

OCC GUIDELINES

SECOND EDITION

BEST PRACTICES FOR ONLINE CURATED CONTENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

CONTENT
FORUM



THE COMMUNICATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA CONTENT FORUM OF MALAYSIA

Guidelines for Online Curated Content Service Providers

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INTRODUCTION

Online Curated Content (OCC) services have become central to how Malaysians access films, series, documentaries and other on-demand entertainment. With greater choice and convenience comes the need for content standards that are clear, practical and proportionate that supports informed viewing, protecting younger audiences, and preserving space for creativity and innovation.

The Content Forum first developed the Best Practice Note for Online Curated Content Service Providers to support a self-regulatory approach recognising the distinct nature of OCC services. Unlike linear television, OCC services are accessed on demand, across devices, and often within personalised user environments — requiring a framework clear enough to guide responsible content practices, yet flexible enough to reflect different service models, classification systems and audience-control tools.

This second edition builds on that foundation, reflecting further industry engagement and practical feedback from OCC service providers and stakeholders, with the aim of strengthening the Best Practice Note as a living self-regulatory instrument.

A COLLABORATIVE INSTRUMENT

This Best Practice Note has always been grounded in collaboration. It was shaped through Working Group discussions involving key industry players, with the shared objective of promoting responsible content practices without imposing a one-size-fits-all model on services that operate differently from traditional broadcasting.

For this second edition, the Working Group process was further strengthened by the participation of the Motion Picture Association (MPA), which has also joined the Content Forum as a member. Its involvement, together with continued valuable input from existing Working Group members — including Astro, AVIA, Media Prima Berhad, Netflix, and other contributors — helped ensure the updated Best Practice Note remains practical, balanced and aligned with industry realities.

Key refinements in this edition include clearer guidance on classification and consumer advisories, stronger emphasis on safety-by-design tools, closer alignment between ratings and user-control mechanisms, improved transparency in complaint-handling, and more nuanced treatment of sensitive content concerns, including religion. These updates aim to preserve informed audience choice while ensuring safeguards for children and other users remain key.

The Best Practice Note continues to serve as a practical guide for OCC service providers in Malaysia — encouraging higher standards, supporting consumer trust, and demonstrating how self-regulation can respond constructively to a fast-evolving content environment.

PREAMBLE

1. This Best Practice Note for Content on Online Curated Content Services (“this Note”) seeks to ensure the progressive adoption of higher standards of content in safeguarding the best interest of consumers while encouraging the growth of creativity and innovation in the content industry.
2. This Note outlines the general standards to be observed by providers of Online Curated Content Services (“Service Providers”), and refers to those who offer curated content, including but not limited through subscription, over the internet or computer networks, directly to paying subscribers via an Internet connection to the subscriber’s computer, TV, or mobile device.

These Service Providers empower consumers by offering them the ability to exercise control over the content they access from the service’s carefully curated library. This approach provides users with greater choice, awareness, and the necessary tools to make informed decisions regarding age-appropriate content for themselves and their families, at their own pace and convenience.

For the avoidance of any doubt, this Note does not apply to pure user-generated content platforms or intermediaries that merely provide access to third-party services, except where such platforms also operate curated or professionally programmed content environments.

3. Service Providers whether local or foreign, shall exercise discretion and due caution in ensuring that the programmes and content provided that is targeted towards and accessed by Malaysian audiences is in accordance with the prevailing laws and regulations of Malaysia, and does not infringe any third party’s copyright, nor contain any prohibited content, such as excessive and offensive violence, terrorism and content that is pornographic and prohibited under applicable Malaysian Law. Service Providers should adopt a risk-based approach in identifying, mitigating, and responding to content that may cause serious harm to individuals or society.

Service Providers are committed to take into consideration the applicable laws of the land. As this pertains to prohibited content, a non-exhaustive list of examples of these prohibited categories are as follows:

- Child sexual abuse materials (CSAM);
- Deliberate and malicious disrespect towards the national flag, national emblems, national anthems, etc of Malaysia;
- Content which deliberately calls for terrorism and other forms of violence against the Malaysian state or state institutions;
- Content which deliberately calls for violence against segments of the population;
- Content which knowingly infringes copyright.
- Content that deliberately facilitates scams, fraud, or deceptive practices.

4. This Note should be applied in spirit and read in conjunction with other relevant legislation, regulations, codes and/or licence conditions.
5. This Note does not create legally enforceable responsibilities for Service Providers, but constitutes recommendations and an expression of best practices. In the spirit of self-regulation, the Content Forum may advise Service Providers to withdraw content that is against the prohibited categories of this Note.
6. This Note deals in general principles and does not seek to address each and every possible case or scenario that could arise. Service Providers may face cases or scenarios which are not specifically referred to or directly addressed in this Note. Examples included in this Note are not exhaustive. However, the principles and provisions in the following sections, should make clear what this Note is designed to achieve and help Service Providers make the necessary judgements.

PART 1: CLASSIFICATION

- 1.1 To aid parental guidance and allow for informed viewing choices, all content shall be classified, based on the nature and type of content. Service Providers may opt to exercise self-classification guided by the following Classification Guidelines (appended in Annex A) or similar appropriate Classification Guidelines. The five (5) ratings set forth in Annex A are as follows:
 - U – General Viewing
 - P13 – Parental Guidance for Children below 13
 - 16 – For 16 and above, no Children below 16 years of age
 - 18 – Mature 18, for persons 18 years and above
 - 21 – Restricted to persons 21 years and above.
- 1.2 Service Providers may adopt robust and consistent including internationally recognized or platform-specific systems made intelligible to Malaysian audiences through clear descriptors and consumer advisories.
- 1.3 Where multiple classification systems are used across territories, Service Providers should, where appropriate, endeavor to achieve broad consistency in the treatment of comparable content, taking into account local legal, cultural and regulatory requirements.

PART 2: SAFETY FEATURES, RATINGS AND CONSUMER ADVISORY

- 2.1 Service Providers should provide reasonable consumer safeguards including but not limited to programme info, classification ratings, consumer advice and content warnings. This is to facilitate consumers in exercising their right to choose their own content and use the available control measures based on their individual self-evaluation.
- 2.2 Service Providers' systems should prioritize "safety by design," incorporating features such as user profiles, PIN codes, passwords, or other mechanisms to restrict access to content that is not intended for all audiences. This may include age-appropriate curated profiles, and viewing restrictions. These tools should support informed audience choice by enabling users, parents and guardians, where applicable, to manage access to content in a manner consistent with applicable ratings, advisories and user preferences. Instructions on how to use these tools should be straightforward and easily accessible.
- 2.3 To ensure the well-being of all users, particularly younger audiences, program ratings should be prominently displayed. The ratings system employed by Service Providers should either adhere to locally recognized frameworks or, if unique to a particular service and its content, be easily comprehensible. Furthermore, whenever feasible, program ratings should align with the technical control tools provided by each service

to enhance content protection for minors.

- 2.4 Service Providers shall inform viewers about the content they are about to watch and highlight sensitive themes or depictions. These methods may include, but are not limited to, pre-roll advisory messages, on-screen notifications, prominent icons or descriptors, information in the detail page or synopses of the specific content or series, or messaging during playback. These labels and advisories, when used, should be clear, prominent, and designed to assist viewers in making informed decisions. Examples of sensitive categories that may require labelling include sex, violence, nudity, and offensive language. These measures would empower consumers to make informed choices about their viewing experience.
- 2.5 The rating classification must be clearly and prominently displayed, ensuring that consumers are informed of the program's rating before making a decision to view or purchase it.
- 2.6 For programs rated P13 or above (or its equivalent), the consumer advisory should also be provided along with the rating, indicating the key elements that have led to the classification, such as "Rated 18 for Strong Violence."
- 2.7 Service Providers should offer safety features that are easily discoverable, user-friendly, and accompanied by clear guidance to support informed use by parents, guardians, and individual users.

PART 3: CONTENT ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

- 3.1 Service Providers are expected to exercise prudent judgement and due diligence in ensuring that advertisements, posters, still images, or excerpts of titles do not contain controversial or sensitive content concerns and themes.
- 3.2 Service Providers are required to adhere to the relevant content codes and regulations when promoting services and programs through advertisements on television and radio.
- 3.3 Service Providers are strongly encouraged to incorporate appropriate program rating symbols and consumer advice for programs rated 16 and above (or its equivalent) in their promotional and publicity materials, both in print and online.
- 3.4 Any tag-on promotional trailers to a programme made available must be edited to the equivalent or lower classification standard of that offering, e.g. the trailer of an 18-rated programme tagged on to a 16-rated programme must be edited to 16-rated standards or below.
- 3.5 Tag-on promotional trailers for programmes rated P13 (or its equivalent) or higher are not allowed as part of a programme targeted at children and rated as suitable for General Viewing.

PART 4: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

4.1 Programmes must:

- a. take into consideration the prevailing laws of Malaysia;
- b. not undermine national interest, national security, public interest, public security, or public order;
- c. not be detrimental to Malaysia's relationship with other countries; and
- d. not contain extremist or anarchic messages, such as advocating or promoting the use of violence.

4.2 Service Providers should ensure that due impartiality is observed in factual programmes dealing with matters of public policy or controversial issues of public importance in Malaysia. Due impartiality requires factual programme producers to deal even-handedly when opposing points of view are presented in a programme. On matters of public importance, balance should be sought through the presentation, as far as possible, of principal relevant viewpoints. Reasonable effort should be made to ensure that the factual content of programmes is accurate.

4.3 Service Providers should consider the context, intent, and presentation of content, including whether potentially harmful material is mitigated by editorial framing, educational value, or public interest considerations.

Racial and Religious

4.4 For the purposes of this Note, race includes dialect groups and ethnic groups.

4.5 Service Providers should bear in mind Malaysia's multi-racial and multireligious context. They should exercise due caution and discretion when featuring the activities, beliefs, practices, or views of any racial or religious group. In featuring any religious belief or view, Service Providers should ensure these do not in any way disparage or cast other religious faiths in poor light.

4.6 Programmes must:

- a. be kept neutral and be in respect of all religions. Where religious content, themes or portrayals materially depart from established teachings, beliefs or practices, they must be handled with sensitivity and where appropriate, accompanied by suitable contextual information, which may include content advisories, disclaimers, narrative framing or other relevant context, so as not to mislead audiences;
- b. present references to race and religion accurately and in a dignified and sensitive manner;
- c. not denigrate or be intended to offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group; and
- d. not incite or be likely to incite racial and/or religious intolerance or misunderstanding must not be broadcast.

4.7 Racial and religious stereotyping should be avoided.

Persons with Disabilities

4.8 Service Providers should take reasonable and progressive steps to improve accessibility, including but not limited to subtitles, closed captions, audio descriptions, and user interface accessibility features, taking into account technical feasibility and proportionality.

PART 5: CLASSIFIABLE CONTENT ELEMENTS

5.1 The seven major content concerns addressed in this Note are as follows:

- Theme
- Violence
- Nudity
- Sex
- Language
- Drug Use
- Horror

5.2 The different degrees to which each content concern can be allowed at the various classification levels are spelt out in detail in the Classification Guidelines (appended in Annex A). These Guidelines serve as a basis for classifying programmes and should be read in conjunction with all the other provisions set out in this Note.

PART 6: ADDITIONAL CONTENT CONSIDERATIONS

News & Other Factual Content

6.1 Service Providers should deal even-handedly with diverse viewpoints in news and other factual programmes, such as current affairs and info-educational programmes. Balance should be sought through the presentation of different viewpoints, and not be slanted by the exclusion of facts or by misleading emphasis.

6.2 Reasonable effort should be made to ensure that factual content is fair and accurate.

6.3 The Government or its agencies are to be granted, as soon as practicable, a right of reply or an opportunity to respond to correct mistakes, wrongful reporting or misrepresentations. For private individuals or groups, an opportunity to respond should be considered based on the merits of each case. The Content Forum may recommend a Service Provider to give an aggrieved party the opportunity to respond over an appropriate medium.

- 6.4 Significant errors in factual programmes such as news, current affairs and info-educational programmes should be corrected and made available at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.5 News and other factual programmes, such as current affairs and info-educational programmes, that contain disturbing, alarming or graphic real-life visuals should carry consumer advice to alert viewers.

PART 7: CONSUMER PROTECTION AND FEEDBACK MECHANISM

- 7.1 Service Providers should commit to provide consumers with a mechanism to provide feedback about their viewing or user experience, whether positive or negative. This feedback mechanism should be easily located and include identifiable contact information (such as email or phone) for where to address complaints, concerns, or other commentary. Additionally, Service Providers should have internal protocols to allow the operator to consider and respond to consumers in a reasonable and timely manner. Where possible, this internal review process and timeline expectations for redress should be communicated to users.
- 7.2 In addition to an established complaint mechanism, Service Providers should consider including a help centre or ‘frequently asked questions’ section on their site or app to allow users to raise questions or concerns that might arise during their viewing experience.
- 7.3 Service Providers must take into account the interests of end-users with disabilities.
- 7.4 Service Providers are encouraged to provide users with clear information on the complaint-handling process, and where practicable, to include information on indicative timeframes, relevant escalation options, or other follow-up processes.

PART 8: COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

- 8.1 In the spirit of fostering effective governance and promoting trust within the curated content industry, Service Providers commit to engaging in a comprehensive and proactive collaborative engagement with relevant stakeholders, including with regulators, industry bodies, civil society organisations, and where appropriate, child safety and consumer protection stakeholders.
- 8.2 By aligning practices with evolving regulations, Service Providers aim to enhance governance and build trust, establishing the groundwork for a dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership between Service Providers and the broader array of stakeholders.
- 8.3 Through open dialogue and knowledge exchange, Service Providers seek to facilitate the alignment of industry practices with dynamic regulatory frameworks, while also contributing to the development of responsible and accountable content standards.

PART 9: EMERGING PRACTICES

- 9.1 Service Providers are encouraged to progressively enhance their systems and practices so that recommendations, thumbnails, previews and promotional placements are presented in a manner that is consistent with the applicable classification, age-rating and audience suitability of the relevant content, particularly where such content may be inappropriate for children or other age-sensitive audiences.
- 9.2 This Part highlights emerging practices observed in international frameworks and industry developments. While not forming part of the core expectations under this Note, Service Providers are encouraged to progressively consider these practices, where appropriate and proportionate to the nature and scale of their services.

Service Providers are encouraged to progressively consider:

- i. Safety-by-design in content discovery and recommendation systems
- ii. Age-appropriate design principles
- iii. Transparency in content labelling and classification
- iv. Collaboration on industry standards and best practices

CLASSIFICATION GUIDELINES

i. Classification Ratings

The purpose of classification is to provide sufficient information on the content offerings as a tool for informed decision-making to allow more viewing choices for viewers based on their personal tastes and standards. This classification is also meant to protect younger audiences from viewing content which is not suitable for their age. The five classification ratings are described as follows:

Rating	Description
U	This category is for viewing by all walks of life without age limit. The programme portrays good values, decency and positive lessons as well as entertaining.
P13	Viewers under 13 years of age need parental/guardian supervision while viewing. Scenes in the programme contain elements of horror; scary; negative acts; suspense and frantic elements, but not excessive; elusive storyline; and elements that can disturb a child's emotion.
16	This category is suitable for the age of 16 and above. No children below 16 years of age. The programme may contain moderate physical violence, comedic violence, comic horror, special effects, fantasy, supernatural elements or animated violence with a sustained sense of threat. Infrequent, brief and non-detailed depictions of torture, drugs and psychoactive abuse can be observed. It may also contain some suggestive dialogue and non-sexual nudity, moderate sexual situations and innuendo, but depictions will be infrequent and of low intensity.
18	This category is for viewers aged 18 and above. The programme contains elements of horror, gory, and violent, but not excessive; adult scene and nudity that is not excessive; social, sensitive political and religious elements which require a high-level understanding.
21	This category is suitable for mature audience of 21 and above. May contains frequent frontal nudity, prolonged or frequent sexual acts with stronger details, strong sexual violence, deviant sexual activities, strong language, graphic violence and gore, strong drug usage and graphic horror.

Service Providers may classify content on their service by reference to the above ratings or may apply equivalent or similar ratings and classification frameworks designed to achieve the same objective as the above ratings.

ii. Content Concerns

The assessment of a programme includes the following seven content elements:

a. Theme and Message

Classification shall take into account the overall treatment of themes and messages within a programme, including their context, intent, tone, and likely impact on audiences. Particular care should be taken where themes may influence attitudes, behaviours, or perceptions, especially among younger audiences. For U and P13, theme(s) and message(s) should be presented and treated carefully due to the potential impact on the younger audiences. Programmes that carry mature element in the theme(s) or content would generally be classified 16, 18 or 21. Programmes that present subject matter in a manner that is misleading, harmful, or likely to cause significant public misunderstanding, particularly on issues affecting health, safety, or public interest, may be subject to higher classification or further review. Where a programme contains themes or messages that have previously been subject to restriction or prohibition, Service Providers should consider this when reviewing and classifying the content in accordance with applicable laws and regulatory requirements.

b. Violence

The degree and nature of violence in a programme will impact the classification rating. Depictions of violence may frighten, unsettle, or invite imitation, especially from children. Therefore, only mild depictions of violence may be allowed in programmes meant for children. For the higher ratings, stronger depictions of violence are permitted. However, programmes that contain detailed or gratuitous depictions of extreme violence or cruelty; detailed instructions on methods of crime or killings; or excessive or exploitative depictions of sexual violence will be rated for higher classification.

c. Nudity

The extent and context of depictions of nudity are classification considerations. There should be no nudity at a U rating. At 18 rating, depictions of nudity in a non-sexual and sexual context may be presented. There can be exceptions for programmes which feature infrequent and non-sexual depictions of nudity at P13 and 16 rating, e.g. nudity shall be allowed depending on the degree of inherent artistic, realism or fictional elements, educational merit and presentation of the content if it is not excessive and explicit in nature. Depictions of frequent frontal nudity may be featured at 21. Exploitative depictions of nudity will be refused classification or banned.

d. Sex

Classification of depictions of sexual activity in programmes depends on its explicitness, frequency, and relevance to the storyline. Generally, there should be no depictions of sexual activity at U and P13 ratings. Programmes that depict alternative sexualities, e.g. homosexuality, should be measured reasonably and may be classified at higher rating. Programmes containing stronger depictions of sexual activities such as sadomasochism, bondage, orgies, or sexual violence will be subject to strict review and/or edits and may be allowed at 21 rating. Programmes containing explicit depictions of deviant sexual activities (e.g. paedophilia, bestiality, and necrophilia) or exploitative depictions of sexual activities will be refused classification or banned.

e. Language

The classification of coarse language depends on the strength of the language, the context in which it is used, as well as community and cultural sensitivities associated with its usage. Coarse language, rude gestures, and gestures with sexual connotations must not be featured in U rating programmes as they are easily imitated by young children. In P13 programmes, there may be infrequent use of expletives such as "F" word and not in the context of contempt. Stronger language is acceptable at higher ratings, with due consideration given to the degree of offensiveness and frequency of usage. This includes coarse language that offends community and cultural sensitivities.

f. Drug and Substance Abuse (including Psychoactive Substance Abuse)

Programmes with depiction of drug and substance abuse rated U and P13 should be dealt cautiously. Programmes rated 16 may only feature infrequent or discreet references or depictions of drug and substance abuse, as these may have a negative influence on the young. Depictions of drug and substance abuse may be featured at 16, 18 or 21 ratings, depending on the frequency and level of details. Programmes with content that openly promote drug or psychoactive substance abuse or includes detailed and instructive depictions of drug or psychoactive substance abuse will be refused classification or banned.

g. Horror

In classifying programmes containing horrific or disturbing content, take into consideration the impact of such depictions to ensure that young audiences are protected.

iii. Contextual Assessment

In all cases, classification should consider the overall narrative context, including whether the programme endorses, critiques, or merely depicts the themes presented, as well as the presence of mitigating elements such as educational value, consequences, or moral framing.



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