a person in the workforce may have difficulty undertaking;

   Example

   The force required to lift or otherwise handle heavy weights, to push or pull objects that are hard to move, to operate tools that require the use of 2 hands to exert sufficient force but that are designed for one hand or to operate tools that require squeezing of grips that are wide apart.

   v) exposure to sustained vibration;

b) manual handling of live persons or animals;

c) manual handling of unstable or unbalanced loads or loads that are difficult to grasp or hold;

1.4 Related Documents

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Vic) Part 3.1 Manual Handling
Code of practice for manual handling

SAA HB59: Ergonomics. The human factor

1.5 Responsibilities

1.5.1 Heads of Department

Ensure compliance with the part 3.1 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Vic)* by identifying hazardous manual handling tasks and controlling the risk of musculoskeletal disorder so far as is reasonably practicable.

1.5.2 Laboratory Managers and Supervisors

Develop procedures to ensure that the level of risk of musculoskeletal disorder associated with manual handling tasks is controlled so far as is reasonably practicable.

Undertake appropriate risk assessments for all manual handling duties.

The documented Manual Task Risk Assessment checklist should be maintained until the task is no longer undertaken.

1.5.3 Staff / Students

Staff and students are required to cooperate with their employer to reduce the risk of injury. Employees should participate in the Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control process. Employees are required to cooperate with the employers actions to control the risk of musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace.

Follow any information, training and instructions you have received, such as using correct handling techniques and where required using mechanical aids.

New employees must complete the Health & Hazard Assessment Questionnaire (HHAQ) to establish if any prelisting condition will require adjustment of work practices or the work places to avoid aggravation of a pre existing condition

1.5.4 Director OHS & Injury Management

Ensure the availability of advice, information and training for staff undertaking manual handling tasks.

1.6 Procedure and Guidelines

1.6.1 Introduction

The following checklists have been published to assist in the identification, assessment and control of Hazardous Manual Handling Tasks:

- Manual Handling Risk Assessment With an OHS Action Plan Form
- Manual Handling Risk Assessment Without an OHS Action Plan Form
- OHS Action Plan

1.6.2 Identification

All hazardous manual handling tasks must be identified and assessed before the task is undertaken. The person(s) undertaking the task must be consulted, and if practicable, the designated health and safety representative should also be involved.

1.6.3 Assessment

The level of risk to the person(s) involved with the task should be assessed where the level of risk is moderate or higher, then risk reduction measures are required. The Manual Handling Risk Assessment Form will assist you in completing and documenting the assessment. The risk or a musculoskeletal disorder affecting an employee must be eliminated, or if not reasonably practicable, reduced as far as reasonably practicable using the manual handling hierarchy of control.

Particular attention should be given to posture, layout, conditions, and the task, and object involved.

The task must be reassessed before alteration is made to the objects being handled, or a change to the workplace location. If additional information about a manual handling task becomes available, it should also be incorporated into the assessment.

1.6.4 Control

Provision of information, training or instruction in manual handling techniques must NOT be used as the sole or primary means of controlling risk unless the following ways of controlling risk are not practicable-

(a) altering the workplace,

(b) altering the environmental conditions, including heat, cold and vibration, where the task involving manual handling is carried out,

(c) altering the systems of work used to carry out the task involving manual handling;

(d) changing the objects used in the task involving manual handling;

(e) using mechanical aids.

These controls must also be assessed for their short, medium or long term viability.
1.6.5 Training

The OHS and Injury Management department can provide training in manual handling and ergonomic workstation design. Further information or advice can be obtained from the respective Local OHS Practice Expert.

2 Ergonomic Principles for Screen Based Work

2.1 Purpose

To assist the University in creating and maintaining a safe work place to ensure that ergonomic principals are adopted for all tasks involving workstations.

2.2 Application

This procedure applies to any work practice involving keyboard work that includes computer aided design and programming, word and data process, or involving telephonist duties.

2.3 Legislation

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (Vic) Part 3.1 Manual Handling

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

2.4 References

Keyboard Workstation Assessment Checklist

Home-Based Workstation Assessment Checklist

Code of Practice for Manual Handling 2000

Australian Standard AS 3590 Part 2. Work station Furniture

Australian Standard AS/NZS 4442 - Office Desks

Australian Standard AS/NZS 4443 - Office Panel Systems - Workstations

Australian Standard AS 1680.1 - Interior Lighting General Principles and Recommendations

Australian Standard AS 1680.2 Interior Lighting Series

Australian Standard AS/NZS 3827 - Lighting System Performance

2.5 Responsibilities

2.5.1 Head of Department

Ensure that staff are provided with appropriate tools and materials for office work duties.
2.5.2 Departmental Managers and Supervisors

Ensure staff receive appropriate training on the correct usage of ergonomic equipment at the commencement of work through the use of the Induction Checklist, and regularly review the work site when changes in duty or equipment occur.

2.5.3 Staff / Students

Cooperate with supervisors and other staff to assist in creating and maintaining a safe work place where ergonomic guidelines are followed.

2.5.4 OHS Local Practice Experts

Provide initial advice and assistance relating to specific hazardous manual handling tasks.

2.6 Procedure and Guidelines

Ergonomics is a specialised field, therefore these guidelines can only outline the basic principles. Departments should follow these guidelines when purchasing new furniture and in the planning stage for new accommodation. These guidelines will also be of use in an initial assessment of work stations when staff report problems. Further details can be obtained by pursuing Standards listed in the References. Prior to purchasing office furniture the University’s Design Standards should be used to evaluate the suitability of the furniture.

It is recommended that staff trial ergonomic furniture before purchasing to ensure individual comfort.

2.6.1 Seating

Chairs

Refer to the University’s Design Standards for detailed specifications for the following purposes:

1. Student Task Chairs
2. Staff Task Chairs:
3. Standard Meeting Room Chairs:
4. Executive Meeting Room Chairs
5. Interview/Consulting Room Seating
6. Interview Room Seating:
7. Examination Room / Seminar Room or Events Seating
8. Experimental Laboratory Seating:
9. High Workstation/ Counter (Drafting) Stools:

10. High Workstation (Drafting) Stools:

11. Casual, Lounge, Occasional Seating:

**Ergo Balls**

* Not recommended for use in open plan areas - as balls can become trip hazards
* A physiotherapist or other medical practitioner should be consulted prior to use for safety information
* Ensure that ergonomic set up of workstation is correct for height when seated on a ball
* Use only for prescribed time intervals - as an exercise tool
* Ensure written permission has been obtained by the Head of Department to bring in equipment from home

**2.6.2 Workstations**

**Work station designed for computer use**

Refer to section 2.4.2 Ergonomic Design Standard for the following purposes:

Office administration areas

Reception areas/enquiry counters/student centre counters

Laboratories – computer

Laboratories – experimental

Meeting rooms – standard and executive

Teaching and learning spaces

Libraries

Collaborative learning areas

Information management

Receiving areas

Waste storage and handling
2.6.3 Computing Equipment

Refer to: Office Ergonomics Guidance

2.6.5 Lighting

Refer to: Office Ergonomics Guidance

2.6.6 Other Ergonomic Considerations

Refer to: Office Ergonomics Guidance

3 Preventing Occupational Overuse Injuries

3.1 Purpose

To address concerns over health and safety matters associated with the use of equipment, in particular ergonomic layout of screen based equipment which may contribute to Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS).

3.2 Application

This procedure relates to types of equipment including personal computers, terminals used for work and data processing and computer controlled analytical instruments.

3.3 Legislation

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 Part 3.1 Manual Handling

3.4 References

Ergonomic Unit, WorkSafe Australia: Ergonomic principles and checklist for the selection of office furniture and equipment


3.5 Responsibilities

3.5.1 Department Managers and Supervisors

Required to specify when completing the pre employment health questionnaire, the number of hours a day the new employee will spend on screen based equipment

Establish ongoing systems to monitor for signs of muscle fatigue and the well being of staff using screen based equipment.

Ensure new staff are given adequate training in the use of the computer system, adjustment and layout of the work station
Understand the procedures to be followed if an eye injury does occur to a member of staff, particularly the steps involved in rehabilitation of staff.

3.5.2 Occupational Health Nurse

May recommend eye examinations for staff spending several hours a day using screen based equipment.

3.5.3 Counselling Services

Provide training on stress management and assertiveness.

3.5.4 Sport and Physical Recreation Centre

Provide workplace exercise programs.

3.5.5 Local OHS Practice Experts and OHS Specialist Staff

Assist with advice on aspects of working with screen based equipment, with emphasis on preventing Occupational Overuse Syndrome and other musculoskeletal injuries.

3.5.6 Staff / Students

Report to their supervisor any physical discomfort they believe is associated with their screen based equipment and seek advice from the Local OHS Practice Experts.

Obtain advice of the preferred layout of their work station and work flow from the Local OHS Practice Experts

3.6 Procedure and Guidelines

3.6.1 Understanding Occupational Overuse Syndrome

Occupational Overuse Syndrome (previously known as RSI, Repetitive Strain Injury). Occupational Overuse Syndrome is a collective term for a range of conditions characterised by discomfort or persistent pain the muscles, tendons and other soft tissues, with or without physical manifestations. These injuries may be caused or aggravated by work and are associated with repetitive movement, sustained or constrained posture and / or forced movements. Psycho-social factors, including stress in the working environment may also be important in the development of these injuries.

The muscles and tendons involved in these conditions may be in the wrists, forearm or upper arm, shoulder, upper spine or neck of the person affected. Pain or discomfort may exist in any one or group of these muscles or tendons at one time. The work done by muscles may be active as in typing, handwriting, playing of musical instruments, use of hand tools, playing of racquet sports or static work when the muscles are required to maintain a posture. It is important to realise that the muscle fatigue rate varies between individuals and in any one particular individual from time to time.
If an occupational overuse syndrome condition is allowed to develop unchecked, it may cause the individual pain and loss of function and the department to lose human or financial resources. Early recognition of the symptoms is essential to control or minimise the effects of such injuries.

3.6.2 Preventing Occupational Overuse Injuries

Prevention strategies will need to include elements of:

- job design
- work organisation
- supervision and training
- the role of the individual and
- the ergonomic design of the work station.

Ensure that all positions incorporate a variety of tasks which allow variation in movement and posture. A mix of repetitive or static work, and non repetitive work should be included so that recovery from any muscle fatigue is made possible.

Endeavour to ensure that no employee is required to continually type or enter data for more than 5 hours per day. Where the job involves a major component of keyboard work, or other tasks using the same muscle group, frequent rest breaks should be taken. This structuring of the task should be a matter of discussion and agreement between individuals and their supervisors.

Allow an adjustment period to the work rates after work absences or during a learning period.

Try to avoid taking on new staff during holiday periods when key training personnel are not available.

3.6.3 Visual Display Units and Radiation

Studies carried out in Australia and overseas have confirmed that the monitor units do not pose a health risk to the operator. Any inquiries should be directed to the Local OHS Practice Experts.

4 Document Control

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Authorised: Director OHS and Injury Management

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