

Furniture specification guide (ergonomics / health and safety)

CHAIRS

Legal minimum:

Chairs staff use to work at a PC/laptop must legally have the minimum adjustments (it is also recommended these are followed for student chairs and furniture for computer use):

- backrest height adjustment (up and down so that the correct part of the back can be supported on individuals of differing heights)
- backrest tilt (backwards and forwards to suit individual's needs)
- seat height adjustment (to suit individuals of different heights)

Nice to have extras:

- seat depth adjustment – good for taller individuals as the seat slides away from the backrest and can accommodate longer legs
- pump up lumbar support – extra comfort (not essential but improves comfort)

Other useful info:

- Armrests are not recommended – they often get in the way and can cause poor posture and therefore discomfort.
- Mesh backs can be problematic as they often do not provide much back support and therefore may need replacing
- adjustability is key so that most individuals can use the chair comfortably
- individuals with medical needs or other needs may require a different chair

DESKS (including reception desks used as computer workstations)

Legal minimum:

- Large enough to carry out the user's work
- Low reflective surface (ideally not white as this can cause glare / eye strain in some circumstances)
- Allow a flexible arrangement of the screen, keyboard, documents and related equipment

Nice to have extras:

- Height adjustment (by a few inches or so) to accommodate taller individuals. This is not an essential feature as desk height can be raised by raisers which are placed under the feet. It is especially useful with hot-desk working as it allows flexibility.
- Sit / stand desk - allows the user to either sit or stand whilst working (rather than the smaller adjustments above). This is not an essential feature, in fact there are health issues associated with a static standing posture. If used correctly sit stand working can encourage movement and avoid static postures and certain individuals with medical issues can benefit from using one.

Other useful info:

The above advice also applies to reception desks. Some examples where the computer monitor cannot be correctly positioned due to the position of the upper work surface of the reception desk (used by customers/visitors) have been found. These have required subsequent modification to allow the users to adopt a good posture and work comfortably.

Links:

- The HSE has produced a useful guide on seating and workstations at work (HSG 57):
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg57.pdf>
- The following British standards are also relevant:
 - BS EN ISO 9241-5:1999 Ergonomic requirements for office work with visual display terminals (VDTs). Workstation layout and postural requirements
 - BS 3044:1990 Guide to ergonomics principles in the design and selection of office furniture
 - BS EN ISO 9241-6:1999 Ergonomic requirements for office work with visual display terminals (VDTs) – Part 6: Guidance on the work environment
 - BS EN 527-1:2011 Office furniture — Work tables and desks