Audio Visual Materials in schools – Procedures for use

## Classification of film and computer games

Under the National Classification Scheme, the states and territories are responsible for the enforcement of classification decisions. Each State and Territory has classification enforcement legislation to complement the Commonwealth Classification Act. In New South Wales legislation it is called the [*Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Enforcement Act 1995*](https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1995-063)(NSW).

In general, films and computer games are classified as G, PG, M and MA 15+. Films may also be classified R 18+ or X 18+.  G, PG and M are **advisory classifications** recommending the appropriate audience. MA 15+, R 18+ and X 18+ are **legally restricted classifications.**

Details of the classifications can be found on the Commonwealth’s [Australian classification website](https://www.classification.gov.au/). Information for schools is also provided on the Attorney-General’s website and includes fact sheets for schools, teachers, students and libraries.

### Classification of television material (other than films)

The [*Broadcasting Services Act 1992*](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/bsa1992214/) (Cth) provides the framework legislation for television and radio broadcasts. While films that appear on television are generally covered under the National Classification Board guidelines, television programs are classified using Television Classification Guidelines, including in the [*Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice*](http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/aba/contentreg/codes/television/documents/2010-commercial_tv_industry_code_of_practice.pdf) coordinated by the [Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/HOMEPAGE/pc%3DHOME) Classification systems for television are similar to those used in the national classification system and include C, P, G, PG, M, MA 15+, AV 15+. Details are available from the [*Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice*](http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/aba/contentreg/codes/television/documents/2010-commercial_tv_industry_code_of_practice.pdf)*.*

## Directions for schools

All audio visual materials and computer games must be previewed by teachers prior to use with students. The reviewer should give particular consideration to the suitability of the material in the educational context, relevance to the syllabus and the age and maturity of the intended audience.

Consumer advice found adjacent to classification marking may assist schools when previewing materials. Schools should also be sensitive to cultural protocols that may be relevant to certain members of intended audiences when previewing materials.

The use of classified films, programs and computer games in schools requires the approval of the principal. The principal may delegate the approval of the use of C, P, G, and PG material to an executive member of staff but must not delegate approval relating to use of M and MA 15+ material.

Material classified G is classified for general viewing. There may be some material in this category that is of no interest to students.

Material classified PG should only be used with students after careful consideration by teaching staff and approval in accordance with [Audiovisual materials in schools-procedures for use](https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/controversial-issues-in-schools), given that material in this classification might upset, frighten or confuse some students and an adult may be required to provide guidance to students. Staff may wish to inform parents in advance of the presentation of this material to allow parents the opportunity to withdraw their child from the viewing.

Material classified M should only be considered for students who are 15 years and over. Material in this classification may contain themes and scenes which require a mature perspective. The material should have particular relevance to the course of study and should only be considered when other related resource material is limited.

Decisions about whether the use of M classified films, television materials and computer games in the school will be approved, must be made by the principal. The principal may delegate the task of previewing the material to an appropriate member of the teaching staff who will advise the principal as to suitability for students 15 years and over.

Parents are to be informed in advance of the presentation so that they have the opportunity to withdraw their child from the viewing. For students in years 11 and 12, informing parents in advance may take the form of a notification to parents at the beginning of the course that material classified M may be shown during the course.

Material classified MA 15+ should only be considered for students who are 15 years and over. This classification is legally restricted. The material should have particular relevance to the course of study and should only be considered when other related resource material is unavailable.

Decisions about whether the use of MA 15+ classified films, television materials and computer games in the school will be approved, must be made by the principal. The principal may delegate the task of previewing the material to an appropriate member of the teaching staff who will advise the principal as to suitability.

Parents are to be informed in writing in advance of presentation of the content and classification of the material. Parents’ written approval will be required for their child’s participation in viewing this material. Students who are 18 years or older and living apart from their parents may sign their own approval. Principals should refer to section 7 of the department’s [Family Law Guidelines](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/rights-and-accountability/legal-issues-bulletins/family-law-guidelines#Summary_0) in circumstances where students under 18 may be living independently.

Regardless of the students’ ages, films classified R 18+ and X 18+ must not be shown to school students under any circumstances.

Principals and teachers should note that this advice should also be applied to any approved school excursions that may involve visits to cinemas, video game venues, associated coach/air travel or other related activity that may involve film screenings or television viewing.

Schools must ensure that no breaches of copyright eventuate in screening any material considered suitable following review within the conditions outlined above. Schools can play films for educational instruction by way of an exemption in copyright law provided the audience is limited to persons who are receiving the educational instruction or are otherwise directly connected with the place where the instruction is given.

However, this exemption does not cover playing film for non-educational purposes. Principals are reminded that schools are directly responsible for purchase of a Co-curricular Licence, to cover copyright provisions for screening of any video material on excursion bus travel, school camps, sport rainy day or lunchtime activities and other similar events.

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| Year group | Classification  |
| Years 7, 8 and 9  | Only G and PG permitted Students under 13 need parental approval  |
| Year 10  | M rated films – needs principal approval and a permission note  |
| Years 11 and 12  | MA – needs principal approval and a permission note  |

## Film Note

Based on the policy above, teachers are required to send home a note for any M rated films in year 10 and are reminded that only G and PG films/content are to be used in years 7 - 9. Any enquiries regarding MA films in Stage 6 need to be discussed with the Head Teacher and, if permission is given, a separate opt-in note must be issued.

If a student returns a note claiming that they are not permitted to watch a film, an alternative activity/film must be organised for that student.