



Pre-Booking Express (PBE) service Guidance for film distributors

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Background

Through both the regular BBFC/FDA working party meetings and individual consultations, the film industry has indicated to us that it would be useful if the BBFC could offer a specific service providing rapid turnaround for works which have a very short lead time. In general, such short lead times are planned rather than accidental: the distributor knows that the content will be ready on a particular date in the future but needs to get a classification outcome shortly after that date. Such a service would also help on those occasions where distributors require a last-minute urgent turnaround on a title.

Stakeholders acknowledge that a service offering rapid turnaround would be subject to limitations (to ensure quality of decision making) and would involve administrative costs which would need to be recouped by levying a surcharge on the standard tariff. The new Film Pre-Booking Express (PBE) service is a similar model to the existing successful PBE (VRA) model which ensures distributors get a classification on their work by an agreed deadline

The service

The service is designed solely for theatrical material which is uncontroversial in nature and straightforward to classify. In order to prevent the service having a negative impact on the standard service, it will be limited to a set number of minutes per day, offered on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no limits on the number of works an individual company can submit under the PBE scheme in any week or month, but the BBFC reserves the right to introduce such limits without notice.

Service levels

The service guarantees that the BBFC will deliver to the customer, subject to the stated limitations and conditions, the following:

- (i) A decision that the work is not suitable for PBE classification; or**
- (ii) A final category decision (in the form of an email and extranet notification) comprising the category awarded, unique registration number ('CF number'), approved runtime and, if appropriate, the black card and consumer advice.**

For works delivered to the BBFC by 9am (for 'pm slots'), this will be delivered by 6pm the same day. For works delivered to the BBFC by 2pm (for 'am slots'), this will be delivered by 2pm the next day.

Fees

For the purpose of calculating the fee, the running time indicated by the distributor at booking will be rounded up to the nearest 15 mins (or to 5 mins for works with a running time of less than 5 mins). This 'rounded up' running time is referred to as 'booked time'.

The fee will be based on the booked time, and a rate of standard tariff + 20% will apply.

The work may be withdrawn by the distributor, with a full refund, up to 48 hours before the delivery deadline.

Works withdrawn by the distributor after this deadline will be charged a cancellation fee of £100 + VAT.

A penalty fee of £100 + VAT will be charged if:

- the work is not delivered by the delivery deadline
- payment is not received by the delivery deadline
- a booking is moved less than 24 hours before the delivery deadline

The distributor is responsible for covering the cost of an external viewing room for PBE works.

Standard limitations of PBE

(i) The decision of the BBFC that a work is not suitable for PBE classification is final and cannot be appealed.

(ii) Any request from the customer for details of how a different category may be achieved (eg through cuts) or for a reconsideration of the decision will render all deadlines null and void.

(iii) By submitting a work for classification using this service, the distributor accepts that the BBFC is not liable for any losses caused by any failure to meet the stated deadlines.

(iv) If the submitted work is not the booked work, or exceeds the booked running time, the work will not be eligible for PBE classification, and will be processed as a standard submission (but subject to the PBE fee).

(v) A booking may be transferred to an alternative work, but only if the BBFC is notified at least 2 working days prior to the booked time, and provided the running time does not exceed the previously booked time.

(vi) In the event of a work being deemed unsuitable for express classification on the grounds of the nature of the content (see Appendix 1), the BBFC may, at its own discretion, offer a refund equivalent to the difference between the express fee and the standard fee. A refund is most likely if the unsuitability of the content for the express service could not reasonably have been predicted by the submitting company.

(vii) The service is only available on normal working weekdays, and during normal working hours. It is not available at weekends or on bank holidays, and may be withdrawn at any time.

(viii) A work which does not comply with the standard submission criteria, or which does not play on standard BBFC equipment, will be deemed unsuitable for the PBE service. No refund is payable in such circumstances.

(ix) All external viewings must take place within 2 miles of the BBFC's offices.

(x) An Examiner must be allowed to re-run any scene they wish too whilst viewing at an outside screening room.

Conditions of use

The PBE service is suitable only for a submission which:

- is less than 180 minutes total running time;
- is not likely to be controversial and which does not raise novel or difficult classification or legal issues (See Appendix 1 for guidance on material likely to be unsuitable for this service on these grounds);
- **is not likely to have a significant impact on the public perception of the BBFC or the standards it applies. This is likely to include, but is not limited to, works dealing with controversial themes, or which have already attracted public or media concern about their classification or effects.**

NB Bookings for non-English language works are subject to the availability of suitable interpreters.

Submission process

1) Advice prior to booking

Customers should call the customer helpline on 020 7440 0299 for advice on how the PBE service works and on whether a particular submission is likely to be suitable for the service. Enquiries may be referred to the duty Senior Examiner if the issue relates to whether the work is likely to be controversial or to raise novel or difficult classification or legal issues (in which case it will not be suitable for the service).

2) Booking

Bookings can be taken at anytime up to 12pm the day before a viewing slot, subject to availability.

There are two viewing slots available per day. One AM (9am-1pm) and one PM (1pm-5pm).

Only one film and up to four trailers can be seen during each slot and the total run time for the bookings can not exceed 180 minutes.

A film can be booked in the BBFC's theatre, if available, or in a screening room within 2 miles of the BBFC's premises. Trailers can only be booked in for internal viewing slots.

Bookings must be made either online through the extranet or by calling the customer helpline. There are a limited number of PBE viewing minutes and submissions available for the morning and afternoon sessions each day (max. 180 mins. for each session). Booking is offered in 15-minute 'chunks' so the booked time will be the running time rounded up to the nearest 15 minutes. (The fee will be based on the 'booked time' rather than the actual running time.) Bookings are taken on a first come first served basis.

Customers must choose either a morning or an afternoon session and must state whether the booking is to be viewed at the BBFC or an external viewing room. If the booking is to be seen externally the viewing of the work must be completed by 12.30pm for an AM slot or 4.30pm for a PM slot. This is to allow the Examiners to return to the BBFC and complete their reports.

If a customer is unable to book their work in online via their extranet account they should contact the customer helpline. The following information must be provided to book a work in.

- Title of work
- Running time (rounded up to nearest 15 mins.)
- Viewing date and session
- Submission format
- Details of external viewing room (if applicable)
- Language and subtitle details

A film submission form should be sent to helpline@bbfc.co.uk after a booking is made via the customer helpline. This must be received by 2pm the day before a viewing slot.

The work may be withdrawn by the distributor, with a full refund, up to 48 hours before the delivery deadline.

Works withdrawn by the distributor less than 48 hours before the delivery deadline will be charged a withdrawal fee of £100 + VAT.

3) Submission of media item

The media item must be delivered to the BBFC by:

- 2pm on the day before for 'am' slots;
- 9am on the same day for 'pm' slots.

The exception to this rule is if the viewing is at an external viewing room. The following deadlines apply for external viewings only.

DCP

The BBFC does not require the DCP to be delivered for measurement. An email must be sent to projection@bbfc.co.uk, no later than 1pm for an AM viewing slot and 5pm for a PM viewing slot, with the following information:

- Title of work as it appears on screen
- Exact runtime of work as displayed on digital projector
- Ratio

35mm/DVD

The media item must be **delivered by the distributor** to the BBFC anytime up to 2 hours before the screening of the work or immediately after the screening of the work, but no later than 2 hours before the deadline of the viewing slot (12pm or 4pm).

Failure in the BBFC receiving either the media item or the technical details email by the above deadlines will void the BBFC's commitment to deliver an answer by the 2pm or 6pm deadline.

4) Decision

We will deliver to the dedicated distributor contact the following:

(i) A decision that the work is not suitable for PBE classification; or

(ii) A final category decision (in the form of an email and extranet notification) comprising the category awarded, unique registration number ('CF number'), approved runtime and, if appropriate, the black card and consumer advice.

For works delivered to the BBFC by 9am (for 'pm slots'), this will be delivered by 6pm the same day. For works delivered to the BBFC by 2pm (for 'am slots'), this will be delivered by 2pm the next day.

Appendix 1: Material unsuitable for the Pre-Booking Express service

PBE is designed to offer distributors a fast-track classification process for simple and straightforward submissions. Submissions which are complex in nature, or which raise novel or difficult classification or legal issues, or which may prove controversial, are not appropriate for the service. Express submissions which, in the view of the BBFC, are not simple or straightforward, will automatically be removed from the PBE service and will instead be processed as normal submissions. Distributors who are unsure as to whether a work is suitable for the PBE service should contact a Senior Examiner for advice prior to making the booking.

The following are NOT suitable for the PBE service:

- Works exceeding 180 mins total running time
- Identical, re-edited, extended or abridged versions of a video or theatrical work which has been rejected.
- **Works whose classification, in the opinion of the BBFC, is likely to have a significant impact on the public perception of the BBFC or the standards it applies. This is likely to include, but is not limited to, works dealing with controversial themes such as paedophilia or racism, or which have already attracted public or media concern about their classification or effects.**

In addition, the following are UNLIKELY to be suitable for the express service:

- Sex works
- Sex education works
- Works containing explicit images of real sexual activity
- Works containing sexual or sadistic threat
- Works containing sexual or sadistic violence
- Works which contain images of a child actor or child character (whether live action or not) under 18 who is nude, partially nude, engaged in sexual posing or sexual activity, or who appears in close proximity to adults who are engaged in sexual posing or sexual activity.
- Works containing scenes in which vertebrate animals appear to suffer, or to be placed at risk of suffering, real pain, injury or harm, or to have been goaded to anger in any way, and which have not been supervised by the RSPCA or the American Humane Association or similar
- Works containing real criminal activity

NB THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST. THE BBFC MAY ON VIEWING, AND AT ITS OWN DISCRETION, IDENTIFY CONTENT NOT SPECIFIED HERE AS BEING UNSUITABLE FOR THE EXPRESS SERVICE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS NOT

STRAIGHTFORWARD AND REQUIRES FURTHER CONSIDERATION BEFORE A DECISION CAN BE REACHED.

Provided the work is not likely to have a significant impact on the public perception of the BBFC or the standards it applies, a work which lies on the borderline between two categories will normally be dealt with as follows:

- The submitting company will, in the first instance, be offered the higher of the two possible categories.
- If the submitting company does not accept the higher category, or wishes to pursue the possibility of obtaining the lower category, or of obtaining the lower category by making cuts or other changes to the work, the work will be referred for further consideration and any and all express service deadlines become null and void.

For example, a work containing multiple or aggressive uses of very strong language will normally result in an offer of a minimum '18' classification. If the submitting company wishes to pursue the possibility of obtaining a '15' classification, the work will cease to be considered an 'express' work and will be referred for further consideration in the normal manner. In such circumstances, the express service deadlines are null and void, and the BBFC makes no commitment to deliver a decision within a specified time (though, as ever, every effort will be made to conclude the necessary deliberations as soon as possible).