

## VIDEO GAMES CLASSIFICATION

### Introduction

1 Video Games Classification is introduced to protect the young while allowing wider choice for adults. The system also aims to reflect community standards while ensuring that due consideration is given to a video game's educational and artistic merit.

2 In assigning a rating, the system takes into consideration various concerns, including theme, violence, nudity, sex, language, and drug use.

3 The classification system includes the highest rating of "M18" (Mature 18) which will indicate that the title is for persons 18 years and above. This rating is enforceable by law. Video game retailers should ensure that the age restriction is enforced at the point of sale.

4 For game titles with some contentious elements, the Board may require that an Age Advisory label carrying the words "Suitable for 16 & above" be affixed.

5 A video game, in the most extreme cases, may be disallowed for all ratings (NAR) when the game contains content that exceeds acceptable social standards and could be potentially harmful to society.

6 Games need not carry any classification rating if, upon declaration to the Board, they are not issued a M18 rating, Age Advisory, or disallowed for distribution.

### General Principles

7 When making a classification decision for a video game, the Board takes careful account of the game's content as well as all other relevant factors and concerns. In general, the decisions are guided by the following principles/considerations:

a) Generally accepted social mores

Video games must be sensitive to community standards of morality and decency, and be acceptable to its intended age group.

b) Need to protect the young

A M18 rating or an Age Advisory will be given for content which could be harmful or unsuitable for the young.

c) Racial/religious harmony

As Singapore is a multi-racial and multi-religious society, video games should not cause offence or create misunderstanding or disharmony amongst any racial or religious groups.

d) National Interest

Video games should not undermine public order, national interest and/or stability.

e) Treatment of Theme and Content

The acceptability of a theme depends on its treatment and the presentation of the content. The context in which a scene occurs is also considered when deciding on the suitability of a game.

f) Evaluation of Impact

The impact of a video game will be evaluated based on the presentation, duration, frequency, degree of visual and audio details, and their cumulative effect. The impact may be stronger if the game contains scenes that are more realistic, detailed or uses special effects to heighten emotions. Scenes which are more explicit, prolonged and/or frequent or set in a context which local audience can identify with easily will also have a greater impact.

g) Creative/ Educational Merit

Due consideration will be given to the educational and/or artistic merit of the game.

### **Player Control**

8 The choices made by a player may cause a game to perform in ways that a game publisher or developer cannot control or adequately anticipate. For instance, a player may choose to repeat a brief section of the game over and over again, or cause onscreen characters to behave out of character.

9 When assessing content in games, the Board will consider the net effect of the game as a whole. The Board does not take into consideration the repetitive potential of any part of the game that the developer did not anticipate.

### **Third Party Modification**

10 Third-party modifications are outside the control of a game publisher and developer. Practices of third-party modification are commonplace among game-playing audiences but do not need to be considered by the Board in the classification of a game, even if the game includes tools for third-party modification.

## **The Video Game Classification System**

11 All video games that are to be sold in retail will need to be declared to the Board via the use of an online declaration system.

### **Age Advisory – Suitable for 16 & above**

12 The Board may, in its discretion, require selected games to carry an Age Advisory.

13 An advisory label indicates that the game contains some contentious elements that are not recommended for the young. Games that contain the following elements may be required to carry an age advisory label.

- a) Violence
  - Moderate level of violence. This refers to realistic but not excessively graphic violence with depiction of blood which may be included in the gameplay.
- b) Sex
  - Portrayal of implied sexual activity.
- c) Nudity
  - Nudity without details, e.g. no nipples, genitalia or pubic region (includes hair).
  - Still or moving images which may be mildly suggestive may be featured, e.g. scantily-clad women in bikinis or lingerie.
- d) Language
  - Coarse language should generally be limited to the use of words like “fuck”.
- e) Drug Use
  - Depiction of illegal drug use which is incidental to the game and not realistic. Content of the game does not encourage drug use.

14 The age advisory label should carry the words “Suitable for 16 & above”. The text of the advisory label should be black on a white background. Specifications of the label is available on MDA’s website.

15 In accordance to the Films Act (Video Games – Exemption) Notification 2008, video games with the following content should be submitted to the Board for classification. Upon assessment, the Board may classify a game M18 or disallow it if it does not meet the Board's guidelines.

### **M18 – Mature 18**

16 The M18 rating indicates that the game is restricted to persons 18 years and above. These games may contain the following:

- a) Theme
  - Treatment and exploration of mature themes appropriate to 18 years and above.
  - Content that requires the player to engage in illegal activities or play the role of a criminal so long as it does not contain detailed instructions for committing crimes.
  - Some homosexual content, provided it does not glamorize the lifestyle or is exploitative.
- b) Violence
  - Depictions of realistic violence, such as killing, maiming or causing other serious injury to humanoid characters if the violence is not sadistic, cruel and abhorrent.
- c) Sex
  - Portrayal of sexual activity with some nudity, both topless and frontal, if not detailed.
  - Homosexual activity should be limited to kissing and hugging.
- d) Nudity
  - Depiction of topless nudity or occasional full frontal nudity, if not exploitative. Nudity should not titillate or be the main feature of the game.
  - Still or moving images which may be sexually titillating (but does not contain nudity), e.g. scantily-clad women shown in a manner that is sexually suggestive, if not excessive or gratuitous.
- e) Language
  - Frequent use of strong coarse language, such as "motherfucker", "cunt", and "cocksucker".
- f) Drug Use
  - There may be realistic depiction of illegal drug use, but portrayal should not include instructive details. Games should not glamorise or encourage drug taking or the primary intent of a game should not be to encourage the consumption of drugs to achieve success, e.g. kill the enemy or complete a level.

17 When a game is rated M18, consumer advice may be included to highlight the elements which contributed to the rating of the game. Examples of consumer advice include “Violence”, “Sex”, “Nudity”, “Sexual References”, “Coarse Language”, or “Drug Use”.

### **Not Allowed for All Ratings (NAR)**

18 Games that contains the following elements will be refused classification and should not be circulated:

- a) Content which denigrates any race or religion, or undermines Singapore’s national interest.
- b) Content that glorifies deviant sexual behaviour or activities such as paedophilia or bestiality. Games dealing with alternative lifestyles such as sado-masochism and group sex.
- c) Clear instructional details of criminal activities, such as step-by-step guide to making a bomb.
- d) Detailed and bloody depictions of sadistic and cruel violence, including horrific, brutal or repulsive depictions of death, injury, dismemberment or torture.
- e) Depiction of sexual violence, including rape.
- f) Content where the primary purpose is for the players to engage in sexual activity.
- g) Detailed and frequent depiction of sexual activity, such as depictions of actual sexual intercourse including content which depicts explicit sexual activity where genitals may not be visible.
- h) Exploitative and excessive depiction of nudity. This refers to male and female nudity where genitalia are clearly depicted. This would include content where the presentation of nudity is exploitative and nudity is a constant feature of the game.
- i) Coarse language which is religiously offensive and denigrative.
- j) Content that glamorises or encourages the use of illegal drugs. Or serve as a step-by-step guide to preparing and consumption of illegal drugs.

## **Implementation and Periodic Review**

19 This is not a legal document and is not intended to limit in any way the Board's exercise of functions under the Films Act (Cap 107). In particular, nothing in this document shall preclude the Board from classifying any video game in such manner as it may think fit.

20 The Board will review this document periodically in light of social and technical changes and public expectations.

21 This set of document takes effect from 28 April 2008.