EDITORIAL POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE

AUDIENCE INTERACTIVITY

(Last updated: October 2010)

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES ISSUES

This guidance note should be considered in conjunction with the following Editorial Guidelines:

- Code of Conduct on Competitions
  See Editorial Guidelines Appendix 2: Code of Conduct for Competitions and Voting

- External Relationships & Funding
  See Editorial Guidelines Section 16 External Relationships & Funding: Public Value Partnerships

- Interacting with our audiences
  See Editorial Guidelines Section 17 Interacting with our audiences

- Politics, Public Policy & Polls
  See Editorial Guidelines Section 10 Politics, Public Policy and Polls: Opinion Polls, Surveys & Votes

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- The Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU) exists to provide advice on all technical aspects of running a competition, vote or award. They should be consulted at an early stage of any proposal.

- All competitions, votes and awards must comply with the Code of Conduct (see Appendix).

- Competitions should always have a clear editorial purpose and offer a genuine test of skill, knowledge or judgement.

- Winners of competitions should always be genuine. No member of the production team or anyone else should pose as a contestant or winner.

- Competitions involving Premium Rate Telephony must be referred to a senior manager in your division and then referred to Editorial Policy and ITACU.
• Any proposal to set up an award must be referred to Editorial Policy and a Senior Manager at the planning stages.

• An award should have clear, published rules, agreed with Programme Legal Advice.

• Criteria for judging or nominations must be transparent, clear, fair and consistent.

• Winners and runners-up of awards must have clear written guidance on their conduct once the result has been published.

• When an award is being decided entirely or partly via a public vote then the voting mechanism used should be robust.

• Special considerations apply when an award is run in partnership with an outside organisation.

• Votes must not be set up to make a profit, except when authorised for a BBC charitable cause; any proposal for a vote should be referred to the relevant Controller or Senior Manager in the division for sign off.

• Votes involving Premium Rate Telephony must be referred to a senior manager in your division and then referred to Editorial Policy and ITACU.

• Under no circumstances can the result of a BBC vote be faked.

GUIDANCE IN FULL

• Preface: The role of the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU)
• Part A: Detailed Guidance on Competitions
• Part B: Detailed Guidance on Mounting and Running Awards
• Part C: Detailed Guidance on Voting

Preface: The role of the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU)

The BBC has a specialist unit to provide advice on all technical aspects of running a competition, vote or award and any other uses of Premium Rate Telephony. The Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU) oversees the delivery, management and contracting of all BBC’s Premium
Rate Telephony and other telephony relating to voting and competitions for all programmes, both independent and in-house, across all divisions and output.

The unit is based in FM&T but it serves the whole BBC. It advises on fixed line and mobile telephony, red button, and also will advise on online voting and competitions where there is also a telephony method of voting or entry. It is an essential part of ensuring that the BBC can continue to offer its audiences innovative interactivity which complies with new tougher industry regulations.

The ITACU team has specialist staff who have an extensive background in the telecoms industry and an in-depth knowledge of technical systems, contracts, service provision, mobile and data retention.

ITACU also provides business affairs and legal advice, with referrals where appropriate to Programme Legal Advice and Divisional Business Affairs teams.

ITACU will provide programme teams with terms and conditions for competitions and voting; carry out tenders and award contracts for service providers and verify their processes; select and contract third party verifiers; act as a repository for all relevant documentation associated with competitions, votes and awards which use telephony and all of the BBC’s use of Premium Rate telephony and facilitate regular audits of the BBC uses of all such interactivity.

The unit does not offer editorial advice: Editorial Policy should be consulted for all editorial queries; ITACU liaises closely with Editorial Policy.

Sign off by ITACU is a mandatory part of any proposal to use Premium Rate Telephony. Further details about ITACU can be found here: [http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu](http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu) (Link only available to internal BBC users).

**Part A: Detailed Guidance on Competitions**

*Introduction*

BBC programmes and services across all genres and in all media may from time to time run viewer and listener competitions. They can enrich our output and help us to connect with our audiences. As well as being entertaining, they may also educate and inform viewers, listeners and online users. They can help us promote our programmes and services; help us reach underserved audiences and also help us to be more innovative.
It is essential that all BBC competitions meet the high editorial, ethical and technically robust standards that our audience rightly expect from us.

All BBC competitions must comply with the Code of Conduct which is affixed to this document.

Everyone who runs a competition should read the summary guide at the start of this note to help ensure they have complied with the requirements of the guidance.

This part is concerned with viewer, listener and online competitions. Game shows, contestant trawls and talent shows are not classed as general viewer and listener competitions and are not required to complete a competition approval form, although producers of such shows may find the advice in this guidance note useful.

This section provides detailed editorial advice. It outlines the BBC referrals and compliance process for competitions. In all cases where the vote involves telephony and/or a combination of online voting and telephony you will need technical, legal and contracts advice from the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU).

http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu (Link only available to internal BBC users).

The following principles apply to ALL BBC competitions:

- There must always be a clear editorial purpose for any BBC competition, whether it is included in a BBC programme or website or whether it is run off air as part of a programme or service promotion or in conjunction with a third party;
- We must offer a genuine test of skill, knowledge or judgment appropriate to the audience;
- All competitions must be run with probity and to the highest standards of integrity. They must be fair, legal and honest and run in a technically robust manner;
- We must always inform the audience clearly of when a competition is due to open and close;
- We must publish terms and conditions to ensure the organisation and running of the competition is fair and transparent and ensure prizes are appropriately and accurately described

Under no circumstances may any result be faked. It is essential that:
• Winners are genuine and never invented, pre-chosen or planted by the production team or anybody else connected with the running of the competition;
• No member of the production team or anyone else poses as a competition contestant or winner;
• You are confident that there will be sufficient entries to make the competition viable, robust and a useful editorial addition to the programme; otherwise you must not run it

In addition:

• Competitions involving Premium Rate Telephony must be referred to the senior manager in your division charged with approving the use of Premium Rate telephony, and then must be referred to Editorial Policy, and ITACU (who will consult Programme Legal Advice where necessary);
• Competitions must not be set up with the aim of making a profit except where they are being used to generate funds for a BBC charitable initiative;
• Premium Rate lines are used when they are the most suitable and safest way to handle large volumes of calls effectively;
• The lowest viable tariff must be charged. ITACU will advise on the tariff;
• The only time, in exceptional cases, that the BBC may run Premium Rate lines to raise funds, is for a BBC charitable initiative. In such cases the editorial content of the programme must relate directly to the charitable cause. Any such proposals must be signed off by the Divisional Director and referred to the Editorial Policy in advance;
• Premium Rate lines may not be used to raise funds for Charitable Appeals in CBBC output;
• Any competition, in which the audience can text in to a live programme, and where the result is to be announced in the same programme, must be referred to ITACU who will consult Editorial Policy;
• Competitions must not normally be launched and resolved within a programme of half an hour or less. Any proposed exception must be referred to the channel controller or equivalent senior manager, who must consult ITACU and Editorial Policy;
• All pricing information must be given clearly and accurately, both verbally and visually where appropriate;
• We must not promote any competition which is not organised by or run in conjunction with the BBC;
• We must retain editorial control of our own viewer, listener and online competitions even when they are mounted in association with suitable third parties;
• We must not require people to buy anything to enter a BBC competition unless it is linked to a BBC charitable appeal;
• We must not mislead people about the nature of prizes. They must be accurately described and suitable for all potential entrants (see section 5);
• We never offer cash prizes in viewer, listener and online competitions
1. Permissions and Referrals

All proposals for BBC competitions must be referred in the first instance to a Controller or equivalent Senior Manager in your area for approval in principle.

Before a competition is launched you must complete a competitions approval form for authorisation and submit it to the relevant controller or equivalent Senior Manager.

In some cases if a competition takes place daily, weekly or monthly the Controller or equivalent Senior Manager may decide it is not necessary to complete the form for each separate edition. Approval may be obtained for the competition over a period of time (e.g. a month for a competition taking place daily or annually for a monthly competition). The exact period of time before a new approval form may be required is at the discretion of the Controller or Senior Manager. All approved competitions and their supporting forms must be lodged on a database in each division and submitted to ITACU.

An appropriate editorial figure in the relevant production area must be identified by the Division as being responsible for overseeing the running of the competition, and must have completed the relevant training as outlined in the approval form. This person must also be responsible for ensuring that the competition has been appropriately resolved and ensuring that relevant documentation has been retained and copies sent to ITACU.

The specific referrals for Premium Rate Telephony are detailed in section 2 below:

2. Setting up a competition

The competition, its editorial ambition, structure, running and resolution should match the public’s high expectations of the BBC.

2.1 Appropriate Planning

Competitions need to be adequately resourced, throughout, in terms of technical support and administration. If some creativity is required, rather than simply answering questions, it must be established that all entries can be fully and equally considered, before a shortlist or winner is selected. Independent judging panels may need to be convened (see 5.3 below). Detailed records must be kept of the winner selection. These must be submitted to ITACU for logging:

Email: itacu@bbc.co.uk
Website: http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu
Adequate time must be allowed for entries to be received, verified and considered. Remember you may need to extend this in case of problems such as postal strikes or problems with online technical systems such as uploading of entries.

You must have a reasonable expectation that you will be able to cope with the number of entries and that you will generate enough interest in the competition to make it viable to launch. The choice of medium, the prize, amount of on air/ or online promotion for the competition, and the overall editorial set-up including what entrants have to do to win will all affect the likely popularity of the competition. You may wish to vary any of these elements before you finalise plans.

### 2.2 Telephony or online based competitions launched and resolved within a short programme

If a programme is half an hour or less, the BBC would not normally permit a competition to be launched and resolved within the same show. It is very unlikely that within half an hour a programme would have adequate time to set up the competition properly; allow the audience appropriate time to participate; and have enough time to collate and verify the results.

Any proposed exception MUST be referred to the Channel Controller, or National or Regional Controller, who should then consult Editorial Policy and ITACU.

### 2.3 Contingency Planning

Before you run any competition it is essential that you agree a contingency plan. This must be agreed and signed off by the appropriate editorial figure. It must outline what to do if there is a problem with the running of a competition. This could include a problem with the technology used for running the competition; the need to change or withdraw a prize e.g. cancellation of a sporting event; being unable to contact winners on air or after.

Separate contingency plans may be needed to outline what to do in the event of a failure of technology (refer to ITACU) or if there is an editorial or legal problem such as evidence of a breach of the rules by entrants (seek further advice from Editorial Policy & Programme Legal Advice).

If the competition is to be decided via an audience vote see Detailed Guidance on Voting for further advice.
2.4 Competitions aimed at or likely to involve children

Great care must be taken about any competitions which are aimed at or are likely to attract children.

If the competition involves telephony, entrants must be reminded that they must ask permission of the person who pays the bills to make the call.

Online, competitions involving children must include a statement to the effect that children (of 13 or under) should always get their parent’s or guardian’s permission before entering their personal details (name, address etc) onto the competition form.

Any proposal to use Premium Rate telephony in competitions aimed at children must be referred to the relevant Controller.

The BBC does not use Premium Rate telephony in CBBC programming.

2.5 Accessibility and choice of media

We aim not to exclude any of our audiences. Some households may not have easy access to digital technology. Normally if a competition is trailed on radio and television there should be universally accessible methods of entry, e.g. if there is an online option there should also be a telephone or written option. Competitions which can only be entered via the internet should only normally be trailed on channels where we can reasonably expect most of the likely audience to have some online access. There may be exceptions for editorial reasons for some competitions, but these should be referred in advance to Editorial Policy.

2.6 Setting of questions

Some competitions require the audience to answer one or more questions. The questions chosen are an essential part of the editorial decision making process and must be under the BBC’s editorial control. They must demand a level of skill appropriate to the likely audience and must also be suitable in tone and subject matter. Competition questions and answers should be thoroughly researched to ensure they are factually accurate.

Competition questions should not refer to any branded goods or services which are offered as prizes. Obviously where the prize is a ticket to events such as the FA cup final or concert, or book or CD then questions may test the audience knowledge about the relevant subject matter (e.g. history of the cup final or general knowledge about a writer or performer).

If entry to the competition is via a Premium Rate line or there is a donation line for a BBC charitable appeal, or any other payment to enter mechanism, ITACU
Legal & Business Affairs must be consulted (who will also refer to Programme Legal Advice); a demonstrable level of skill must be demanded otherwise the competition risks being an illegal lottery or gambling.

3. Terms and Conditions

All BBC competitions must have published, comprehensive, terms and conditions, so that we are transparent with our audiences about the nature and running of our competitions. It must be clear how to enter the competition: confusion causes complaints. For example the terms and conditions should stipulate age limits, what is required of entrants, methods of selection, opening and closing dates and times. ITACU Legal & Business Affairs will advise on appropriate rules.

Although terms and conditions can be posted on a website, it is essential that important rules that the audience may need to know about before deciding to enter are clearly stated on air if a competition is being run in a programme. Entrants also need to be told where to find the rules.

4. Entry

Entrants must always be treated fairly, properly, and in accordance with the rules/terms and conditions.

4.1 Restrictions on entry

Normally all BBC competitions should be open to all audience members. However in a few cases there may be very strong editorial reasons to use a competition to attract interaction from specific sections of the audience, such as people from specific geographical areas.

If this is proposed, prior referral must be made to the Controller or equivalent Senior Editorial Manager who is responsible for the approval of competitions, who may consult with Programme Legal Advice and Editorial Policy.

The best way to use a competition to attract interaction from a specific section of the audience is to design a competition which is particularly likely to attract those groups to enter; this could be because of the editorial nature of the competition itself, the type of prize, the programme or website on which it is being promoted. However it is never acceptable to reject a legitimate winner or entrant who has complied with the rules just because they do not fit the target profile.

Any acceptable restrictions on entry must be made explicit to the audience at the outset. Any such restrictions must be reflected in the terms and conditions and these must be approved by ITACU Legal & Business Affairs who will consult Programme Legal Advice.
BBC staff are not normally eligible to enter a BBC viewer, listener or online competition. Any rare exceptions must be referred to Editorial Policy.

4.2 Online Entry forms and the Data Protection Act

Entrants to an online competition should normally complete an electronic “entrance form” which should only request the minimum amount of personal information necessary to enter the competition. The reasons for requesting any additional information should be declared under the Data Protection Act. The user must be offered a clear option to enter without providing the additional information, for example by putting an asterisk in the fields which are optional.

Personal information (which can be as little as a name and address) must not be passed on to third parties without the user’s prior knowledge and consent.

Competition entries should be retained for 2 years in case there are any complaints or queries following the competition and to facilitate audits.

The correct answer and limited details of winners (usually name and town) must be made available on request and our terms and conditions must advise entrants of this requirement.

5. Selection of winners

BBC competitions must all involve some test of knowledge or skill appropriate to the target audience. Winners must be selected fairly, openly and in accordance with the terms and conditions. There are various methods of selecting winners. The method chosen should be appropriate to the nature of the competition and must always be fair to all entrants.

5.1 Creative Competitions (panels and voting)

BBC competitions may ask entrants to demonstrate creativity, such as writing a radio play, or blog or taking a photograph. It is important to establish clear and fair criteria on which the competition is to be judged at the outset. The criteria used must be available to the public. For online competitions the criteria should normally be available on the competition website.

5.2 Audience voting

Consideration must be carefully given as to whether a vote is the most appropriate way of deciding the winner of a competition. If the competition has involved a high level of skill, such as writing a play or composing music then a panel may be the most appropriate way of judging. It may be appropriate to have two stages and involve both a panel and an audience vote.
If a competition is to be decided by way of an audience vote then you must consult the Section C: Guidance on Voting.

If the vote is by text (SMS) and is to be run and resolved in a live programme, referral must be made to ITACU who will consult with Editorial Policy.

If the competition result requires a very fast turn around time e.g. as part of a live show, it is unlikely that online or text will be acceptable. This is particularly true where there may be a strong incentive to cheat, because checking the integrity of online votes is likely to take some time and effort.

**5.3 Using a Panel**

(See also Detailed Guidance on Mounting and Running an Award)

In many cases for creative competitions it will be more appropriate to use a panel to judge entries. This judging system should be clearly explained to the audience and to entrants via on air/online announcements and the terms and conditions. The panel should normally include, or be overseen, by a BBC representative to ensure that the BBC remains in editorial control of the running of all of its competitions at all stages. Panellists should be issued with the criteria for judging. They must confirm, in writing, that they have no conflicts of interest; they should not have any close personal or commercial connection to the entrants.

If such a connection emerges once the competition has commenced, then the panel member should withdraw. Programme Legal Advice should be consulted. It might be necessary to restart judging. It is important that all entries are judged in a consistent manner in line with the agreed criteria. In some cases, for example when short–listing large numbers of entries, entries may be split into groups and judged by separate panels of judges. However we must always be consistent and in such cases a control mechanism such as an overseeing adjudicator must be considered to ensure fairness between panels. Further advice may be obtained from Editorial Policy.

**5.4 Random Selection**

(Usually only used for quizzes.)

In many cases BBC competitions are in the form of general knowledge quizzes.
In such cases a panel or vote is unlikely to be used, a winner is likely to be selected at random from all correct entries. In such cases a demonstrably fair random selection process must take place. Where we state in terms and conditions that winners will be randomly selected, we must never use additional subjective
criteria, for example short-listing entries because they sound or appear lively or because they live near to where any programme recording is due to take place. (See section below)

All correct entries must be entered for random selection. There are several ways to ensure this including:

- **Drawn from a “hat”:** If there are relatively few entries then it could be acceptable to put either all the entries, or all the correct entries into a “hat” or other appropriate receptacle. The first correct entry drawn will be the winner. It may be acceptable to draw several alternatives in case the winner is not contactable or the entry drawn has incomplete details. However if this is done it is essential that the entries are dealt with in the same order in which they are drawn. The first correct entry, which fulfils the entry terms and conditions must be the winner. It is NOT acceptable to draw/select winners in reverse order, although we may announce runners up before winners. Entries should normally be drawn with a witness, who may be from the production team.

- **Automated random selection:** This is a complex area and you must take advice from ITACU. If there are large numbers of entries, and/or entries from a variety of sources e.g. online, text (SMS) and telephony, then it is usually appropriate to use an automated computer generated random selection process. It is likely that in such cases the telephony service provider will be responsible and contracted to carry out the random selection. However the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the running of the competition should ensure that the system is appropriate, with advice from ITACU.

- If entries have come from several sources then great care must be taken to ensure the selection remains fair at all stages. More people may have entered via one method than another. Entries must be appropriately weighted to ensure everyone has the same statistical chance of being selected. Not all automated random selections systems are the same or as robust. Referral must be made to ITACU.

**5.5 Random selection & second stage (Where the finalists compete on air)**

In certain limited cases, particularly live Radio quizzes, the format of the competition may mean that two or more finalists must be selected, from the correct entries to compete on air. In such cases, editorially, it will be necessary to ensure that the finalists are able to compete in that way for example they may need to be able to cope with the pressure of competing live on air and also may need to be lively and interesting.

In such cases the competition would have two stages; a random selection of all winning entries and then a second stage where these winners are contacted in the order in which they have been drawn and auditioned to select finalists to go on air.
It is essential that this process is clearly explained on air and online in the terms and conditions. It is also essential that this second stage audition process is supervised by the senior editorial figure responsible for overseeing the competition to ensure it is managed appropriately. Advice must be sought from Editorial Policy and Programme Legal Advice.

It is very unlikely this format would be suitable for a Premium Rate competition.

6. Prizes

The choice of an editorially appropriate prize is an integral part of the good running of a BBC competition. We must not offer cash prizes for any viewer or listener or online competition. We must never accept cash to pay for competition prizes. We must not mislead audiences about the nature of the prize. Great care must be taken to describe accurately either on-air or online in the terms and conditions of entry, full details as to what is to be included and what is not to be included in a prize: for example travel expenses, accommodation etc. Particular care must be taken to ensure that the prize in despatched within a reasonable time.

6.1 Suitability of prizes

Prizes for viewer and listener and online competitions should meet the expectations of the likely audience. We would normally offer “money-can’t-buy” experiences, rather than prizes of a high monetary value. They should match the likely age of participants. The choice of prize should not risk bringing the BBC into disrepute.

6.2 Donated prizes

We should normally pay for the prizes we offer in our competitions and aim to offer original rather than expensive prizes. However, in order to ensure the best value for the licence fee payer we may accept modest donated prizes such as concert or theatre tickets, tickets to sports events, books or DVDs. We may accept prizes of visits to special events, including hospitality offered at the event, but we should pay for the majority of costs e.g. for travel or accommodation.

The BBC must retain its editorial independence and objectivity and we must not promote or appear to favour one organisation or company. It is important, therefore, that we ring the changes when accepting any donated prizes. If there is a range of prizes there should be a range of donors over time. For example if a local radio station has a number of football teams in its area we should not continually offer tickets to only one of the team’s matches as prizes.
We must never allow a donor to influence the on-air or online editorial e.g. provide copy about the prizes, suggest questions for the competition.

Competition questions should not refer to any branded goods or services which are offered as prizes (see 6.5 below) and we should normally avoid offering prizes of branded products or services which are referred to editorially elsewhere in the programme or on the same section of the website.

It is essential that no prize is accepted in return for a “plug”. We must never accept prizes in exchange for a verbal or visual or logo credit for the donor or their sponsors. Programmes must never give an assurance that there will be an on-air credit or online credit or any publicity in exchange for the donation of a competition prize.

Prizes should be described in an informational, non promotional manner. The name of the supplier should not normally be given and the brand name should not be mentioned unless it is necessary editorially to describe the prize. Any references to the brand must be kept to the minimum. Normally only one reference should be made. We should avoid shots of brand logos on air and online.

Unless there is a very strong editorial reason to do so, we would not normally provide an online link to the supplier of a prize.

Donations of substantial prizes are permissible only in exceptional circumstances and must not bring the BBC’s editorial integrity into question. For example it might be possible to accept a more substantial prize if offered by an artistic, educational, arts or sports body or a research foundation. Such prizes can be accepted only with the approval of the relevant Controller or equivalent Senior Manager. Editorial Policy must be consulted also.

**6.3 Prizes for Charity Competitions**

The BBC may run on-air competitions or contests as part of its fundraising activities for BBC charitable campaigns such as Children in Need or Red Nose Day. In such cases we may accept a substantial donated prize, as an incentive to entering and donating to the charity. Any such donation of a substantial prize for a BBC charity competition must be referred to Chief Adviser Editorial Policy. Legal advice should also be sought and legal documentation with the charity may also be required.

**6.4 BBC commercial products as prizes**

Great care must be taken over the use of BBC commercial products such as magazines, books and DVDs as prizes. The BBC commercial product should never be the main focus of the prize. Usually we would only offer BBC
commercial products as part of a “basket” of prizes, for example we could include some BBC DVDs in a general family selection of DVDs.

6.5 Product prominence

Whether a prize has been donated or not we must take care not to describe or depict it in such a way as to give undue prominence for any third party, whether they are a commercial organisation or not. Normally we would not refer to a prize by its branded name, for example we would say “games console” rather than “Xbox”. In order to avoid undue prominence, care must be taken over the use of any pictures which show branding. There should be no element of plugging.

Online, if an image of a product is used, it should not be too large or too prominent.
The name of the supplier should not normally be given and the brand should be mentioned only if strictly editorially necessary. Product logos should not be used.
We should never use text from product promotional material.

Normally we would not offer an ongoing subscription to an organisation or magazine as a prize.

7. Competitions which use telephony

7.1 Premium Rate Telephony Services

Definition of Premium Rate Telephony Services (PRTS)

Premium Rate Telephony Services are those which deliver some form of content, or service which is charged to the users’ phone bills. They can be run via fixed lines, mobile phones or interactive digital television.

Fixed line Premium Rate numbers are normally prefixed with ‘09’.

Premium Rate text (SMS) services normally use short access codes typically four or five digit numbers. These will usually be shown on phone bills as ‘Premium Rate call’ or ‘high Premium Rate service’, although this may vary depending on individual mobile network operators. Premium Rate charging for mobile content is generally per text (SMS) message.

- Premium Rate lines are used when they are the most suitable way to handle large volumes of calls effectively;
- The lowest viable tariff must be charged. Advice must be sought from ITACU;
- The only time, in exceptional cases, that the BBC may run Premium Rate Lines to raise funds, is for a BBC charitable initiative. In such cases the editorial content of the programme must relate directly to the
charitable cause. Any such proposals must be signed off by the Divisional Director and referred to the Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy in advance;

- All proposals to use Premium Rate telephony must be referred to the senior manager in your division charged with approving the use of Premium Rate telephony, and then must be referred to Editorial Policy and ITACU Legal and Business Affairs (who may consult with Programme Legal Advice). A Premium Rate Telephony approval form must be authorised by the relevant Controller or Senior Manager. All Premium Rate competitions require legally approved rules.

Any use of Premium Rate telephony must also comply with the Code of Practice issued by the telephony industry regulator PhonepayPlus (formerly ICSTIS) – please consult ITACU:

http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/pdfs_code/PhonepayPlus11CoP_Apr08v3.pdf

and relevant help notes:

www.phonepayplus.org.uk/pdfs_helpnotes_code11/pricing.pdf

### 7.2 Audience Information

It is extremely important that we are totally transparent with our audiences in relation to our use of Premium Rate telephony. We must ensure that they are given all relevant information.

An IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system will normally be used to handle Premium Rate votes. This technology can use a computer to process voice responses or touch tone signals from a normal phone call. The IVR can often use pre-recorded messages to give relevant information to callers; such as the fact that their entry has been registered or which answer they have given in the case of multiple choice questions. These systems generally handle large call volumes.

Consult ITACU if you are intending to use an IVR system.

### 7.3 Information on call costs

Audiences must be informed clearly of how much it will cost them to interact with a BBC programme using Premium Rate numbers. On television, the BBC requires this BBC Editorial Policy BBC Detailed Guidance on Competitions information to be conveyed verbally at appropriate regular intervals as well as visually.
Call cost information on a graphic should be clear and legible. Particular care should be taken over backing colours, font size and type of script, to ensure information is not hard to read.

Call cost information should also be given verbally, at appropriate regular intervals by a presenter or in a voice over and should be audible, clear and at a reasonable pace.

Call cost information may also be given as a recorded message on the competition entry lines.

It will not always cost the same to call from every network; calls from mobiles in particular may be more expensive. This must be declared on air.

The standard wording is “calls cost x from a BT landline, calls from other operators may vary and mobiles will be considerably higher”.

Where programmes are using Premium Rate competitions in order to raise money for BBC charitable appeals, audiences must be informed clearly what charity will benefit from the service. They must also be told what proportion of the call charge will be donated to the charity.

For example “calls cost x from a BT landline, calls from other operators may vary and mobiles will be considerably higher. x from each call will go to BBC Children in Need/Comic Relief etc” (see 8.5 below)

We should also aim to inform them of call costs from non-Premium Rate telephony.
You must consult ITACU for appropriate current wording.

Online information: Usually we do not display Premium Rate numbers online. Any proposal to do so should be referred to Editorial Policy. Where it is agreed to do so, all relevant call cost information must also be displayed. In some cases, particularly for popular high profile shows such as a TV talent show, with audience voting, we may decide to include a table showing indicative costs from the main mobile phone networks, on the show website. In such cases ITACU must be consulted at an early stage; they will provide this information for the website.

7.4 Information about line opening and closing times

Audiences must be informed clearly and precisely when competition lines open and close; this should include dates and sometimes also times where appropriate, for example where a vote involves email or phone/text entry.
When using Premium Rate Telephony you must ensure systems are used which prevent callers from being charged, should they try to enter before lines open or after they close. Further advice must be sought from ITACU.

We must verbally and visually (for television) remind people not to enter before or after lines open or close. We normally state: “don’t enter before or after x time, your entry won’t count, and you may be charged”

For non Premium Rate interactions:

If you have to use a system which cannot prevent callers being charged before a line opens or after it closes then the on air message should be:

“do not enter before or after x time or your entry won’t count and you will be charged”

7.5 Charity fundraising

Any proposal to use Premium Rate competitions to raise money for charity must be referred in advance to the Divisional Director and Editorial Policy. Programme Legal Advice must also be consulted if the proposal is approved.

Some programmes, series and strands within existing shows are specially commissioned as part of the charity fundraising output for BBC Appeals e.g. “Comic Relief does Fame Academy”. In such cases, where the output is directly connected to the charitable appeal and is clearly in the run up to the Charitable Appeal, Premium Rate competitions may be used as a form of donation.

N.B. we will not use Premium Rate lines to raise funds for Charitable Appeals in CBBC output.

7.6 Tariffs for Premium Rate charity fundraising

A range of Premium Rate tariffs may be used to raise monies for charity: the BBC does not specify any one rate. These tariffs yield varying amounts for charity. In selecting the tariff care must be taken to ensure we do not charge our audiences a prohibitive amount, even if the monies are to be used for charity.

Sometimes Premium Rate text (SMS) entry may be used for charity fundraising for a BBC Appeal. Very careful consideration is needed to ensure that the use of Premium Rate text (SMS) votes to raise money for charity is editorially justified. It is possible that the charity or programme may wish to attract a
specific demographic which would usually use text (SMS) entry for competitions e.g. Radio One, BBC Three.

In all cases ITACU will advise on the appropriate tariff and will ensure the best return possible is achieved for the charitable appeal, whilst delivering a robust technical system. The final decision as to the appropriate tariff will be made in consultation with Editorial Policy.

7.7 Non-Premium Rate telephony

Non-Premium Rate numbers may be available to run a competition. Clear cost information should still be provided on-air. Care should be taken to ensure that the system proposed can support the interactivity. Consult ITACU.

7.8 Text (SMS) entries

Text entry is very popular among sections of our audience. It will not be suitable for all proposals. It is vital that enough time is allowed between the close of the competition and the collation, selection, verification and announcement of the result.

Text (SMS) entries are not delivered in real time. There can be a time lag between the viewer or listener sending a text, and the entry being registered, as the data has to go through several stages of processing. This delay can be considerable in some circumstances.

Any competition, in which the audience can text into a live programme, and where the result is to be announced in the same programme, must be referred to ITACU who will consult Editorial Policy.

Text messages can be charged when the user sends their message to the BBC (MO) or when they are sent a reply from the BBC (MT). Which method is most appropriate will vary from case to case and should be discussed with ITACU well in advance of setting up the competition.

8. Contracting Telephony Service Providers

Telephony service providers may be required to manage competition entry systems.

In some cases they will run and aggregate the entries in all media including online.

ITACU will advise whether a service provider is needed and put in place appropriate contracts.

For Independent Productions, the contracts and the supplier to be used must be approved by ITACU Legal and Business Affairs well in advance to check that they conform to BBC standards.

8.1 Testing Lines
In all contracts ITACU will ensure that:

- Telephony lines are tested appropriately;
- Review meetings are held between the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the running of the competition, the telephone service provider, ITACU and, on some occasions Editorial Policy, to ensure the system has operated effectively and identify any issues;
- If any issues arise, either during the running of the competition, or if they become apparent after the final data is available, the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the competition must be informed; they will consult with ITACU and possibly Editorial Policy; further senior consultation may be required;
- Programme Legal Advice may also need to be consulted.

9. **Jointly run competitions with third parties**

Any proposal to run a jointly organised competition must be referred to Editorial Policy.

The BBC may run competitions in conjunction with suitable third parties, such as arts institutions and professional bodies. Normally we would not run competitions with a commercial organisation. However there may be exceptions for very strong editorial reasons, for example we might join with a publication to run a competition to recognise particular creative skill such as short story writing.

Whether the competition is to be run on or off air, we must ensure that the third party is a suitable partner. If we accept any donated prize, or offer any opportunity, which involves third party funding, it is essential that its acceptance does not call into question the BBC’s editorial integrity, objectivity or independence.

(See BBC Editorial Guidelines, Section 16 – External Relationships, Public Value Partnerships)

The BBC and the third party may jointly fund the competition with the BBC paying a substantial part of the costs. But no money from the third party should flow into any programme budget or be used to pay for any production or broadcast costs. Referral must be made at an early stage to Chief Adviser.

9.1 **Participation in 3rd Party Award / Competition**

If viewers or listeners are being offered the chance to vote for a third party award e.g. a category of *The Brits*, see Part B: Guidance on Mounting and Running an Award.
The BBC and the third party may jointly decide how the competition is run and the winner chosen. The third party must not be responsible for choosing the winner.

In some cases third parties may wish to run their own entry route, in addition to the BBC method of entry. For example they may wish people to be able to enter on their own site as well as via bbc.co.uk. This may be possible but needs very careful handling. In most cases we should ensure people enter only via BBC entry route.

Should third party insist entry must also be via the third party route – referral must be made to Editorial Policy and ITACU well before any agreements are reached. The BBC must be satisfied that the third party entry mechanism is robust and fits with the terms and conditions.

The BBC must make sure there is appropriate supervision of the collation of entries from different entry points to ensure the end result is totally fair, and that all correct entries have an equal chance of being selected.

Usually there will need to be a contract or an agreement to establish clearly how the partnership will work, and how the responsibilities for running and administering the competition will be allocated between the partners. ITACU Legal and Business will advice on all contractual matters.

All communications around the competition will need to have BBC approval e.g. all third party marketing material which refers to the BBC or its programmes or services. We should not promote any competition which has not been organised by or run in conjunction with the BBC. To that end we must not "brand slap" i.e. simply lend our name to someone else’s competition. The BBC must be editorially involved in the set up and running of the competition and ensure it meets BBC standards.

**10. Pre-recorded and repeated programmes**

**10.1 Pre-recorded Programmes**

If a competition is run during the course of a programme, (rather than simply promoted at the end of a show) the audience will normally presume that the programme is live. The inclusion of interactivity into a pre-recorded show can cause problems if not handled carefully. We must never mislead the audience.

Great care must be taken to ensure that it is appropriate to include a competition in a
Pre-recorded programme; that the competition mechanism is still valid and robust; and that particular care has been taken over scripting to avoid misleading the audience in any way. It may also be important to add extra explanatory information online with the terms and conditions.

If a programme has been pre-recorded, and a problem has been identified before transmission which renders the result inaccurate, then the programme should not be transmitted without appropriate changes. This may require re-editing.

The appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the competition must be consulted.

10.2 Repeated Programmes

If a programme which includes a competition is to be repeated we must never knowingly mislead the audience into thinking they can enter when in fact they cannot. This is particularly important if the entry is via telephony. But whatever the entry method, people must not be misled.

In some cases programmes may need to be edited before repeating:

- For television, we must totally obscure entry details if they are on a graphic in the original programme;
- We should also use an announcement or add a graphic to inform viewers the competition is closed;
- Where there are verbal announcements of entry methods it will be necessary to edit or to have a continuous strap running through that section of the programme to inform the audience the competition has closed;
- For radio, appropriate edits must be made

Under no circumstances should a programme be repeated where it is known that there were errors in the voting or audience information without appropriate changes.
This also applies to On Demand services (see 10.3 below).

10.3 On Demand services (including BBC iPlayer)

Many of the BBC’s programmes are now available on a range of On Demand services, in particular the BBC iPlayer. It is important that audiences are informed that the interactivity may have changed or be closed.

There are various ways of doing this:
• a short specially commissioned VT at the start of the show which will remind people that interactivity may no longer be open and direct them to the programme website for up to date information;
• a strap with audience information;
• The programme synopsis, which describes the programme content, must highlight that the programme includes interactivity and direct people to the website for information, where relevant

Productions must ensure they liaise with the On Demand scheduling team, to inform them of programmes which need additional information. It may not be appropriate for some programmes which include interactivity to be included in the On Demand Schedule, if appropriate announcements and audience information cannot be given.

In Radio, for services such as radio iPlayer, programme teams must liaise with the Audio and Music interactive teams to ensure that information in programmes which contain votes or competitions is amended accordingly.

11. Publicising BBC competitions

Suitable third parties, such as BBC Worldwide magazines or other publications or suitable online sites, may be used by the BBC to help publicise our competitions. Magazines may include entry forms; third party websites may link back to a BBC online entry form. However on air we should only give the BBC method of entry.

11.1 Off-air marketing competitions

In addition BBC Publicity or Marketing may sometimes run competitions off-air which are either publicised on third party spaces (magazines, websites etc) or run in conjunction with suitable third parties, in order to promote our programmes and services. The principles outlined in this guidance note apply.

12. If things go wrong

Nothing matters more than trust and fair dealing with our audiences. Even with the best planning things may occasionally go wrong and in extreme cases this could result in problems on air. However, even though there may be pressures to keep programmes on the air, we must never compromise our editorial integrity.

Refer up, as soon as possible if serious problems over the robustness of the competition begin to develop. The appropriate editorial figure responsible for the programme which contains the competition must be informed, even if the problems have occurred in another media. For example, the competition
may be run on several platforms and the problem may have occurred only online, however the television or radio executive must be made aware of this at the earliest opportunity.

The problems with the competition could have significant consequences for the programme. The appropriate editorial figure will need to decide what action may be needed on-air, whether further advice or further referrals upwards are needed, and what relevant audience information should be given out as soon as possible.

If the competition is online then the relevant Interactive executive must be informed.

In all cases it is vital that we do not inadvertently encourage people to keep entering when we know the competition may be compromised.

All measures possible must be taken to try to rectify the problem – where the competition involves telephony or a combined telephony online entry mechanic ITACU must be consulted.

Do not announce or publish an incorrect result on-air, online or in any other media. Instead explain to the audience that there has been a problem and the result will be announced at a later date.

This must be done even if the whole programme/project has been developed or billed around the result of the competition.

BBC Press and Publicity should usually also be alerted.

The need for transparency is paramount. Audiences will value our openness. Online, we may wish to publish an explanation and an FAQ to give people more information about what has gone wrong and why.

**13. Documentation: Independent verification and adjudication**

In the case of high profile competitions where the prize is of high value or importance and particularly where Premium Rate telephony has been used to decide the outcome, it may be appropriate to ensure that the result is overseen by an independent verifier. ITACU will advise on such matters and contract a verifier in such circumstances.

Appropriate records must be kept by the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the interactivity and also by service providers to demonstrate competitions have been run fairly, appropriately, in accordance with the BBC Guidelines, the relevant sections of the Ofcom Code and the PhonepayPlus (ICSTIS) Code, and in accordance with the terms and conditions.
ITACU will advise what documentation must be kept and will also act as a central repository for the information and data. (itacu@bbc.co.uk)

**Part B: Detailed Guidance on Mounting and Running Awards**

*Introduction*

In some cases, the BBC may decide to set up its own awards, to recognise the achievements or talents of members of the public or a specialist group such as writers, musicians or sport stars. BBC Awards may sometimes be run in conjunction with a suitable outside organisation.

BBC Awards will inevitably give a BBC stamp of approval for the achievements of individuals and/or third party organisations. As such they should only be set up to serve a serious purpose. We should not offer awards if we do not intend the recipient to be able to make reference to the award in public. Consideration should be given at a senior level to ensure that the proposal to set up a BBC award is editorially acceptable.

All BBC Awards must comply with the BBC Code of Conduct which is affixed to this guidance note.

This section provides detailed editorial advice about how to run a BBC award. It outlines the new BBC referrals and compliance process for use of telephony. In all cases where an award involves a public vote using telephony and/or a combination of online voting and telephony you will need technical, legal and contracts advice from the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU):

[http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu](http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu) (Link only available to internal BBC users)

The following principles apply to all BBC awards:

- Any proposal to set up a BBC award must be referred to Editorial Policy and a Senior Manager at the planning stages;
- There should be clear, published rules, which have been agreed with Programme Legal Advice;
- Criteria for judging or nominations must be transparent, clear, fair and consistent;
- Winners and runners up must have clear written guidance as to how they may make reference to the award once the result has been published by the BBC; it should be clear in the terms and conditions
that failure to comply could result in disqualification or the award being rescinded;

- If an award is to be decided totally or in part via a public vote then appropriate efforts should be made to ensure the voting mechanism used should be robust

If the award is to be run in partnerships with an outside organisation then:

- Our choice of partner and the editorial nature of the awards proposed must be appropriate and should not bring the BBC into disrepute;
- The BBC’s editorial impartiality and integrity must not be compromised and the BBC must retain editorial control;
- We should work with a range of partners and not unduly favour one above another

If the award involves a bursary or a prize funded by an outside organisation, this must be approved by Editorial Policy and the BBC Regulatory lawyers.

If there is any proposal to sponsor the awards ceremony, this must be referred at the earliest stage to Chief Adviser Editorial Policy. Sponsorship by commercial organisations is not permitted for BBC Awards.

Everyone who runs a BBC award must read the summary advice at the start of this Part to ensure they have complied with the requirements of this guidance.

1. Permissions and Referrals

Before you may run an award you must complete the Awards approval form and submit to the Controller or equivalent Senior Manager in your division for authorisation.

Awards may be complex to set up and may require advice from several specialist areas of the BBC including Editorial Policy, Programme Legal Advice, Marketing and Communications, Fair Trading, and Business Affairs. If the award involves any use of telephony then technical and contracts advice must be sought form ITACU.

Therefore any proposals to set up a BBC award must be referred at an early stage to Editorial Policy, who will advise on which other department may need to be consulted, depending on the nature of the proposal and help coordinate this advice.

The relevant Senior Manager must also be consulted.

2. How to set up and run BBC Awards

Awards may be decided by way of a panel, a public vote or a combination of the two.
An appropriate editorial figure must oversee and be responsible for the running of the award. A BBC award cannot be set up at the last minute.

3. Judging a BBC Award

3.1 Terms and Conditions

Awards can only be judged fairly, either by the public or a panel, if clear criteria are established at the outset. These must be outlined in the terms and conditions so that entrants, nominators and judges are all clear as to the purpose of the award and how it is to be decided.

If there is to be a public vote then clear terms and conditions for voting must be published; see also Part C: Voting.

3.2 Panels

In many cases it will be appropriate to use a panel to judge entries. The judging system should normally be clearly explained to the audience and must be explained to entrants via on-air/online announcements and the terms and conditions. The panel should normally include, or be overseen, by a BBC representative to ensure that the BBC remains in editorial control of the running of all of its awards at all stages. Panellists must be issued with the criteria for judging. They must confirm, in writing, that they have no conflicts of interest; for example they should not normally have any close personal or commercial connection with entrants.

If it emerges that there is a conflict, once the award judging process has commenced, then the panel member should withdraw. Programme Legal Advice and the senior editorial figure responsible for overseeing the running of the award must be consulted; advice may also be sought from Editorial Policy. It might be necessary to restart judging.

3.3 Nominations

Sometimes the awards process may take several stages: nominations may be drawn via public nominations or via a panel; a shortlist may be decided by a vote or a panel or a combination of the two.

We must apply clear criteria at all stages.

4. Jointly run awards with third parties

Further advice should be sought from the BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 16 External Relationships and Funding.
Any proposal for a jointly run award must be referred at an early stage to Editorial Policy.

The BBC may decide to mount a competitive award with a suitable organisation such as academic, educational or artistic institutions or charitable foundations: for example, the BBC Short Story Award, which is run with the Book Trust and the Book Trust for Scotland.

In some cases our awards may be made up of a number of categories and different partners may help decide individual categories.

The choice of partner for a joint award must be appropriate and editorially justifiable; care must be taken not to promote the partner. All on-air and online references should be editorially justifiable. Even though the award may be jointly organised, the BBC must retain overall editorial control. The partner may not decide the winner. In some cases, such as *The Brits*, BBC audiences may have the opportunity to vote in a third party organised award (see section 5 below).

We do not normally mount awards with commercial organisations. However, it may be possible:

- To run a competitive award with a publication or other media organisation for a joint award for skills associated with broadcasting such as journalism, music, writing or drama or other BBC initiative;
- For local radio stations to join with a regional publication to organise and present a local award.

When organising an award with a media organisation or publication, it is important that our choice of partner is editorially justifiable and that we take care not to promote the partner on-air.

Nominations and/or voting may be via the BBC and the publication or media organisation, but BBC licence fee funded services may only publicise entry via the BBC. It is essential that no-one is required to buy a publication in order to be entered for a BBC award or make a nomination.

Normally the BBC will not incorporate the third party name into the title of the award. Any proposed exception must be referred to Editorial Policy. It will never do so in the case of a commercial organisation.

A contract or agreement will need to be drawn up between the BBC and the outside organisation, which must set out clearly lines of responsibility; Business Affairs must be consulted.

A third party may do the following:
• Provide Specialist expertise for the judging panel;
• Help run and publicise the awards;
• Provide or run facilities for shortlisted candidates – such as workshops;
• Provide part of the overall prize – e.g. a grant or bursary, performance opportunity, publication of a winner’s work

4.1 Bursaries for BBC Awards

N.B further guidance in this area is to be published shortly, in the interim any proposals involving third party sponsorship or funding of BBC awards must be referred to Chief Adviser, Editorial Policy

The BBC sometimes mounts special award ceremonies at outside venues for some of the key awards offered by the BBC such as Young Musician of the Year or the Radio 3 World Music Awards. In some cases in order to defray the costs to the licence fee payer it may be acceptable to supplement the cost of mounting a public event by sponsorship from a non-commercial body.

The money from the sponsor may only be used for the costs of mounting the event.
No sponsorship money may be used for any broadcast costs. Accounts must show clear separation between event costs and broadcasting costs.

The sponsor must not be involved in any way with the running of the awards or in any decisions as to who receives awards. An individual award at the ceremony may also be sponsored, but again the sponsor will have no say over who wins the award.

In some cases it may be acceptable for a non-commercial sponsor to fund an award which might take the form of a grant or bursary for the overall winner or winners of a specific BBC award. Winners may apply for such a bursary after they have won their award. The BBC must be in charge of the process of awarding these bursaries against published criteria.

Bursaries are only offered for clear public service reasons to enable the recipients to undertake suitable activities such as service to the community or artistic or musical studies.

Legal advice must be sought over the terms and administration of a bursary.

Any proposal for sponsorship of a BBC Public Service Award or Awards event must be referred at the earliest stage to Chief Adviser Editorial Policy.

5. Third party awards including BBC audience participation

In rare circumstances it may be acceptable for BBC programmes or BBC channels to accept the opportunity for our audiences to vote in an award or
set of awards mounted by a third party e.g. a specific category in *The Brits*, or the *Baftas*.

Great care must be taken to ensure that such an association does not bring the BBC into disrepute. It is not acceptable for BBC programmes, services and channels simply to lend their names to third party awards without sufficient editorial involvement: we must not “brand slap”.

All such proposals must be referred at an early stage to the relevant Controller or equivalent Senior Manager and to Editorial Policy.

**6. Verification**

BBC Awards are only mounted for a serious purpose and we normally expect them to have a resonance beyond the associated broadcast. They may have a direct impact on the winner and runners up. It is imperative that the award has been run in a robust manner, and it may be important to be able to demonstrate this.

In some cases it may be appropriate to consider putting in place a system of independent verification of the process and final result. For example, some programmes may wish to use an independent solicitor or accountant or suitable verification body. In other cases where there is a judging panel it might be important to ensure the Chair is independent of the BBC and/or any partner organisation. Editorial Policy will advise whether external verification is required and will liaise with ITACU to procure a suitable verifier.

**7. Use of a BBC Award by winners and/or runners up**

It is likely that winners and in some cases, finalists/runners up, may wish to refer to the fact they have won or been considered for a BBC Award. We must ensure there is clear information for winners and nominees as to how the award may be referenced.

This information should be issued to all entrants at an appropriate stage. Adherence to these must form part of the terms and conditions. We must ensure that the terms and condition include the right to withdraw the award at any stage if it transpires that winners have broken them or if their subsequent behaviour could bring the BBC into disrepute.

In may be advisable to put together a “winner’s pack” of BBC material which may be used by winners, with accompanying conditions. This could consist of any of the following depending on the nature of the award, subject to relevant clearances, and in accordance with the BBC Fair Trading Guidelines:

- An award logo;
- Relevant short clips and or stills of their entry or appropriate short extracts of the programme such as the announcement of the result;
• A form of words to describe their success in the awards as agreed by the BBC;
• Possibly a BBC quote;
• A certificate, which may be displayed;
• A link back to the BBC site to explain the background to the awards and how the end result was arrived at;
• In certain very limited cases they may be able to reference the award on specific product such as stickers on books or CDs. However, any such agreements MUST be referred to Editorial Policy who will consult with Fair Trading: a separate trade mark licence may need to be issued.

Winners will not be allowed to use any elements of the winning pack or refer to the BBC or its programmes and services:

• In commercial advertising or promotions;
• In order to attract external funding;
• To lobby or campaign;
• To attract donations

Each case will vary and Editorial Policy, Business Affairs and in some cases Fair Trading must be consulted.

8. BBC Awards mounted in conjunction with BBC publications

There are particular issues here and any such proposals must be referred to Chief Adviser Editorial Policy at the earliest stages.

9. Documentation

Appropriate records must be kept by the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the running of the award, and the telephone service provider where relevant; in order to demonstrate the BBC awards have been run fairly, appropriately, in accordance with the BBC Guidelines, and the terms and conditions.

If the award is decided in whole or part via a public vote involving telephony then a copy of all relevant documentation must also be sent to ITACU.

Email: itacu@bbc.co.uk

Website: http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu

Part C: Detailed Guidance on Voting

Introduction
Public voting is a central factor in many BBC television and radio programmes such as “Strictly Come Dancing”, “Sports Personality of the Year” and “Restoration”.

It is an extremely popular way for our audiences to interact with BBC content and programmes. We use audience votes in most genres and for a variety of editorial purposes. The majority of BBC votes are small scale, many of them on radio and online, where the audience is encouraged to vote on light subjects such as a favourite pop song or a most loved children’s character. Votes can also be used for many other purposes, ranging from raising money for BBC charitable appeals, changing the plot of an interactive drama to deciding the outcome of a competition, talent search, or for a BBC Award.

It is essential that all BBC competitions meet the high editorial, ethical and technically robust standards that our audience rightly expect from us.

All BBC Votes must comply with the BBC Code of Conduct which is affixed to this guidance note.

Everyone who runs a BBC vote must also read the summary guide at the start of this section to ensure they have complied with the requirements of this guidance.

This guidance note does not cover audience voting on politics and public policy, e.g. opinion polls, surveys and votes.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 10 Politics, Public Policy and Polls)

This part provides detailed editorial advice about how to run a BBC vote. It outlines the new BBC referrals and compliance process for use of telephony. In all cases where the vote involves telephony and/or a combination of online voting and telephony you will need technical, legal and contracts advice from the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU).

Email: itacu@bbc.co.uk

Website: http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu

The following principles apply to all BBC organised votes:

- Votes must be run in a robust, fair and accurate manner;
- The robustness of the voting mechanism should match the editorial significance or impact of the vote;
- Enough time must be allowed between the closure of the vote and the announcement of the result to ensure that the result can be properly collated and verified;
• Votes must not be set up with the aim of making a profit except where it has been authorised for the purpose of raising money for a BBC charitable cause;
• The audience has the right to expect that their votes will count;
• Under no circumstances whatsoever can the result of any BBC vote be faked.

It is essential that:

• No member of the production team or anyone else connected to running the vote alters the legitimate result;
• Any proposal to run a vote must be referred to the relevant Controller or equivalent Senior Manager in the division for sign off;
• Votes involving Premium Rate Telephony must be referred to the senior manager in your division charged with approving the use of Premium Rate telephony, who must consult Editorial Policy and ITACU;
• Premium Rate lines are used when they are the most suitable and safest way to handle large volumes of calls effectively;
• The lowest viable tariff must be charged. ITACU will advise on the tariff;
• The only time, in exceptional cases, that the BBC may use Premium Rate telephony to raise funds, is for a BBC charitable initiative. In such cases the editorial content of the programme must relate directly to the charitable cause. Any such proposals must be signed off by the Divisional Director and referred to Editorial Policy in advance;
• We will not use Premium Rate lines to raise funds for Charitable Appeals in CBBC output;
• Clear terms and conditions must be available for voters and for participants where relevant;
• Any proposal to use a text vote which will be run and resolved, in a live programme should be referred to ITACU who will consult with Editorial Policy.

In addition:

• All pricing information must be given clearly and accurately, both verbally and visually where appropriate;
• We must not mislead the audience about the purpose of a vote;
• Voting may be carried out using fixed line telephony, text (SMS), online, or other means such as postal votes

### 1. Permissions and Referrals

All proposals for BBC votes must be referred in the first instance to a Controller or equivalent Senior Manager in your area for approval in principle. If a vote involves telephony or a combination of online voting and telephony you must consult ITACU well in advance and complete a voting approval form.
for authorisation and submit it to the Controller or equivalent Senior Manager in your division responsible for signing off votes.

In some cases, if a vote takes place daily, weekly or on a regular basis the Controller or equivalent Senior Manager may decide it is not necessary to complete the form for each separate edition. Approval may be obtained for the voting over a period of time (e.g. a month for a vote taking place daily). The exact period of time before a new approval may be required is at the discretion of the Controller or Senior Manager.

All approved votes and their supporting forms must be lodged on a database in each division and also submitted to ITACU. http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/itacu (link only available to internal BBC users)

The specific referrals for Premium Rate Telephony are detailed in section 4 below.

1.1 Overseeing the vote

An appropriate editorial figure in the relevant production area must be identified by the Division as being responsible for overseeing the running of the vote, and must have completed the relevant training as outlined in the approval form. This person must also be responsible for ensuring that the vote has been appropriately resolved and ensuring that relevant documentation has been retained and copies sent to ITACU.

Early discussions should take place between ITACU (where the vote involves telephony or online and telephony combined), the telephone service provider and the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the vote, whether the vote uses Premium Rate or other forms of telephony. This is because in order to ensure things run smoothly it is important that the appropriate editorial figure responsible for the running of the vote fully understands how the interactivity will work, in relation to the Programme or online editorial and the telephone service provider understands the editorial rationale. Further telephony technical advice must be obtained by ITACU.

This principle also applies for online votes which are to be used in television and radio programmes. There should be appropriate consultation between the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the programme and the interactive executive responsible for the online vote.

2. Setting up a Vote

2.1 Appropriate planning

A vote may run just for fun, where no one has anything obvious to gain from the result e.g. Britain’s favourite bird. A vote may be used to express public
admiration as in *Great Britons*. In a few cases, the outcome of a BBC public vote may represent a potentially life changing opportunity for individual winners. The outcome of mass public voting may be advantageous to organisations; it could be of interest to lobby groups and in some cases could represent a commercial advantage.

We have a duty to be fair to anyone who is being judged by an audience vote and also a duty to fairly and accurately reflect the opinions of the voting audience.

Careful consideration should be given at the outset as to whether a public vote is the most editorially appropriate method of deciding a result: it may not always be. Sometimes an alternative method such as a panel may be more appropriate.

It will not always be appropriate to use all forms of available interactivity for voting; in particular in some cases voting via text (SMS) and/or online may not be appropriate.

Careful planning is necessary to ensure that votes run effectively and can be conducted properly in the proposed time span. It may be necessary to seek specialist advice. Votes need to be adequately resourced throughout, in terms of technical support and administration. There must be sufficient resources to make sure that all legitimate votes are counted. Adequate records must be kept.

Enough time must be allowed for votes to be received, verified and collated before the result is announced.

### 2.2 Contingency planning

Before you run a vote it is essential that you agree a contingency plan. This must be agreed and signed off by the appropriate editorial figure. It must outline what to do if there is a problem with the running of a vote. This could include a problem with the technology used for running the vote; clear attempts to rig the result; withdrawal of competitors. For any votes designed to serve a significant purpose, the contingency plan should also be discussed with Editorial Policy.

Separate contingency plans may be needed to outline what to do in the event of a failure of technology (refer to ITACU) or if there is an editorial or legal problem such as evidence of a breach of the rules by entrants (seek further advice from Editorial Policy & Programme Legal Advice).

In particular, you will need to consider what happens if the telephony system breaks down, or there is a tie for first place or any other crucial position (such as bottom two contestants who face elimination) during a live show. A suitable alternative method of deciding the final outcome must be agreed.
This could include using a preselected and vetted section of the studio audience, the use of a panel, or in rare cases restarting the vote. Legal and Editorial Policy advice may need to be sought.

3. Which voting method should you choose?

The voting method chosen should usually be the one which is most suitable for the target audience; for example, it is possible that a vote run on Radio 1 may be a text or online vote, a vote on a major Saturday night BBC One entertainment show is likely to use fixed line telephony. There are specific issues to consider with different methods. The main points are listed in the sections below.

4. Votes which use telephony

This is the most popular method. It is accessible by all sections of the audience as people can dial in from a landline or a mobile phone. If the vote is likely to have a high response, it may be appropriate to use a Premium Rate number. The telephony platform which supports the interactivity must be able to handle the likely volume of calls reliably and over the time period allowed for the vote. ITACU must be consulted.

Other non-Premium Rate numbers are available and may be suitable for some forms of voting – however numbers prefixed with “0871” are to also fall under PhonepayPlus [formerly known as ICSTIS] regulations as they will be classified as Premium Rate. You must ensure the type of telephony chosen can support the nature of the vote you are proposing to run. Advice should be sought at an early stage from ITACU.

Text (SMS) votes may use a short code of four to five numbers or long numbers of 11 digits. Short codes can be standard rate or have Premium Rate elements either when they are sent by the user or if a confirmation text is sent to the voter. Unlike fixed line telephony, you cannot always tell by the prefixes on short access codes whether the number proposed is a Premium Rate or not. ITACU will advise on whether a text short code is Premium Rate or not.

Text (SMS) messages can be charged either when the user sends their message to the BBC, or when they are sent a reply from the BBC. Which method is most appropriate will vary from case to case and should be discussed with ITACU who may consult with Editorial Policy well in advance of setting up the vote.

4.1 Premium Rate telephony services

Definition of Premium Rate Telephony Services (PRTS)
Premium Rate Telephony Services are those which deliver some form of content, or service which is charged to the users’ phone bills. They can be run via fixed lines, mobile phones or interactive digital television.

Fixed line Premium Rate numbers are normally prefixed with ‘09’. Premium Rate text (SMS) services normally use short access codes typically four or five digit numbers. These will usually be shown on phone bills as ‘Premium Rate call’ or ‘high Premium Rate service’, although this may vary depending on individual mobile network operators. Premium Rate charging for mobile content is generally per text (SMS) message.

- Premium Rate lines are used when they are the most suitable and safest way to handle large volumes of calls effectively;
- The lowest viable tariff must be charged. Advice must be sought from ITACU;
- The only time, in exceptional cases, that the BBC may run Premium Rate Lines to raise funds, is for a BBC charitable initiative. In such cases the editorial content of the programme must relate directly to the charitable cause. Any such proposals must be signed off by the Divisional Director and referred to Editorial Policy in advance;
- All proposals to use Premium Rate telephony must be referred to the senior manager in your division charged with approving the use of Premium Rate telephony, and then must be referred to Editorial Policy and Legal and Business Affairs in ITACU (who may consult with Programme Legal advice). A Premium Rate telephony approval form must be authorised by the relevant Controller or Senior Manager. All Premium Rate competitions require legally approved rules;
- A non-chargeable system must be used on Premium Rate vote lines so callers trying to vote before or after lines open and close are not charged.

Any use of Premium Rate telephony must also comply with the Code of Practice issued by the telephony industry regulator PhonepayPlus (formerly ICSTIS) – please consult ITACU.

http://www.phonepayplus.org.uk/pdfs_code/PhonepayPlus11CoP_Apr08v3.pdf

and relevant help notes:

www.phonepayplus.org.uk/pdfs_helpnotes_code11/pricing.pdf

4.2 Audience information

It is extremely important that we are totally transparent with our audiences in relation to our use of Premium Rate telephony. We must ensure that they are given all relevant information. An IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system will
normally be used to handle Premium Rate votes. This technology can use a computer to process voice responses or touch tone signals from a normal phone call. The IVR (interactive voice response system) can often use pre-recorded messages to give relevant information to callers, such as the fact that their entry has been registered or which answer they have given in the case of multiple choice questions. These systems generally handle large call volumes.

Consult ITACU if you are intending to use an IVR system.

**4.3 Information on Call costs**

Audiences must be informed clearly of how much it will cost them to interact with a BBC programme using Premium Rate numbers. On television, the BBC requires this information to be conveyed verbally at appropriate regular intervals.

Call cost information on a graphic should be clear and legible. Particular care should be taken over backing colours, font size and type of script, to ensure information is not hard to read.

Call cost information should also be given verbally, at appropriate regular intervals by a presenter or in a voice over and should be audible, clear and at a reasonable pace.

Call cost information may also be given as a recorded message on the competition entry lines.

It is also be advisable to display call cost information online where numbers are displayed.

It will not always cost the same to call from every network; calls from mobiles in particular may be more expensive. This must be declared on air. The standard wording is “*calls cost x from a BT landline, calls from other operators may vary and mobiles will be considerably higher*”.

Where programmes are using Premium Rate competitions in order to raise money for BBC charitable appeals, audiences must be informed clearly what charity will benefit from the service. They must also be told what proportion of the call charge will be donated to the charity. For example “*calls cost x from a BT landline, calls from other operators may vary and mobiles will be considerably higher. x from each call will go to BBC Children in Need/Comic Relief etc*” (see 5.6 below).

We should also aim to inform them of call costs from non-Premium Rate telephony.

Please consult ITACU.
Online information: Usually we do not display Premium Rate numbers online. Any proposal to do so should be referred to Editorial Policy. Where it is agreed to do so, all relevant call cost information must also be displayed. In some cases, particularly for popular high profile shows such as a TV talent show, with audience voting, we may decide to include a table showing indicative costs from the main mobile phone networks, on the show website. In such cases ITACU must be consulted at an early stage: they will provide this information for the website.

4.4 Information about line opening and closing times

Audiences must be informed clearly and precisely when competition lines open and close; this should include times and sometimes also dates where appropriate (for example where a vote is run over a long period of time).

When using Premium rate the telephony systems used must prevent callers from being charged, should they try to enter before lines open or after they close. ITACU must be consulted.

We must verbally and visually (for television) remind people not to enter before or after lines open or close. We normally state:

“do not enter before or after x time or your vote won’t count and you may be charged”.

For non–Premium Rate interactions:

If you have to use a system which cannot prevent callers being charged before a line opens or after it closes then the on air message should be:

“do not enter before or after x time or your entry won’t count and you will be charged”.

In most live programmes, where timings are likely to alter, it may not be possible to give an exact time for the opening or closing of a vote. In such cases, great care must be taken to ensure all verbal and visual information throughout the show is very clear to avoid any audience confusion. This should include a clear indication of the junction when lines open/close (e.g. lines will open/close after the next act has performed). If possible, there should be a time check of the number of minutes leading up to the opening/closing (e.g. if you have a VT immediately preceding the opening/closing, you should plan to say ‘voting lines open/close in approximately x minutes’).

4.5 Charity fundraising
Any proposal to use Premium Rate competitions to raise money for charity must be referred in advance to the Divisional Director and Editorial Policy. Programme Legal Advice must also be consulted if the proposal is approved.

Some programmes, series and strands within existing shows are specially commissioned as part of the charity fundraising output for BBC Appeals e.g. Comic Relief does Fame Academy. In such cases, where the output is directly connected, votes may be used as a form of donation.

We will not use Premium Rate lines to raise funds for Charitable Appeals in CBBC output.

4.6 Tariffs for Premium Rate charity fundraising votes

A range of Premium Rate tariffs may be used to raise monies for charity; the BBC does not specify any one rate. These tariffs yield varying amounts for charity. In selecting the tariff care must be taken to ensure we do not charge our audiences a prohibitive amount, even if the monies are to be used for charity.

Sometimes Premium Rate text (SMS) entry may be used for charity fundraising for a BBC Appeal. Therefore very careful consideration is needed to ensure that the use of Premium Rate text (SMS) votes to raise money for charity is editorially justified. It is possible that the charity or programme may wish to attract a specific demographic which would usually use text (SMS) entry for votes e.g. Radio One, BBC Three.

In all cases ITACU will advise on the appropriate tariff and will ensure the best return possible is achieved for the charitable appeal, whilst delivering a robust technical system. The final decision as to the appropriate tariff will be made in consultation with Editorial Policy.

4.7 Non-Premium Rate telephony

A non-Premium Rate number may sometimes be more appropriate. Clear cost information should still be provided on air. Care should be taken to ensure the system proposed can support the interactivity. Advice must be sought from ITACU.

4.8 Text (SMS) voting

Text voting is very popular among sections of our audience. It will not be suitable for all proposals, in particular it may not appropriate where the vote will run and result delivered in a live show. It is vital that enough time is allowed between the close of the vote and the collation, verification and announcement of the result. Text (SMS) votes are not delivered in real time. There can be a time lag between the viewer or listener sending a text, and the vote being registered, as the data has to go through several stages of
processing. This delay can be considerable in some circumstances; any proposal to run a text (SMS) vote, which will be resolved during a live show, must be referred to ITACU who will also consult Editorial Policy.

Text messages can be charged when the user sends their message to the BBC (MO) or when they are sent a reply from the BBC (MT). Which method is most appropriate will vary from case to case and should be discussed with ITACU well in advance of setting up the vote.

4.9 Contracting Telephony Service Providers

Telephony service providers may be required to vote entry systems. In some cases they will run and aggregate the votes in all media including online. ITACU will advise whether a service provider is needed and put in place appropriate contracts.

For Independent Productions, the contracts and the supplier to be used must be approved by ITACU Legal & Business Affairs well in advance to check that they conform to BBC standards.

In all contracts ITACU will ensure that:

- Telephony lines are tested appropriately;
- There is a requirement for the service provider to provide the production team with a regular breakdown of results, and information on any unexpected patterns of voting, as far as is technically feasible – this must include a report on votes outside the relevant voting window even though such votes should not have been changed;
- Review meetings are held between the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the running of the competition, the telephone service provider, ITACU and, on some occasions Editorial Policy, to ensure the system has operated effectively and identify any issues;
- If any issues arise, either during the running of the vote, or if they become apparent after the final data is available, the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the vote must be informed; they will consult with ITACU and possibly Editorial Policy. Further senior consultation may be required and Programme Legal Advice may also need to be consulted.

5. Online votes

Online voting is a popular form of interaction but while it is cheap for the online user, however it may not be easily available to a large minority of households. There is also no direct equivalent to the Caller Line Identification technology which may sometimes be available for telephony, so it may not be easy to identify individual voters online in order to bar multiple votes.
Votes which need a fast turn around time, for example as part of a live TV programme, will not normally be suitable to run online. This is particularly true where there may be a strong incentive to cheat, because checking the integrity of online votes is likely to take time and effort (see also section 8 for more details).

6. Voting from multiple platforms

It may be appropriate to offer the audience the chance to vote in a variety of ways e.g. online, text (SMS) and via a fixed line, or sometimes via a postal vote or other source – or any combination. However in such cases we need to ensure that all votes from all sources are properly aggregated. The appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the vote must consult with ITACU, where telephony is involved to ensure that the system of accepting votes from a variety of sources is robust.

ITACU and the appropriate Senior Editorial figure will need to liaise between the different departments running different aspects of the vote and ensure appropriate measures are in place to feed verified results from all media into one centralised point for collation and final verification. Enough time should be allowed for this process; extra time should be allowed if some parts of the vote are also being collated by a third party, for example if we are in partnership with an outside organisation (see section 12).

7. Fairness to contenders

In some cases the winner of a vote may clearly stand to benefit from the result, for some it could even be a life changing opportunity. The BBC must ensure all contenders are treated fairly in all our coverage on and off air.

7.1 On-air

Care must be taken to ensure contenders are treated fairly when put before a public vote. Careful consideration must be given to fairness when making editorial decisions over how to feature contenders on air. For example where the vote is done by telephony all numbers should be given equal prominence and promotion; if a vote is to be run across a series of programmes where the performance of contestants is judged, it may be appropriate to consider varying the order in which contestants perform from week to week to ensure no one is disadvantaged; it may be appropriate to inform the audience regularly of the numbers of all the contestants as well as giving out numbers individually.

In most circumstances in order to ensure that all contestants have a fair chance where telephone voting is used lines should be opened after all the contestants have been featured (e.g. in the case of a talent show this would be after they have all performed; in a series this may vary further into the run
as the audiences begin to vote on the basis of cumulative performances as well as on a week by week basis)

Further advice may be needed from Editorial Policy.

7.2 Terms and Conditions for contestants

Where appropriate, for example where winners stand to gain materially from the result, contenders should normally be given clear written guidance outlining the terms of the vote. Legal advice may be needed and contracts should be put in place with contenders. Contenders may be enthusiastic about the vote. It can help raise excitement around the vote if they garner support. However we need to ensure that this activity does not result in any unfairness and we need to give clear advice at the outset. Further advice must be sought from Editorial Policy who may consult with ITACU Legal and Business Affairs, Business Affairs in the relevant divisions or Programme Legal Advice where relevant.

Contenders must be reminded that where appropriate there may be a process in place to detect deliberate attempts to manipulate the result and that the BBC reserves the right to discount such votes. They must be informed in writing that if there is evidence that they or anyone working on their behalf has attempted to deliberately manipulate the result this could lead to disqualification. In some cases formal briefings should be held to remind contenders of the rules of the contest. These briefings must be documented.

Contenders may wish to publicise the vote to gain support. However it is important that competitors are not disadvantaged because they cannot afford professional marketing help. They must be informed in writing that they should not engage in paid for marketing, to drum up support. For example they may not normally take out paid for advertising or promotions in support of their nomination. No BBC embargoed information should be released, such as the vote line numbers, before the BBC has released them.

Where the BBC is publicising the vote, great care should be taken to ensure we do not favour one nominee or contestant above another; all should be treated fairly.

8. Integrity of the vote

It is important to protect the integrity of the vote. We must ensure that the robustness of the voting mechanism and its administration matches the vote's editorial significance.

8.1. Integrity of the vote when using telephony systems
We need to balance carefully the desire of some of our audiences to vote enthusiastically and the need to ensure that the end result is robust and a fair and genuine reflection of the opinion of those who voted.

Audiences may sometimes vote enthusiastically for example where the vote is in a popular entertainment show. However a deliberate and organised attempt to manipulate the result is clearly different from an individual eagerly registering their opinion several times in a show.

Our published terms and conditions should clearly state that the BBC has the right to disallow votes, if it detects deliberate attempts to manipulate the result. Legal advice should be sought from ITACU Legal and Business Affairs who may consult Programme Legal Advice.

We may need to consider measures, in some cases, to restrict the number of times people can vote, where this is editorially appropriate and technically possible, i.e. “vote capping”. ITACU will advise on the technical feasibility of such a proposal and additions to terms and conditions and on-air messaging (see also 4.8).

For Independent Productions, the contracts and the supplier to be used must be approved by ITACU Legal & Business Affairs well in advance to check that they conform to BBC standards.

8.2 Integrity of the vote when using online systems

Online voting can provide an effective method for large numbers of people to interact by registering their support for specific choices. But an online vote only represents a self selecting sample of people, it is representative of nothing more than those people who have chosen to respond and it should clearly be reported as such.

For guidance on online votes about a political or public policy issue, see Section 10 of the Editorial Guidelines: Politics, Public Policy and Polls.

(See Editorial Guidelines Section 10 Politics, Public Policy and Polls)

An Interactive Executive must be responsible for overseeing the running of every online vote. Any division or network may nominate one executive as the referral point for such queries.

It is worth remembering that while online voting is cheap for the user, it is also cheap for one malicious person to write and run a voting script with the intention of registering thousands of online votes surreptitiously in order to try to manipulate the result.

8.3 Robustness of the voting mechanism
We must ensure that the robustness of the online voting engine is sufficient to meet the editorial requirement whilst effectively mitigating the associated risks.

We need to make sure the vote engine is genuinely “fit for purpose”, can meet the editorial requirement and ensure the BBC brand is protected.

The BBC has several online voting engines which include Vote 2006, Vision's Log2Results and the new pan-BBC vote engine, iVote, which will be available late 2010.

Producers should work with the Interactive Technical Advice and Contracts Unit (ITACU) to ensure that the right tool is picked for the job. ITACU approval is required for all online voting and so should be the first port of call when looking to run one.

When looking to utilise vote engines which are external to the BBC, Editorial Policy and ITACU should be consulted immediately and the latter will conduct a formal review of the proposed technology. Information Security sign-off and Information Policy and Compliance sign off remain the responsibility of the editorial team.

8.4 Verifying voting patterns

We should ensure that we undertake additional checks where necessary. Some methods of manipulating online votes are not immediately obvious. For example, if a user succeeds in running a multiple voting script against a BBC vote, there may be no obvious visible 'spike'. The script may register a vote once a minute, (24 hours a day, or intermittently), for as long as the vote is open. This means that unless the BBC actively checks the logs for suspicious patterns like this, we may not find the suspect votes.

8.5 Allowing enough time to collate results

We should allow enough time in the period between closing the online vote and announcing the result for the votes to arrive, be processed and checked.

Working out whether a block of votes breaks the rules and should be discounted can take time, skill and judgement. The more sophisticated the attack, the more sophisticated the defence should be to match it. As an example, the server logs for the online vote in the earlier rounds of *Great Britons* some years ago were checked for multiple voting scripts over many hours after the vote had closed. Approximately 250,000 of the 750,000 votes cast were rejected as unsatisfactory, before the final result was announced.

Where an online vote is combined with a telephony vote ITACU must be consulted.
8.6 Publishing running totals during a vote

We should also consider very carefully indeed whether to announce running totals before the final verified result. In many cases, this will not be appropriate:

- While displaying running totals can add excitement to the voting process, it can also alter the course of the vote dramatically. It can encourage users to try to manipulate or “game” the system, it gives malicious users live information on which competitors to target and it gives them instant feedback on whether their attempts to manipulate the vote have worked;
- If we display live running results before freezing the vote for checking, anyone will be able to see if we then remove any votes as the totals will go down. We will then be under pressure to give a detailed explanation in every single case about why we have done this, which users may not readily accept as being fair. (But see section 15 for our duty to be transparent if the vote has to be postponed or set aside).

8.7 Editorial control over a vote

Output which relies on online voting should normally be based on a vote run or directly commissioned by the BBC.

This gives us editorial control over the robustness of the voting mechanism. Any proposal to base BBC output on an online vote which is not run or directly commissioned by the BBC, for example on a third party social networking site. Any proposals to carry out a BBC vote on a third party social networking site must be referred well in advance to Editorial Policy.

8.8 Information on voting systems

How to vote must be clear:

- The rules themselves must be clear;
- It must be clear to the first time user exactly how the online voting or rating mechanism works;
- One way to make it harder for malicious users to manipulate or “game” our voting technology is to give those users as little feedback as possible about the effectiveness of their attacks. We should not normally let individual users know when their online votes have been discounted, disqualified or set aside (see also section 15 which outlines our duty to be transparent with audiences if things go wrong).

8.9 Votes which involve a substantial prize
We must take particular care about the robustness and integrity of online votes to win major or life-changing opportunities (for example in a talent show or competitive award) from the earliest stages, in order to protect the integrity of the votes or programmes around which they are built.

In addition we need to think carefully in advance about how users are likely to behave. For example, some people may find a strong incentive to cheat over an award worth a lot of money; others may be motivated to try to rig a vote to win a "money-can’t-buy" opportunity: a chance to win professional training or to perform in front of a huge audience and launch a new career.

8.10 360 Degree Commissioning

Where there is a 360 degree commissioning process:

- We should make sure that the team responsible for the online vote talk in detail to the Audio or Vision production team about exactly what is needed;
- The online team will need to know exactly what the editorial significance of the vote is so that they can make sure it is matched by the robustness of the online voting mechanism;
- The online team will need to be very clear in return to the Audio or Vision production team about how much time, editorial, technical and other resource will be needed to deliver the vote. For example, we should routinely test the vote in advance of going live, for load and overall technical and editorial performance, wherever possible. This is essential where we are planning anything we haven't done before.

Where there is no 360 degree commission, the same consultation process should happen from the earliest stages between the editorial and technical teams.

Great care must be taken at the outset to consider whether an online vote is really likely to generate a large enough number of votes to ensure that the result is robust. This is because a low number of votes make it much easier for a determined person to manipulate the result. Decisions by the BBC as to whether to exclude a small number of votes are also more likely to affect the overall result. Careful thought needs to be given to effective publicity and promotion to maximise the likely number of votes.

Careful monitoring must be put in place to track the progress of the vote. If there is too low a response rate to ensure that the result is robust, a decision must be taken by the senior editorial figure in charge of overseeing the vote as to whether to continue, in some circumstances the vote may need to be abandoned if it cannot be deemed to be a robust result. In such cases Editorial Policy should be informed.
If there are serious doubts as to whether an online method of voting is appropriate you may wish to consider whether using another method such as telephony could help address the issue.

9. Calculating the result

The public has a right to expect that their votes will count. Enough time must be allowed between the close of voting lines and the announcement of a result, to ensure that appropriate checks have been made and the votes have been counted, this is particularly important in live programming.

Any proposals for text votes must be referred to ITACU who will consult Editorial Policy.

If voting is allowed by text (SMS) it should be remembered that often it can take a considerable time for text (SMS) messages to be registered. In some live shows, depending on the format, voting by text (SMS) may not be appropriate at all.

In certain circumstances where the vote is for a very serious purpose, for example it presents a life changing opportunity and the result will have a major benefit to a third party or for high profile events we may consider adding an independent adjudicator to the process. For example we could use a suitable person such as an independent solicitor or accountant.

10. Pre–recorded and repeated programmes

10.1 Pre–Recorded Programmes

If a vote is run during the course of a programme, the audience will normally presume that the programme is live. The inclusion of interactivity into a pre-recorded show can cause problems if not handled carefully. We must never knowingly mislead the audience.

Great care must be taken to ensure that it is appropriate to include a vote in a pre–recorded programme; that the vote mechanism is still valid and robust; and that particular care has been taken over scripting to avoid misleading the audience in any way. It will also be important to add extra explanatory information online with the terms and conditions.

If a programme has been pre–recorded, and a problem has been identified before transmission which renders the voting information inaccurate, then the programme should not be transmitted without appropriate changes. This may require reediting. The appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the vote must be consulted.

10.2 Repeated Programmes
If a programme which includes a vote is to be repeated we must never mislead the audience into thinking they can vote when in fact they cannot. This is particularly important if the vote is via telephony. But whatever the method, people must not be misled.

In some cases programmes may need to be edited before repeating:

- For television, we must totally obscure or remove voting details if they are on graphic in the original programme;
- We should also use an announcement or add a graphic to inform viewers the vote is closed;
- Where there are verbal announcements of voting details it will be necessary to edit or to have a strap running through that section of the programme to inform the audience the vote has closed;
- For radio, appropriate edits must be made.

Under no circumstances should a programme be repeated where it is known that there were errors in the voting or audience information without appropriate changes. This also applies to On Demand services – see below.

10.3 On Demand services including BBC iPlayer

Many of the BBC’s programmes are now available on a range of On Demand services, in particular the BBC iPlayer. It is important that audiences are informed that the interactivity may have changed or be closed. There are various ways of doing this:

- A short specially commissioned VT at the start of the show which will remind people that interactivity may no longer be open and direct them to the programme website for up to date information;
- A strap with audience information;
- The programme synopsis, which describes the programme content, must highlight that the programme includes interactivity and direct people to the website for information, where relevant.

Productions must ensure they liaise with the On Demand scheduling team, to inform them of programmes which need additional information. It may not be appropriate for some programmes which include interactivity to be included in the On Demand Schedule, if appropriate announcements and audience information cannot be given.

In Radio, for services such as radio iPlayer, programme teams must liaise with the Audio and Music interactive teams to ensure that information in programmes which contain votes or competitions is amended accordingly.

11. Jointly run votes with third parties

Any proposal to run a jointly organised vote must be referred to Editorial Policy.
In certain cases we may decide to mount a vote in conjunction with an appropriate third party, such as an arts institution, publication or sporting body. The BBC must at all times be responsible editorially for the vote. Normally we would not run votes in conjunction with a commercial organisation.

Whether the vote is to be run on or off air, we must ensure that the third party is a suitable partner and does not call into question the BBC’s editorial integrity, objectivity or independence.

(See BBC Editorial Guidelines Section 16 External Relationships and Funding)

Usually we would expect the voting to be directly managed by the BBC. In some cases it might be that the final result is a combination of votes that have been registered via the BBC and its partners. In such cases we must be entirely happy that the voting procedures put in place by partners meet BBC standards and the BBC should oversee the final result.

In some cases, for example the Brits, Bafta etc BBC audiences may have the opportunity to vote in a third party awards event; refer to BBC Detailed Guidance on Mounting and Running an Award.

12. Publicising BBC votes

Suitable third parties, such as BBC Worldwide magazines or other publications or suitable online sites may be used occasionally by the BBC to help publicise our votes. Magazines may include articles about our votes and voting forms; third party websites may link back to a BBC online vote. However we should not refer to the third party on-air, and we should only give out on-air the BBC method of voting.

13. Votes in programmes aimed at or likely to involve children

Great care must be taken about any votes which are aimed at or are likely to attract children.

Any proposal to use Premium Rate telephony in a vote aimed at children must be referred to the relevant Controller in your division.

We do not use Premium Rate Telephony in votes in CBBC output.

14. If things go wrong

Nothing matters more than trust and fair dealing with our audiences. Even with the best planning things may occasionally go wrong and in extreme cases this could result in problems on air. However, even though there may
be pressures to keep programmes on the air, we must never compromise our editorial integrity.

Refer up, as soon as possible if serious problems over the robustness of the voting system begin to develop. The appropriate editorial figure responsible for the programme which contains the vote must be informed, even if the problems have occurred in another media. For example, the vote may be run on several platforms and the problem may have occurred only online, however the television or radio executive must be made aware of this at the earliest opportunity.

The problems with the vote could have significant consequences for the programme. The appropriate editorial figure will need to decide what action may be needed on-air, whether further advice or further referrals upwards are needed, and what relevant audience information should be given out as soon as possible.

If the vote is online then the relevant Interactive executive must be informed.

In all cases it is vital that we do not inadvertently encourage people to keep entering when we know the vote may be compromised.

All measures possible must be taken to try to rectify the problem.

Do not announce or publish an incorrect result on-air, online or in any other media.

Instead explain to the audience that there has been a problem and the result will be announced at a later date. This must be done even if the whole programme or project has been developed or billed around the result of the vote.

BBC Press and Publicity should also be alerted.

The need for transparency is paramount. Audiences will value our openness. Online, we may wish to publish an explanation and an FAQ to give people more information about what has gone wrong and why.

15. Documentation and verification

15.1 Independent verification and adjudication

In the case of votes where the prize is of high value or importance, the programme associated with the vote is high profile and particularly where Premium Rate telephony has been used to decide the outcome, it may be appropriate to ensure that the result is overseen by an independent verifier. ITACU will advise on such matters and contract a verifier in such circumstances.
Appropriate records must be kept by the appropriate editorial figure responsible for overseeing the interactivity and also by service providers to demonstrate votes have been run fairly, appropriately, in accordance with the BBC Guidelines, the relevant sections of the Ofcom Code and the PhonepayPlus (ICSTIS) Code, and in accordance with the terms and conditions. ITACU will advise what documentation must be kept and will also act as a central repository for the information and data.

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