



Guidance for Making an Online Gambling License Application

About this document

This document has been prepared by the Gambling Supervision Commission (GSC) and contains all of the guidance necessary to supplement an application to establish an online gambling operation in the Isle of Man.

It encompasses all of the process from the initial approach to the GSC or the Department for Enterprise (DfE) through to the point of going live and offering services to clients.

Companies which are interested in locating on the Island are also advised to contact the Digital Isle of Man*, an Executive Agency within Isle of Man Government's Department for Enterprise. They support the tech sector, developing and implementing a strategy to support sustainable economic growth and establishing the Isle of Man as a centre of international excellence for the digital economy.



*Please note that while the GSC and Digital Isle of Man have a strong working relationship, they are separate bodies, and their mandates (compliance versus business development) are deliberately separated to avoid conflicts of interest.

If an applicant wishes the GSC to be able to discuss aspects of an application with DfE, it must give explicit written permission to the GSC. In the absence of this, the GSC cannot share application data with DfE.

The Gambling Supervision Commission

The regulation of the gambling industry on the Isle of Man is the responsibility of the GSC and is set out in the Gambling Supervision Act 2001. The GSC comprises the Inspectorate and the Commission. The Commission comprises of independent members drawn from various professions and backgrounds.

The GSC may discuss aspects of the application process and on the general regulation of the sector but cannot give advice. It also frequently shares its position on items of law and policy with prospective licensees.

These notes were last updated on 15 January 2025

1. Online gambling requirements

1.1 The principal legislation: OGRA

The primary legislation regulating the online gambling industry is the Online Gambling Regulation Act 2001, commonly abbreviated to OGRA. A copy of OGRA and its associated regulations can be obtained from the Tynwald library or on our website – <http://www.gov.im/gambling/licensing/>

OGRA covers all games where:

- they use telecommunications (phones, internet, servers, etc.) and
- they involve players betting money (or money's worth) and
- the games incorporate any element of randomness or chance.

The legislation lays particular emphasis on three core principles of the GSC which are the requirements to:

- Keep gambling crime free.
- Protect the young and vulnerable; and to
- Ensure that the facilities offered by licensees are fair and that players receive their true winnings.

The GSC also has a duty to protect the reputation of the Isle of Man as a well-regulated gambling jurisdiction; it must also where possible ensure that the Island's economic interests are protected.

1.2 A genuine presence in the Isle of Man

In addition to compliance with OGRA, operators who intend to establish in the Isle of Man must satisfy the following criteria:

- They must establish a Manx company.
- They must have at least 2 local directors, who must be individuals and not corporate entities.
- They must appoint at least one resident Designated Official (DO), or where that Designated Official cannot reside in the Isle of Man, an Operations Manager (OM)
- They must either register players on Isle of Man servers or they must operate under a network services licence which obliges them to establish the network services in the Isle of Man (Except in the case of software supply only licenses where no play must take place on Manx servers)
- Gambling and trading accounts should be located in a bank in the Isle of Man unless otherwise agreed.

The GSC reserves the right to decline applicants who appear to be creating a nominal Isle of Man presence purely in order to obtain services or legitimacy through OGRA licence approval, on behalf of their parent or sister organisations located elsewhere in the world.

2. Determining whether a license is required.

2.1 Types of online gambling which require an OGRA license.

The GSC currently categorises activities under an OGRA license as follows:

Casino Games

- ❖ Casino Games (RNG)
- ❖ Casino Games (Peer to Peer)
- ❖ Casino Games (Live Dealer)
- ❖ Casino Games (Other)
- ❖ Casino Games (Virtual Goods)

Bingo Games

- ❖ Random number generator

Lottery Games¹

- ❖ Lottery Games (RNG)
- ❖ Lottery Games (Reseller)
- ❖ Lottery Games (Live Studio)

General Betting

- ❖ General Betting (Fixed Odds)
- ❖ General Betting (Tele-betting)
- ❖ General Betting (Pari-mutuel)
- ❖ General Betting (Betting Exchange)
- ❖ General Betting (Lottery)

Pool Betting

- ❖ Pool Betting
- ❖ Pool Betting (Virtual Goods)

Betting Intermediaries

Business to Business Software Provision

Network Services

Software Supply

- ❖ Software Supply
- ❖ Software Supply (Token-Based)

Please note that whilst this list defines identified models, it is not intended to be restrictive and as such the GSC remains receptive to proposals which may not appear to fit within the categories detailed.

¹ See section 3.3 for guidance on lotteries intending to take UK players.

Virtual Currencies

Regulation changes in 2017 made it possible to open an account with an Isle of Man gambling operator by using anything which has a value in money's worth. This includes convertible and non-convertible virtual currencies (CVCs and VCs respectively).

Convertible virtual currencies include crypto currency (such as bitcoins) which can be bought and sold through independent exchanges for fiat currency.

Non-convertible virtual currencies include virtual goods such as digital "skins" for avatars and weapons in video games and other digital objects that have functions in video games, in addition to in-game currencies that can be used to buy such objects.

It is theoretically possible to replace the fiat currency element of most betting with CVCs and VCs and the utilisation of this emerging technology has yet to fully mature the GSC's approach looks to prescribe controls via license conditions.

Currently permitted models identified are:

- ❖ CVC/VC to fiat conversion prior to play.
- ❖ CVC/VC-in, CVC/VC-out -peer-to-peer.
- ❖ CVC/VC-in, CVC/VC-out - against the house; or
- ❖ VC-in, Conversion, VC-out.

Models not currently permitted are:

- ❖ CVC/VC-X-in, CVC/VC-Y-out; or
- ❖ CVC/VC-in, Fiat-out.
- ❖ Fiat-in CVC/VC.

In the non-permitted models detailed, the player effectively treats the operator as an exchange and as such the GSC is generally unwilling to licence these models.

Existing operators adding CVCs to their license.

The GSC does not see the addition of a CVC into payment options as a new gambling product. If slots can be played using separate fiat and CVC wallets then it is sufficient for the licence to specify that RNG Games are licensed.

However, the GSC will require the licence to be modified so that a schedule with the requirements for CVC use can be added.

Existing operators adding virtual goods to their license.

The GSC sees the offering of gambling using VCs as a separate product and licensees seeking to offer this type of gambling will be required to have the new product approved by the GSC and added to their licensed products.

More information on virtual currencies can be obtained in the AML/CFT Guidance for Virtual Currencies'.

2.2 Not all online gambling requires an OGRA license.

It should be noted that OGRA excludes certain established activities from its scope despite their possible connection with telecommunication-related gambling activity.

While restrictions on the following activities may yet exist in other legislation, an OGRA licence is not required if you are supplying or offering the following:

The UK National lottery

Offering the national lottery as the official lottery operator does not require an OGRA licence.

Gambling which is covered by a Betting Office licence

Gambling which is covered by a casino license

Offering gambling under the provisions of a betting office licence or a casino licence does not require an OGRA licence in addition – it should be noted however that the products these land-based licences currently cover are strictly controlled by separate regulations and agreements.

Spread betting.

Spread betting is not currently regulated under OGRA and any moves to introduce spread betting to the Isle of Man would have to first be discussed with the Isle of Man Financial Services Authority.

Activities defined by the Insurance Act 2008

See the [Insurance Act 2008](#) for more information

Offering pure freeplay games

Where no money or money's worth can be won or lost and where success cannot be translated into gratuitous access to cash games (such as entry fees waived or seats at a tournament), no gambling is deemed to take place and so no OGRA licence is required.

Marketing, market analysis and marketing services

Provided the company adheres to the general advertising guidelines (which are reproduced in 3.5.13 later) that apply to operations in the Isle of Man and providing that the company's operations are regulated in another jurisdiction, it may locate and carry out marketing functions or services into the e-gaming market from the Isle of Man without the need for an OGRA licence.

Marketing activities carried out from the Isle of Man may not target a market unless the operator for which the advertising is being conducted has access to that market through licensing or other arrangements.

Likewise, despite its location in the Isle of Man, such an operation would not be able to claim Isle of Man regulation in any form (unless of course the particular activity were being conducted by or for an Isle of Man licensed operator)

Marketing activities cover such diverse aspects of operation as identifying target markets, creating material likely to stimulate business, the transmission of material to existing or prospective clients, the creation and placement of material in real or virtual environments, the analysis of player behaviour, the procurement and onward transmission of prospective players to a gambling site (so called affiliate activity) and so forth.

Administration

Where the activity in the Isle of Man operation is limited to record-keeping, accounting, the processing of money (e.g. players' money, company investments, the day-to-day invoices and credits that accompany regular business, etc.) and/or the monitoring of online gambling by players (e.g. as chat moderators on a peer to peer site, as traders making decisions on betting offers, as a security department verifying player identities, authorising withdrawals and investigating suspected instances of fraud, collusion or abuse, etc.) then no OGRA licence is required.

Web design

While the operation of a website may or may not require an OGRA licence (see 2.3), its design, construction and maintenance does not.

Software design

The design and/or sale of software that is used by gambling operators whether online or in the back office and whether as games or as auxiliary services (such as player accounts and registration software, random number generation (RNG) and so forth) does not require an OGRA licence however, in accordance with the Online Gambling (Software Supplier Licence) Regulations 2019, operators can choose to be licensed in order to list software on the GSC's software register². See 2.3 for further information.

This exclusion extends to the testing, integration and maintenance of leased or sold software whether the maintenance is done on an ad-hoc basis or through a regular series of patches and updates.

Provision of IT services

The provision of hardware, operating systems and associated applications (including the hosting of such operations) which enable online gambling to occur does not require an OGRA licence. Likewise, the updating and repair of such systems is not a licensable activity.

It is important to note that this activity does however become licensable when the agency which supplies the infrastructure subsequently uses it to:

- ❖ Offer the game.
- ❖ Register players.
- ❖ Strike the bet.

In other words, the company (e.g. the telecom provider) that hosts online gambling on its servers does not need a licence but the company that operates the software on those servers to offer gambling to players does.

² Listing of software, tested by an approved test-house, on the register allows IOM OGRA licensees to deploy content immediately.

Please note however that while hosting does not require a licence, any disaster recovery hosting that is offered to non-Isle of Man licensees must be noted and approved by the GSC – this is because the law restricts the amount of disaster recovery an overseas operator can consume from the Isle of Man before they must apply for a full licence or have their services terminated. This is covered in more depth in section 3.2.4.

Protection of player funds

The value of a registered player's account with an Isle of Man licensed operator is protected at all times by a licence condition. This means that if an operator goes into liquidation, the player's funds can be repatriated to the player.

Agencies which arrange and administer the mechanisms which guarantee the players' monies do not need an OGRA licence to do so. Likewise, agencies which hold the monies (typically banks or trusts) do not need an OGRA licence to do so. It should however be noted that banking in the Isle of Man does fall under the supervision of the Isle of Man's Financial Supervision Commission.

Provision of IT which just presents the results of play.

The GSC divides any gameplay where RNG is used into two distinct phases: the generation phase and the presentation phase.

In the generation phase, the RNG algorithm is polled for a random number and this number is supplied. This generation phase is licensable if it occurs in the Isle of Man because the GSC insists on knowing that such RNGs are trustworthy (i.e. truly random) and so has them periodically tested.

In the presentation phase, the results of that random number are presented to a player. This presentation phase is not licensable if it occurs in, or is supplied from the Isle of Man.

Consider the following simplified example:

1. The player makes a choice then presses the 'SPIN' button.
2. The RNG selects the number 16 [this is the *generation* phase].
3. The screen shows a virtual ball falling into a virtual roulette wheel, it spins for five seconds and then settles in slot 16. A virtual croupier announces, "Red sixteen". [this is the *presentation* phase].
4. The player's accountancy is updated according to the success or otherwise of their selection.

Put another way, a random number could be generated in a jurisdiction other than the Isle of Man, forwarded to the Isle of Man operation (a couple of bytes at most) where the result would then be processed by a game logic and the relevant animations retrieved for display to the user. This significantly larger parcel of traffic could then be delivered to the player's machine in the UK with reduced latency arising from proximity and the sheer size of the Isle of Man's pipeline.

Provision of call centres and customer support

Call centres whether they use telephones, e-mail, chat or any other form of communication can be sited in the Isle of Man and do not require an OGRA licence (subject to the qualifications in section 2.3 below).

Supply of downloaded software

Some online gambling uses software which is first downloaded from a server via the internet (or equivalent) and installed on the player's computer. This application then connects to the operator's network or servers and allows play to occur.

The hosting of such software for download does not require an OGRA licence.

Provision of relay servers

A server may be maintained in the Isle of Man which functions as a 'relay station' for data originating elsewhere. It may be used to buffer data before onward transmission, or it may be used to 'boost' a signal's transmission characteristics. The data may even be stored in the server pending retrieval.

Provided the information of the data that arrives at such a server is not modified in meaning before it is re-transmitted to another destination, it does not require an OGRA licence.

The following list indicates the kind of changes such data can be subjected to without it being classed as modified in meaning:

- ❖ The data can be compressed.
- ❖ The data can be transformed from one protocol to another.
- ❖ The data can be copied, perhaps into multiples of itself.
- ❖ The data can be encrypted or decrypted.

Hosting disaster recovery facilities

Backup facilities for disaster recovery and business continuity can be provided in the Isle of Man to global operators without an OGRA licence.

It should be noted however that IT providers offering disaster recovery services must be approved by the GSC. Section 3.2.4 provides more information regarding in the provision of disaster recovery services.

2.3 A summary of activities

The following activities always attract an OGRA license.

If an operator performs any of the following functions in the Isle of Man, then the operation requires an OGRA licence.

Once an operator becomes licensable, all of the following must be located in the Isle of Man.

Registering players

Where an operator collects and stores personal details (such as name, age, address, username and password – in effect any information which could be used to identify a living person) for the purposes of gambling it requires a licence.

Striking the bet

The bet is considered to be struck at the point that the player commits to gamble.

It is not the initial offering of odds, virtual betting slips or forms that harvest details of the bet. Equally, it is not the subsequent storage, settlement or any other processing of the bet.

- ❖ Commits to the bet on that server by selecting an item on the screen which represents the commitment (such as "spin reels", "submit", "bet now" and so forth); or
- ❖ The transaction is first written into the server's database.

Offering the game

The game is considered to be offered when the player and the operator enter into an arrangement or relationship without which the player cannot gamble.

A company which offers downloads of software to the player that allows them to connect to a network, site, or server to play the game is not offering the game. The game is offered by the site (network, server, IP address, etc.) to whom the player connects with in order to play the game.

A web page which allows the player to begin gambling is offering the game. A web page may source its games from a variety of providers.

A website that is referring the player does not offer the game. The game is offered by the website that the player is referred to.

The GSC does not consider affiliate activity and marketing downloads as offering the game. This list is not exhaustive, and the Inspectorate is willing to discuss other activities on a case-by-case basis.

Hosting a network

Where an operator allows players who have been registered elsewhere in the world to play on its Isle of Man server, it must either:

- ❖ re-register those players and assume responsibility for them; or
- ❖ it must operate under a network services licence and enter into a contract with each foreign operator which sends its players to the Isle of Man.
- ❖ This contract must include agreements regarding cooperation to combat criminal activity (fraud, collusion, money laundering, etc.) and to detect and mitigate problem gambling.

The following activity does not require an OGRA licence but can be licensed:

Software supply

Where an operator supplies software or related services in a way that does not see player activity occurring on Isle of Man servers, they can apply for a standard OGRA licence enabling them to list software on a centrally approved register. Licensing can also include token-based software supply subject to certain criteria outlined at 3.2.6.

3. The application process

3.1 How to start the process

Initially a complete application form and statutory application fee must be submitted to the Inspectorate by an applicant or their representatives.

While representatives, such as lawyers or corporate service providers can perform a lot of the administrative procedure on behalf of the applicant, it is not a statutory requirement for an application to be made by, or through them.

Once the Inspectorate is satisfied that an application has been fully completed and it has received the application fee (which is £5,250), it will typically process the licence within 10-12 weeks. This period officially begins when the Inspectorate issues a letter stating that the application has been accepted and the process is underway.

It is customary for the inspection process itself to generate a lot of questions. This is to be expected and is an ideal opportunity to explain the model and structures, etc. more fully to the mutual benefit of both the applicant and the Inspectorate.

Sometimes these questions can be rapidly resolved by a visit, practicalities permitting.

The Inspectorate will also expect to meet with the Designated Official and Operations Manager (where appointed) to discuss the business model and gain an understanding of the competence these key officials have with regard to the business being proposed and the gambling sector as a whole.

3.2 Determining which license is required.

3.2.1 The OGRA license

A business undertaking licensable activities (see 2.1) will need an OGRA licence. It costs. £36,750 per annum and runs for five years.

Aside from Network Services (see 3.2.4) and Token based supply (see 3.2.6) the OGRA Licence permits the full spectrum of gambling activities outlined in section 2 to be undertaken including software supply and comes with a set of conditions and other requirements, most of which are generic, some of which may be specific to your particular set up.

Operators with a full licence can offer technology (games, software, network access to Isle of Man sub-licensees, etc.) to sub-licensees under the reduced- fee sub-licence scheme.

An OGRA license extends to all parts of a business at the licence-holder level and below. A licence cannot however operate 'upward' to cover the gambling activities of a parent or holding company or 'sideways' to cover the operations of sister companies.

Standard license conditions and other requirements for an OGRA licence are detailed in appendix A. Additional licence conditions may be applicable to particular applicant's circumstances.

3.2.2 “Licences for economic and political DR”

An OGRA licence can be applied for and approved without there being a need to follow it with the establishment of the operation on the Island although the operator may only claim regulation from the Isle of Man when they activate their licence and transfer their operations to the Island. No operations may run in the Island before the licence is activated except those which have been activated as part of a disaster recovery agreement (see 3.2.4 for more information).

Provided the details of the application (ownership, structure, operations, etc.) do not change, the licensee may deploy their services to the Island at their convenience any time within the five-year licensed period.

Until it is activated (elements are deployed to the Island and commence operations) this licence runs from its approval date for payment purposes and may be of use to operators who desire a stable economic and political contingency for their existing operations.

Before such a licence is activated, the GSC checks that nothing has changed since the initial application.

Holders of such an unutilised license would be well advised to periodically report to the GSC that no changes had occurred in their circumstances or conversely that a change had occurred which would require GSC sanction prior to the coming into force of that licence.

There is no difference in cost between a licence that is operated under these provisions and one that is operated by a live operator although duty does not become payable on such a licence until it is activated in the Isle of Man.

3.2.3 Sub-licences

A sub-licence can be obtained if the applicant wishes to operate exclusively with a technology provider with a full OGRA licence regulated by the GSC. An applicant must still apply to the GSC for their sub-licence which costs £5,250 per year.

With the reduced licence fee, the sub-licence lends itself to the smaller operator looking to establish and grow a presence and to the company that has assets to monetise (e.g. a player database) but no established gaming infrastructure.

Any new operator that wants to use the games offered by a network operator can obtain a sub-licence. The condition will be that the sub-licence holder is tied exclusively to the network operator for its games and products that it has developed itself.

Should the sub-licence holder use the games of another network it would need to upgrade to a full OGRA licence.

If a sub licensee however wishes to switch from one Isle of Man technology provider to another, the GSC allows an agreed period of grace during which the transition can occur and the strict sub-licence requirements to remain with one provider alone are waived (the realities of such a shift would see a wind down period on the old provider and a period of testing and integration by the new). Such intentions to switch must always be notified to the GSC.

There is no less of a requirement to check the competence and integrity of the business because it is requesting a sub-licence. All pre-licensing checks and requirements would remain as stated.

3.2.4 Network services licence.

A network services licence must be obtained if the operator wishes to allow one or more foreign registered players on to its Isle of Man server without re- registering the player details.

All of the benefits of a full OGRA licence are available to the holder of a network services licence (for example, a network services licensee could offer games directly to the world market and offering sub-licensing opportunities for its business partners in addition to offering its networks to foreign operators).

A network services licence costs £52,500 per annum. In 2017 the legislative requirements were amended to remove the additional fee for each network partner. In addition, the 2017 changes also brought the ability for existing OGRA licensees upgrading to a network services licence to offset any unutilised portion of its licence fee against the cost of the new licence.

The same facility exists when downgrading from network services licence, however it is important to note in the case of a downgrade that, where the credit offset would create a credit in favour of the licensee, the GSC is unable to issue a refund. Instead, the amount will be applied to reduce the next annual licence fee.

More information relating to the associated calculation can be found within the Online Gambling (Amendments) Regulations 2016.

Contracts entered into between the Isle of Man network platform and foreign operators must include an appropriate commitment to game fairness, the exclusion of crime and the protection of young and vulnerable people. The foreign operators will be expected to operate Isle of Man (i.e. international) standards of AML/CFT and KYC in respect of any players they supply to the Isle of Man based network.

While there are established and successful network models which all fall under the network services licence, the format of the network model is deliberately non- prescriptive. While any model that sees foreign-registered players taking part in gambling on Isle of Man servers requires a network licence to be obtained. The GSC will, in principle consider any model that is put forward that can make use of the opportunities provided.

3.2.5 Provision of disaster recovery services to off-Island gambling operations using Isle of Man telecommunications infrastructure (servers, routers, phones, etc.)

A data centre providing disaster recovery services to off-Island gambling operations within its facilities in the Isle of Man will need to be accredited by the GSC and added to its list of approved disaster recovery providers. Once accredited the data centre will be added to the list on receipt of the statutory fee of £5,250. This fee is payable annually and the accreditation runs indefinitely.

It must inform the Inspectorate of the names of any gambling company they intend to provide a disaster recovery service for at the point when the contract to provide DR is concluded. In addition, a copy of the client's current licence from its overseas Regulator must be submitted to the GSC.

It should be noted that non-Island operators are limited to 30 days of operations on the Island within any two-year window. This can be extended up to 90 days with prior approval of the GSC.

Non-island operators relying on Isle of Man based disaster recovery nearing the end of their first 30 days might want to consider making an OGRA application to the GSC.

3.2.6 Token-based Software Supplier License

The token-based software supplier licence is available to entities that have created blockchain tokens that are intended to be used as the medium of transaction by those who use the gambling software. For example, players obtain the tokens in order to participate in gambling, affiliates are paid using the tokens, and so forth.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate that –

- ❖ A credible supply of tokens has been created and the token is available to the public for purchase (i.e. there are exchanges prepared to list it).
- ❖ The key personnel behind the business:
 - Understand the technology.
 - Understand the risks peculiar to the technology and have credible mitigations.
 - Have a credible, sustainable business model: and
 - Have a record of successful business and the experience necessary to sustain the business model.

In addition, token-based software license applicants will not be permitted to publicise their licensing efforts, or respond to enquiries in respect of the licensing process until they have been licensed.

3.3 What assistance you can expect

The GSC is available to offer guidance on the process and discussion around the interpretation of the OGRA rules at every stage of the application process. Additionally, DfE offer supplementary help and support regarding the set-up of any online gambling business in the Island.

The GSC will not provide legal advice.

When considering the legality of an operator's proposed operations, the GSC has a specific requirement. As part of each licence application the GSC will require to be supplied with a board meeting minute which shows that the board of directors has taken legal advice from a qualified legal professional on the activity that it intends to undertake which demonstrates that the proposed activity is legal. The legal advice itself is not required by the GSC.

As an ongoing requirement, the GSC expects its operator's directors to remain vigilant and to refresh their legal advice from time to time and in response to any developments in markets where it operates.

The GSC may offer guidance and opinion on OGRA or other legislation, but it should at no time be confused with legal advice or be considered binding.

The Inspectorate will only discuss application details with its Designated Official, Operations Manager or nominated representatives. If an applicant wishes its application to be discussed with other interested parties, such permission must be given explicitly by the applicant to the GSC in writing.

The application form has an opportunity for extra permission to be given at the beginning of the process. This too can be augmented or revoked by contacting the GSC at any stage in the future.

An applicant's nominated representative is the person named on page 1 of the application form.

3.4 The complete application

When sending an application to the GSC, it should contain the following items:

- ❖ The application form
- ❖ The application fee is £5,250.
- ❖ A **personal declaration form** (PDF) for any of the following appointments:
 - All controlling shareholders of the applicant company with holdings above 5% and any controlling shareholders of the ultimate parent company and any companies in between with holdings above 5%
 - *(Note - The due diligence required for publicly listed companies varies slightly: in these instances, the GSC will seek to scrutinise all shareholders with 20% or more stock)*
 - Investor, investing at a level above £250,000 or above 25% of the total amount invested.
 - All directors of the applicant company if it is a privately owned entity.
 - The Designated Officials
 - The Operations Manager (if appointed)
 - Any individual who is a shareholder; individual investor; stakeholder; director; DO; OM; MLRO; AML/CFT Compliance Officer, or senior manager and is also a PEP.
 - A list of key officials in the group where the application is from a publicly listed company.

- ❖ A **simplified personal declaration form** (SPDF) for any of the following appointments:

(Note - If an individual fulfils more than one role, only one SPDF is required. Individuals having already completed a PDF need not complete a SPDF)

- All other shareholders of the applicant company
- All other shareholders of the ultimate parent company and any companies in between
- Investor, investing between £50,000 and £250,000; and not more than 25% of the total amount invested.
- Stakeholders who make critical non-financial contributions
- Money Laundering Reporting Officer*
- AML/CFT Compliance Officer*
- Nominated AML/CFT Compliance Officer (for software supplier/token-based software supplier licensing applicants only)
- Senior managers, being the most senior person in each case accountable for the following functions: -
 - Overall corporate strategy
 - Information technology/security of registration and games/betting infrastructure
 - Regulatory compliance
 - Financial control
 - Commercial development
- A letter from the Isle of Man based directors, within which the directors vouch for the integrity and background of the individuals concerned, for those entities submitting a SPDF.

- A business plan which includes the following chapters (which are defined in detail in section 3.5):
 - financial accounts
 - ownership
 - terms and conditions *
 - game rules *
 - internal control systems
 - player protection *
 - technical checks on games offered.
 - the business model
 - payment schematic
 - the proposed banking arrangements*
 - customer due diligence*
 - website look and feel*
 - infrastructure checks
 - player registration checks*
 - treasury services*
 - transaction recording for games and lotteries*
 - transaction recording for sportsbook betting*
 - For software licensees only, an indication of the volume of software to be listed on the GSC register both at application and going forward.

* Not required for software supplier/token-based software supplier licensing applicants

One hard copy of the entire application bundle should be supplied to the GSC, together with one electronic copy which has all individual documents saved as separate files.

The Inspectorate's preference is for the business plan to be provided using Microsoft or Microsoft compatible applications.

The GSC has processed a great variety of online applications. Those which have been the most efficient for us to process have mirrored the progression of the points in the following section (3.5) and have sought to explicitly address the points raised in each section.

If it is important that an application be heard by the GSC for a particular date, this should be discussed with the Inspectorate at the time the application is filed.

Similarly, if an application is pressed for time and needs to be processed without delay, then we offer the following pointers to facilitate processing time:

- ❖ File the application with all of the documentation mentioned in the list above and highlight any items in a covering letter which are still work in progress.
- ❖ Ensure that the documentation that is supplied answers all of the points raised in section 3.5 below.
- ❖ Ensure that the application clearly expresses a preferred date or deadline.
- ❖ Ensure the application fee has been remitted to the GSC.
- ❖ Once an application has been received, it will automatically trigger DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks on qualifying personnel. DBS forms will be sent to personnel by the GSC and should be returned to them as soon as possible to avoid delays in the application process.

The internal processes that the Inspectorate uses to process an application largely mirror the areas covered in section 3.5 – if the Inspectorate has to clarify a point or seek information on a point which has not been addressed in the application’s documents, unnecessary delay is introduced into the process.

Once an application has been accepted, the GSC will work to complete the process within 12 weeks. If a particular hearing date is required, the GSC’s website indicates a suggested minimum application submission date for that hearing. If timing is critical, the GSC strongly recommends that the prospective applicant contact the GSC to discuss the matter.

3.5 The checking process

The maintenance of the Island’s reputation as a well-regulated jurisdiction is paramount. Occasionally, the GSC may decline prospective applicants to protect that reputation regardless of the potential economic benefits.

The Inspectorate’s analysis of the application will include an evaluation of the business model to identify any threats that could, by association, tarnish that reputation.

Where they feel strongly about a particular issue, they may suggest the business model is altered to remove a risk or indeed they may be minded declining the license until such time as the risk is satisfactorily mitigated. In other cases, they may simply append a licence condition to the final approval which allows the GSC to revoke or suspend the license and publicise this fact, pending remedial action.

3.5.1 Due diligence on persons connected with the application.

Each person connected with the application is checked to ensure they are both competent in any offices they hold and that they are people of integrity.

The GSC has detailed in s3.4 the anticipated level of due diligence it will undertake in relation to various entities, however the variable elements to corporate structures and share classes mean that it is impractical to cover all possible scenarios in guidance.

As such this guidance refers to the typical due diligence undertaken with further guidance being available from the GSC on request. It is important to establish that the GSC reserves the right to request additional information/detail in relation to any entity where it deems appropriate.

Once PDFs have been submitted the GSC will undertake the steps necessary to have Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks undertaken. Once DBS forms have been passed to those submitting PDFs they should be completed and returned to the GSC for verification and processing.

Note that the GSC currently requires the application fee to have been submitted prior to the checking process commencing. For individuals completing SPDF’s, DBS checks are not currently undertaken.

The Inspectorate does not expect to have to discover issues for itself which should have been declared on the declaration forms. Where there is doubt over whether a sanction is serious enough to warrant declaration, it should be declared. There is no exemption under the rehabilitation-of-offenders legislation for gaming personnel and a very solid explanation will be required from any beneficial owner or key official who fails to declare an issue which later comes to light from the GSC’s checks to avoid such a person being excluded from consideration.

Often applications are processed with the assistance of a corporate service provider (CSP) in the Island. If personnel wish us to be able to discuss issues arising from their declaration forms directly with their CSP, they must provide their CSP with a letter outlining this permission. The GSC will always insist on seeing such permission before discussing a person's affairs with a CSP.

Note however that a signed declaration form automatically grants the GSC permission to divulge personal details to third parties who are connected with the due diligence process.

All information supplied to the Inspectorate is held in the strictest confidence and is held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The GSC is committed to preventing a situation where officials on the Island are simply uninformed proxies and nominal officials. Indeed, the Inspectorate will stay in regular contact with Designated Officials and Operations Managers with a view to understanding how the licensee's affairs are progressing and does request specific information as part of the ongoing supervision programme.

The GSC may deem throughout the application process that an individual may be or are to be undertaking the role of a role holder captured within section 3.4. If it is agreed that an individual is acting in that capacity, they will be requested to complete the relevant PDF or SPDF for that role.

3.5.2 Due diligence on companies connected with the application.

Companies connected with the application are also checked to ensure that they are a bona fide, legitimate business.

Equally, while most corporate histories tend to be short, if the history behind acquisition and ownership of an operation is particularly complex, the Inspectorate may ask for a timeline which shows each company in the chain and the relationships and transactions between them.

In the case of each company, the company's name, trading name, ownership, incorporation date and place of incorporation will need to be made explicit.

3.5.3 Analysis of the financial accounts

Full analysis of the financial model requires detailed forecasts for a minimum of three years, and for established businesses audited accounts for (up to) the previous two years.

For consistency there is a template provided which must be completed and included with all applications (this can be as well as, or instead of, the company's own financial figures).

These are submitted to an accountant retained by the GSC which checks them for credibility and robustness.

The applicant is expected to submit financial information covering:

- ❖ Plans for future funding to include the values and source(s) of operating/start-up capital.
- ❖ Forecast profit and loss for the first 3 years of trading, broken down by month for the first 2 years and an annual figure for the 3rd year.
- ❖ Forecast monthly cash flow for the first 3 years of trading.
- ❖ Forecast balance sheet for the first 3 years of trading.
- ❖ Terms and origin of any investment and loans (including shareholder loans).
- ❖ The level of business that needs to be maintained and achieved to break

even.

- ❖ Statutory accounts for any operational parent company.
- ❖ Information to support all financial assumptions such as traffic volumes, player spend, cost projections, player acquisition and retention costs, return on marketing spend, relocation, etc.

The GSC will also be interested in the company's ability to sustain its business during adverse conditions and will look for evidence that the business model has been subject to a sensitivity analysis.

This analysis should forecast performance where variables such as player growth, acquisition and retention costs, as well as the more traditional fixed costs (IT, rent, wages, etc.) have been under-estimated. The inspectorate will pay particular attention to the performance required of the operator to break-even and a robust commentary will be expected to support the assumptions made in the accounts.

Where such analysis demonstrates the potential for financial difficulties, any contingencies that can be used to offset the situation should be outlined.

Please note, all figures must be reported in the same currency (£ GBP).

3.5.4 Analysis of ownership

The Inspectorate is obliged by law to understand who owns and benefits from the company's activities so that it can perform the necessary due diligence on those people. ^{O4(2)b}

Details of the certificate of incorporation and the memorandum and article of association should be submitted for the applicant company.

The details provided to the Inspectorate should clearly detail the relationships between any companies involved in the application whether their participation is direct or indirect; it should show who controls those companies and detail any shareholdings they have irrespective of the size of their shareholding.

Any beneficial owner using a nominee company or trust to control the gambling operation must still be notified to the GSC to enable due diligence to be performed. In the case of nominee companies, the GSC will also request sight of the documentation that relinquishes the owner's (usually a CSP or equivalent) control and benefits in favour of the true beneficial owner (typically the declaration of trust and any letter of wishes).

If the Isle of Man registered applicant company is part of a group structure, then we expect to see a comprehensive description of the structure.

This can often be best shown by a diagram, but with accompanying notes.

All companies, trusts or other arrangements in the structure should be fully identified by name, number and jurisdiction of registration.

It should be noted that in most cases, the sources of funding will need to be declared, particularly if funding doesn't arise from the simple sale of shares. These checks are designed to confirm the following:

- ❖ That the funds are genuinely available; and
- ❖ That the funds have not arisen from illegitimate activity.

3.5.5 Analysis of terms and conditions

The exact Terms and Conditions offered by each licence holder is their own responsibility, having taken appropriate legal or professional advice.

However, there are a number of areas or specific items which the GSC would expect to see covered.

The GSC will still review the terms and conditions and game rules (see 3.5.6) that will apply to games for fairness even if the licensee does not intend to register players directly but intends rather to allow the players of foreign operators to use its games under a network services licence.

These can include, but should not be limited to:

- ❖ An overview or introduction.
- ❖ Definitions or explanations of terms used.
- ❖ A cross reference to consult specific game rules.
- ❖ A statement that modifications can be made to the Terms and Conditions and that the customer is responsible for periodically checking them.
- ❖ How disputes will be handled and by whom.
- ❖ How breaches of the terms and conditions by the customer are dealt with.
- ❖ Which jurisdictions' Governing Law is applicable.
- ❖ Agreements on age limits and legality of gambling in jurisdiction from which the player originates.
- ❖ Rules on self-exclusion for problem gamblers.
- ❖ A statement saying that by entering into a registration for membership the terms and conditions have been read and agreed to.
- ❖ The methods by which player registration can take place and the KYC identification requirements under AML procedures.
- ❖ Reference to how abandoned accounts will be dealt with, and in particular what will ultimately happen to abandon funds.
- ❖ How blatant or palpable errors, erroneous pricing, mistakes or omissions are dealt with.
- ❖ Account limits, betting limits and maximum pay-outs.
- ❖ Which sites a player will be excluded from if they elect for self-exclusion; sites with multiple URLs may wish to offer self-exclusion from all related sites or notify players that they should self-exclude from each of the related sites separately.

Players must be given the opportunity to review changes to their terms and conditions. Ideally, such changes are notified to customers as they occur, and the terms can be re-agreed; the GSC is also comfortable with any mechanism which allows players to review dated changes in terms and conditions as well as the latest version. Such audit trails must be easy to understand and navigate and in all cases, any unresolved gambling performed under one set of terms and conditions may not have its terms and conditions supplanted without the player's explicit consent.

Players may not consent to future changes as part of the terms and conditions (e.g. no player may agree to any terms and conditions which contain the wording "*I agree to any future terms and conditions irrespective of when they are made or what they are.*").

3.5.6 Analysis of game rules

There can be two sets of Game Rules.

A licence holder offering a broad range of games or types of games may have a set of general game rules. These could include details on:

- ❖ How bets or games are settled.
- ❖ What happens in the event of a cancellation of an event or game.
- ❖ How disputes will be handled and by whom.
- ❖ How blatant or palpable errors, erroneous pricing, mistakes or omissions are dealt with.
- ❖ Details of betting limits and maximum pay-outs.
- ❖ How breaches of the rules by the customer are dealt with.

There should also be a game specific set of rules for each game offered.

These are expected to set out the method of play and rules in a clear and concise manner, and where applicable include pay tables.

Areas within the terms and conditions and the game rules may cross over and be covered in a similar format in both areas.

3.5.7 Analysis of internal controls and systems

The Inspectorate will be interested in the internal mechanisms the company has to assess, mitigate and monitor risk particularly where it relates to players and player- protection.

It is expected that procedures and manuals detailing internal controls and systems would be submitted with the application. If the operation is exposed to any particular risk, this should be highlighted.

The Inspectorate will require a demonstration that legal comfort has been obtained. This is typically satisfied by providing the GSC with a board meeting minute that shows the board accepted that the legal advice they received on their activity demonstrated that the activity is legal.

Full compliance with Isle of Man data protection law is expected at all times. Likewise, if an operator has relationships with affiliates who hold customer contact information, then a mechanism should exist which the player has agreed to which ensures that the affiliate's marketing material is not sent to those players who are excluded from the operator's website.

3.5.8 Analysis of the arrangements for player protection

Player funds

Definition of player funds

Under OGRA, a licensee is expected to safeguard the funds of players registered in the Isle of Man and to ensure they receive their true and fair winnings. O6(2)(a).

Player funds carry the same meaning as described in Online Gambling (Participants Money (Amendment) Regulations 2014:

"Participants money" means money that for the purpose of or in the course of online

gambling an operator—

- ❖ holds or receives on behalf of a participant; or
- ❖ owes to a participant and includes deposits, winnings, transfers, gratuities and redeemed bonuses.

Player Fund Protection

An operator must at all times ensure that player protection arrangements cover in value the amount of money players have in their accounts plus any monies owed to them by the operator (e.g. unpaid winnings). As such, the following must be protected to 100% value unless otherwise specified by the GSC and must be protected by an approved mechanism:

- ❖ Funds shown in the player's account (i.e. "the wallet").
- ❖ Bonuses that have been fairly redeemed (i.e. where the player has fulfilled the qualifying criteria.
- ❖ All deposits at all times; and
- ❖ Credit betting winnings being transferred between two players who have chosen to use the operator as a form of escrow account (i.e. the money is held, however temporarily, by the operator).

Where an operator uses an OGRA licence to undertake a number of activities, only those activities which register players on Isle of Man servers are required to be covered by player protection mechanisms. Activities offered under a network services licence which do not register players on the Isle of Man (but which, for example offer services to players registered with foreign operators) do not need to cover player funds. Players registering with foreign operators are protected by whatever arrangements they agree to when they first register.

Operators of network services may still wish to create fund protection mechanisms for contractual reasons or as part of their business ethic and so these can still be created notwithstanding they do not require the GSC's approval and are not mandatory.

The GSC is happy to offer advice on player protection mechanisms it has already approved.

Approved Mechanisms

A method must exist which guarantees that Isle of Man registered players receive their deposits and any accumulated winnings in the event that the operator cannot pay. During the application, the Inspectorate will review the appropriateness of the selected ring-fencing vehicle.

While the GSC will consider any proposals to safeguard player funds, a number of choices are immediately available to operators which have been outlined below. In each instance, the Inspectorate will require relevant documentation to evidenced that the mechanism is created in line with the GSCs expectations.

The approved mechanisms are:

1. Bank guarantees.
2. Trust funds.
3. Client accounts.
4. Insurance-based Solutions; and
5. Suitable Vehicle.

1. Bank guarantees constitute arrangements between the bank and the operator which specify default conditions which, if satisfied, trigger the pay-out of the guaranteed amount. They usually attract a fee from the bank for setting up and a regular fee for the continued use of the facility. Licence holders must ensure that protection levels are not eroded by any charges.
2. Trusts normally maintain their own separate bank account and are controlled by trustees. Trusts incur costs for being set-up and may specify charges for annual administration, transaction processing and wind-down. Licence holders must ensure that protection levels are not eroded by any charges.
3. Client accounts are specially designated bank accounts which enjoy the protection of the Online Gambling (Participant's Money) Regulations 2010, as amended by Online Gambling (Participant's Money) (Amendment) Regulations 2014. An operator who places players' money into a client account with an Isle of Man licensed bank satisfies the OGRA licence condition to protect players' funds.
4. Insurance-based solutions which provides for a sum to be paid to the operator in the event of a default situation, that sum being at least equal to the sum of funds owed to players (for instance, lottery jackpot wins). Insurance requires a claim which may vary from the ceiling amount insured upon. Each solution must be understood in relation to its merits to the operator approved by the GSC before it can be used as a protection mechanism. This mechanism can be combined with other fund protection mechanisms provided the sum total of protection at any given time is equal to those funds owed to players.
5. A suitable vehicle is an entity that meets the following conditions:
 - ❖ An Isle of Man based, and FSA regulated investment firm, regulated as a collective investment scheme;
 - ❖ A fund that is cash fund (unless insurance is in place to cover risk of loss).
 - ❖ Low risk investments which must be Moody's A-rated or equivalent and held with deposit taking institutions in the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, UK or Ireland.
 - ❖ All funds are held in GBP (so as to remove foreign exchange risk) or, where player balances are not GBP, the investment shall be in that currency.
 - ❖ Funds are accessible due to daily dealing; and
 - ❖ Management fees are taken from interest and not capital.

Where the target investment vehicle is a portfolio of one or more money market cash funds, the credit ratings of those funds must be AAA and each fund in the portfolio must not be smaller than £5bn. If a money market cash fund's credit rating is revised, then it may not be used until it re-obtains its AAA rating, and players' funds in that market must be returned to the operator or moved into another AAA rated fund as soon as practicable. The licensee is ultimately responsible for ensuring the credit ratings of the funds are AAA and for withdrawing or reallocating them in the event of a change in credit rating.

A licensee is permitted to invest player funds into a suitable vehicle provided there is no reasonable possibility of the funds being eroded or lost. If the investment carries any risk of returning less than the sum invested, then insurance must be provided to cover the whole of the sum invested. Invested funds must remain unencumbered by any form of lien or charge. For example, the investment may not be held as security against loans.

All players' funds paid to the licensee are held on trust irrespective of the mechanism used to protect them and players must be told and agree to the treatment of any interest and capital that arises as the result of the funds being held by the licensee.

Operators may utilise a number of protection mechanisms if desired, so long as the amount of money they can yield at any given time, matches or exceeds the value of player funds recorded on the operators' systems.

Before players' funds may be moved from a client account to an alternate protection mechanism, the GSC must approve the mechanism which is the destination of the players' funds.

Before players' funds may be moved from an approved protection mechanism to another, the inspectorate must be notified.

In the event that a financial institution used in an approved protection mechanism is downgraded, a license holder will be responsible for ensuring the arrangement remains in compliance with requirements and for withdrawing or reallocating funds.

Alternative Arrangements

The GSC will expect that licence holders will protect 100% of player funds at all times unless alternative arrangements have been approved by the GSC.

The GSC will consider alternative arrangements on a case-by-case basis and may put in place arrangements that must be applied for a specific operator. These restrictions may be applied via a condition on the operator's licence or as part of undertakings agreed with the operator as part of the licensing process.

Protecting CVC/VC's

Where a player deposits CVC/VCs with an operator the GSC still considers it to be the operator's responsibility to guard against failures relating to the safeguarding of deposits by having in place credible measures to mitigate risks.

However, the GSC understands that the landscape of CVC/VCs is constantly evolving and it is possible that a situation may manifest where the underlying platform of a CVC/VC or the infrastructure underpinning CVC/VCs is either withdrawn, insufficiently supported or fails (for example, a company which administrates the virtual goods for a computer game discontinues the game).

It is important that players understand the risk associated with the use of CVC/VC's (via terms and conditions for example) but this does not negate the operator's responsibility to have appropriate measures in place. In such a situation however, the GSC would not consider the operator responsible for this type of failure unless it was precipitated by the operator itself.

Further guidance can be obtained by contacting the GSC.

Player Complaints

In addition to the financial aspects of player protection, the Inspectorate will look at the processes for handling player complaints and queries. As a minimum they will expect to see a mechanism to record complaints where:

- ❖ each complaint is date-stamped (*e.g. 26 July 2010*)
- ❖ each complaint includes the player's submission (if available) or a summary of it (*e.g. "A player on the site abused me for betting KK into Trup QQ." My ID is t***_**** and the player's ID is n*****."*)
- ❖ the resolution of the complaint is recorded (*e.g. "unresolved"*)

It is helpful for the operator to maintain a record of all correspondence it has had with a complainant. If a complaint is escalated to the GSC, it will always begin its investigation with a request for the correspondence to date.

Options for appeals or arbitration should also be made available to players.

Problem Gambling

Finally, all OGRA licensees are required to produce evidence of their commitment and support in the field of problem gambling by making a proportionate contribution to organisations that focus on research into the prevention and treatment of gambling related harm; develop harm prevention approaches; and/or identify and fund treatment to those harmed by gambling. Such evidence will be provided to the GSC on an annual basis throughout the duration of the licence.

3.5.9 Analysis of technical checks on games offered.

Whether a game is offered to a player directly or via a third party, the game must be certified by a test house approved by the GSC.

A list of approved test facilities can be found [here](#).

Changes to regulations in 2017 now allow the GSC to accept certification to standards deemed by the GSC to be equivalent to its own (an extract of which can be found at appendix C).

Certification will now be accepted if, in addition to being issued by a GSC approved test house, it also adheres to:

- ❖ The GSCs standards as set out in Schedule 1 of the Online Gambling (Systems Verification) (No.2) Regulations 2007; or
- ❖ the standards published by another gambling regulator with whom the GSC has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); or
- ❖ the standards published by an international body or grouping of gambling regulators of which (in either case) the GSC is a member.

Prospective operators of a network services licence are advised to also familiarise themselves with the modified requirements for network services as detailed in the Online Gambling Regulation (Amendment) (Network Services) Regulations 2011. The Inspectorate can assist in guiding prospective network applicants through the technical requirements.

While a licence can be granted before test certificates are provided, it should be noted that uncertified games may not be offered to the public. A test certificate is need in respect of each game and must be provided to the GSC by the operator (not the test house or software company). Where a game is added without a certificate, the GSC will require that game to be put beyond player access until a certificate has been provided.

The GSC will accept a test certificate from any source provided the original certificate originates from an approved test house. If, for example, a software developer was to have all of its games certified to Isle of Man standards at the point of development and were then to pass a copy of this certificate to each operator who purchased the software, the GSC would accept this certificate.

Whenever a new game is added to an operator's portfolio, a test certificate is required unless the operator can prove (usually via the software company) that the new game is simply an existing, approved game (where the RNG and the game logic have been tested) with a new cosmetic appearance (a re- skinned game).

3.5.10 Analysis of the business model

When analysing the business model, the Inspectorate look to identify all of the relevant entities that comprise the model. Entities include operations, companies, supporting structures and so forth as well as banks, CSPs, legal firms etc.

It also analyses the relationships and transactions between these entities as well as the activities each entity undertakes.

When submitting the business model, the lists in 2.2 and 2.3 should be examined.

For each activity, the applicant should determine if that activity is being undertaken. If it is, they should then explain where it is taking place and who it is being undertaken by.

The GSC does not normally allow an operator to split its product offering in such a way that a similar product is licensed in part in two or more jurisdictions. The GSC is comfortable licensing all of one product and none of any others for a given operator although links available on the Isle of Man regulated web page must only link to products that carry the badge of an EEA regulator. Similarly, the terms and conditions that are supplied to players from these pages may only refer to the GSC or EEA regulators.

As a rule, freeplay models should be discussed with the Inspectorate who will check that no discrepancies exist between freeplay and cashplay modes that are likely to mislead players about their chances if they switch from freeplay to cashplay.

Freeplay models which offer non-monetary prizes should be discussed with the GSC. If at any stage such a prize can be leveraged to produce money or money's worth, then it will qualify as licensable gambling even if the initial offering is free. Such prizes can include bonuses usable on cashplay sites, free turns on cash websites, advantages which materialise when used on a cash site and so forth.

The GSC reserves the right to oblige operators to pay for an independent technology expert to be chosen by the GSC and to assist the GSC with elements of a model that are beyond the GSC's expertise.

The GSC is happy to meet with potential applicants before they pay their application fee in order to discuss models and identify any areas where independent expertise might be required (and where the operator may be requested to fund the expert's fees).

3.5.11 Analysis of the payment schematic

The payment schematic shows the flow of money around the applicant's business as well as between players and the operator and between the operator and any business partners.

The Inspectorate's analysis of the payment schematic concentrates on the methods of payment that can be used to deposit and withdraw money as well as any proposed conditions attached to these and any other financial transactions (including internal transfers and charges). The GSC must approve all payment methods in a payment schematic before they can be used.

It should be noted that non-refundable elements in gambling (e.g. non-refundable tickets) are not permitted in Isle of Man games without the express permission of the GSC.

The Inspectorate also examines the procedures for measuring the operator's exposure to player funds and ensuring that the correct amount of money is stored in the ring-fenced account or its equivalent.

Finally, the banking arrangements of the operation are checked – while these are often in negotiation during the application period it should be understood that banking may not be located outside the Isle of Man unless the Isle of Man Government's Treasury Department has given explicit permission.

3.5.12 Analysis of customer due diligence - know your customer/customer due diligence (KYC/CDD), Anti money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism check (AML/CFT).

The Inspectorate will examine the applicant's AML/CFT procedures and will also look at the staff handbook to ensure that appropriate staff are advised of their obligations.

Evidence will be required that the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Online Gambling) Code 2019 has been obtained and understood, as will the appointment of a suitable AML/CFT Compliance Officer and Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO). The Inspectorate may request a meeting with the MLRO to evaluate the person's qualifications and previous experience with the objective of ensuring they are competent in the role. In addition, the MLRO will be invited to attend regular AML/CTF forum meetings arranged by the GSC.

It is important that appointed MLROs have independent and unimpeded access to the board or ownership of a company, this will need to be demonstrated.

The results of KYC/CDD checks performed by the operator must be available to the GSC upon request.

The Inspectorate will also review the screening policy for appropriate staff designed to check their integrity before exposure to player funds or information. Appropriate staff are defined as those who can directly participate in the running or support of the operation or in its management and direction.

It is important to recognise that where the operator intends to devolve elements of its operation to third parties and the GSC feels there may be a player protection implication, the GSC will expect the prospective licensee to negotiate a right of inspection on the GSC's behalf. Such an inspection if notified would only apply to the third party's Isle of Man facing business.

Even where the right of inspection is not required, such as when a new operator joins a licensee using an OGRA network services licence to offer play on its equipment, the GSC will still expect its licensees to only enter into business arrangements with companies that can demonstrate they operate to international (and therefore Isle of Man) standards of AML/CFT.

Likewise, any business undertaken by a third party on behalf of an Isle of Man licensee must also be performed to international (and therefore Isle of Man) AML/CFT standards.

Guidance on the Code and relevant legislation can be found on our [website here](#)

Potential applicants may find it useful to examine the requirements and compare them to the evidence they will provide within their submission in order to facilitate smoother processing.

3.5.13 Checks on website look and feel.

The applicant company will be required to demonstrate that their planned website complies with regulations. The requirements are summarised below.

On the home page:

- ❖ full name and address of the registered office.
- ❖ the date the OGRA license was originally granted.
- ❖ a statement that the site is regulated in the Isle of Man.
- ❖ the Isle of Man Government crest which can be obtained from the GSC or DfE.

This should be linked to: www.isleofmangsc.com/gambling/

- ❖ hyperlink to a site which assists with problem gambling such as Gamcare or Gambling Therapy (which is suitable for non-English language sites)
- ❖ links to:
 - a summary of the registration arrangements
 - a statement barring those under 18 years old.
 - a statement that online gambling debts are enforceable in law in the Isle of Man

Generally available:

- ❖ mechanisms which allow a player to self-exclude themselves from future participation, future registration and the receipt of marketing material.
- ❖ mechanisms which allow players to limit their stakes or play
- ❖ a means by which the company can be contacted at any time by the player (a phone number, an e-mail address, live chat and so forth)

In addition, the Inspectorate will check that the games being offered, and any proposed advertising planned, do not step outside the bounds of the advertising regulations by being:

- ❖ indecent
- ❖ offensive
- ❖ not based on fact
- ❖ deceptive
- ❖ misleading

Or by:

- ❖ commenting on the legality of gambling elsewhere
- ❖ targeting jurisdictions where online gambling is prohibited.
- ❖ carrying sexual content
- ❖ targeting under 18-year-olds
- ❖ breaching copyright
- ❖ not making clear the expected return to player in respect of any game played

3.5.14 Analysis of infrastructure checks

The Inspectorate will check the model to confirm that the following technical requirements are being met. Depending on the model being offered, these checks may include:

- ❖ the servers hosting the games and upon which the bets are struck are located in the Isle of Man
- ❖ That backup procedures for the safekeeping of data occur at least daily and that the data is held for a minimum of five years.

Where technical systems are mirrored in other parts of the world for non- disaster- recovery purposes, the Inspectorate will ask for the reasons behind the maintenance of non-Island facilities.

3.5.15 Analysis of player registration checks

The Inspectorate defines player registration as the gathering of personal details and the issuing of a user ID and password or its equivalent to a player in order for them to play a game. Player registration is mandatory for licensees except when the services they offer are being conducted under category 8 or category 9 licence types (see 2.1) at which point registration is not mandatory.

Whenever an Isle of Man operator holds a player's registration data on its server, an operator in the Isle of Man must be responsible for the duty of care that is extended by regulations to those players.

A sub-licensee may use the registration facilities of its platform provider, but it remains responsible for registration and player fund protection and so forth. A foreign operator acting as a network partner may not use the player registration facilities of an Isle of Man network operator – the registration server.

When checking the player registration process, the Inspectorate ensures that:

- ❖ a mechanism exists to exclude those under 18 years old who try to register.
- ❖ the name, age and place of residence of the player are collected as a minimum.
- ❖ a mechanism to prevent self-excluded players from re-registering exists.

- ❖ the applicant will keep a secure list of open and closed player registrations that the GSC can request at any time.
- ❖ players can only gain access to online gambling through the use of a password that is unique to them.
- ❖ players will not be able to hold more than one account at any given time.
- ❖ procedures exist to cover requests for account closure, account detail changes (such as user ID, password, corrections to personal data).
- ❖ mechanisms exist to prevent accounts being opened by someone other than the registered person.
- ❖ players whose withdrawals exceed €3,000 are subject to additional identity verification procedures aligned to the AML/CFT code.
- ❖ procedures exist to prevent players registering anonymously or with obviously fictitious names.

3.5.5 Analysis of treasury services

When accepting and processing money from Isle of Man registered players, the treasury or equivalent function within the operator's organisation must make sure that:

- ❖ a mechanism is offered to the player to self-limit their participation (e.g. a maximum stake per session, a maximum cumulative wager for a seven-day period).
- ❖ gambling can only occur once funds have been received or guaranteed to be received from a card issuer.
- ❖ a mechanism exists to issue players with a method (e.g. PINs, user ID and password) to withdraw their monies.
- ❖ a mechanism exists that players can access to obtain a history of their financial transactions, including deposits, wins and losses for sessions, withdrawals and any charges imposed.
- ❖ comprehensive logs of all financial transactions are backed up at least daily and retained for at least five years.
- ❖ All treasury data must be stored in an encrypted or hashed form and PINs related to account numbers must be stored using irreversible encryption algorithms.
- ❖ All financial transactions must be able to be matched to game, lottery and/or betting transactions for the purposes of producing ad hoc reports for the GSC upon request and for the calculation of duty for Isle of Man Customs & Excise.
- ❖ Where chips, tokens and so forth are used in the game that the process for conversion between them and player money is clearly available for scrutiny by the player.
- ❖ Where charges are likely to be incurred by the operator or a third party, the player must be able to see that these charges are likely and how they are calculated.
- ❖ Players have a way to determine that their winnings have been paid.
- ❖ Certain significant events are captured and recorded, specifically large wins above €3,000, transfers in excess of €3,000 and any material in the previously stated Return to Player.
- ❖ Rules relating to the distribution of winnings are clear; that these rules include situations where no winning bet occurs, or a discontinuity of service occurs and that the method of claiming winnings is clear.

3.5.6 Analysis of transaction recording for games and lotteries

The Inspectorate will make sure that the applicant is aware of and intends to comply with the following regulations in relation to games, lotteries and/or betting.

The System must maintain information about all Games and/or Lotteries played, including: -

- ❖ the identity of the Participant, if an Isle of Man registered player
- ❖ the time the Game began.
- ❖ the balance on the Participant's account at the start of the Game or the start of the Participant's participation in the Lottery (as relevant)
- ❖ the sums placed by Participant placed in the Game (time-stamped)
- ❖ the Game status (in progress, complete, etc.)
- ❖ the result of the Game and/or Lottery (time-stamped)
- ❖ the time the Game ended.
- ❖ amount won or lost by the Participant.
- ❖ the balance on the Participant's account at the end of the Game and/or Lottery
- ❖ the currency or currencies utilised by the Participant.

3.5.7 Analysis of transaction recording for sportsbook betting

The System must maintain information about all Bets received from Participants, including:

- ❖ the identity of the Participant, if an Isle of Man registered player
- ❖ the time that the Bet was taken.
- ❖ the balance in the Participant's account at the start of any betting transaction
- ❖ the Bets made by any Participant.
- ❖ amounts won or lost by the Participant.
- ❖ the currency or currencies used by the Participant.
- ❖ large wins (as agreed by the GSC from time to time)
- ❖ transfers of funds (between Participants or between any Participant and the Operator) in excess of such amount as the Commissioners may from time to time direct in writing to the Operator

A document must be provided satisfying the points above – this can either be drawn up by a company's internal IT department, or an external test house can be used if desired.

3.6 The OM or DO's meeting with the Inspectorate

Within a few weeks of the application's acceptance, the Inspectorate may seek to meet informally with the applicant's Designated Official (or with the Operations Manager if one has been appointed).

At this meeting, the Inspectorate will raise any areas that require clarification. It is also an opportunity for the Designated Official or Operations Manager to impress upon the Inspectorate their competence to run the business.

The Inspectorate will be interested in a number of facets of the prospective licensee which include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ a précis of the business model which touches on each different mode of operation if there is more than one. In particular the GSC is interested in the activities that will be undertaken in the Isle of Man

- ❖ details of management and control that will be used to control the licence holder, including the arrangements which the Designated Official or Operations Manager will be using to stay in touch with the day-to-day affairs of the business.
- ❖ any peculiarities affecting the organisation, planning, control or operation of the licence holder's business.
- ❖ An indication of when the licence holder intends to commence operations assuming the license is approved.
- ❖ Aspects of the accounts encompassing in particular forecasts, start-up capital and assumptions underpinning the projections of profitability.

3.7 The formal hearing

Assuming that there have been no delays with the application process then, depending on how the monthly GSC hearings fall, around twelve weeks after the application has formally been accepted the GSC will aim to advise the applicant of its licensing decision.

The on-Island directors on the board of the Manx company, Designated Officials and the Operations Manager (if there is one) are required to attend this hearing. It is at this meeting that any licensing conditions – which may vary from one application to the next – are discussed and agreed. Should those required to attend be unable it is likely the hearing will be re-scheduled for a date upon which attendance will be possible.

It is not necessary for off-Island directors to attend the hearing though they will be required to have met with the inspectorate within six months of the hearing.

It should be noted that directors must have been approved by the GSC, either during the hearing or previously by appointment before they can commence their duties.

Whilst the Inspectorate require on-Island director, Designated Officials and Operations Managers are a mandatory requirement, this requirement may extend to other individuals involved in the proposed business who will provide a valuable contribution to the licensing decision.

Successful applicants that have their licences approved receive notification from the Chief Executive or the inspector of the GSC soon after the formal hearing.

While the GSC is not obliged to share its reasons for declining an applicant, ⁰⁴⁽⁴⁾ it will indicate the reasons in the formal correspondence that accompanies any rejection. It is of course to be hoped that within the twelve-week period prior to the formal hearing, any obstructions to licensing have been discovered and remedied.

3.8 Understanding of “go-live” procedure.

- ❖ Towards the end of the application process, the Inspectorate will explain the process that is normal after the GSC have approved an application. In its simplified form, it is:
- ❖ Prospective licensees will be required to take up (i.e. pay for) a licence within three months of gaining approval from the GSC. The GSC's approval lapses after this period and a fresh application are required to obtain the GSC's approval again.
- ❖ If the approval contains conditions, these must be fulfilled and notified to the Inspectorate prior to the issuance of the licence. Additional approvals may be required prior to the company going live.

- ❖ Once an operator has been issued with the licence, the licence fee renewal date is fixed, and the license is issued; the operator is added to the GSC’s website. From this date, the operator has a maximum of nine months to go live.
- ❖ Test certificates as applicable must be provided prior to go live approval.
- ❖ The operator must understand all of its licence conditions in relation to all of its activities and the importance of making an immediate notification to the GSC if those conditions look likely to be breached.
- ❖ Once the license is issued and during the period prior to going live with services, operators will be expected to complete quarterly returns and will fall under the compliance regime of the GSC.
- ❖ An operator may test their products using hired testers and real money, but the following conditions must prevail:
 - No tester may benefit from the gambling directly (although players may be remunerated for their testing services of course) and any monies won or lost must be repatriated after testing.
 - Only testers and administrators may have access to the site (e.g. password protection or equivalent) which must otherwise be strictly inaccessible to the public for gambling purposes.
 - A site may accumulate and register non-testing players prior to go live but these players may not be given access to the site except in the capacity of testers as previously described.

At the completion of testing, the operator must notify the Inspectorate of their intended go live date and ensure that all required approvals have been received by the Inspectorate.

4. The duties of officials before, during and after the application

The following sections outline the responsibilities of the various officials that must be or may be appointed to control a company’s affairs.

4.1 Who represents the license holder on the island?

The GSC expects a licence holder to be represented by a Designated Official who resides in the Isle of Man. A Designated Official must be a director of the company but may not be an employee of an Isle of Man corporate service provider. The GSC expects that the Designated Official should be able to (where required) devote 100% of his or her available time to the role and therefore it is inappropriate for a DO to have other commitments with other licenses.

If the Designated Official is to reside outside the Isle of Man, the GSC will accept the appointment by a licence holder of an operations Manager, who must demonstrate their competence and be approved by the GSC. An operations Manager must reside in the Isle of Man and must also be a director of the company. An operations Manager can be an employee of an Isle of Man corporate service provider.

A Designated Official must be appointed before an application can be submitted and

evaluated by the GSC. A Designated Official must be approved by the Commissioner's before an applicant can be granted a licence.

Either a Designated Official or Operations Manager must be resident on the Island **before** operations can commence under a licence.

4.2 What roles exist and what is expected of each role?

The duties falling to DOs or their nominated OMs are:

- ❖ To present an overview of the structure and organisation of the prospective licence holder during the application process and to be able to field questions relating to:
 - Company Strategy.
 - Business Plan.
 - Corporate and Organisational Structure.
 - Financial Projections.
 - Business models and licensing implications.
 - Banking and flow of funds/monies through the organisation.
 - Player protections method of choice.
- ❖ To understand the Manx legislation and this guidance and to be able to demonstrate how the licence holder intends to meet the criteria necessary to qualify for the license.
- ❖ To understand and comply with any conditions specified in any license granted.
- ❖ To understand and retain any legal advice pertaining to the operations of the licence holder in any jurisdictions in which it operates to ensure it is fully compliant in all its activities.
- ❖ To make available detailed information relating to the licence holder's plans, operations or control as required by the GSC from time to time.
- ❖ To ensure player accounts are ring-fenced guaranteeing protection of player funds.
- ❖ To ensure that the licence holder remains socially responsible in its operations by excluding youth, crime, unfairness and problem gambling from its operations.
- ❖ To respond to requests made by the Commission in a timely manner.
- ❖ To ensure that anti-money laundering directives in force at the time are complied with.
- ❖ To provide evidence of this upon request; to report suspicious transactions to the Isle of Man Constabulary Financial Crime Unit as they arise.
- ❖ To notify changes in planning, operation or control to the GSC in accordance with the guidance offered in section 4.4 of this guidance.
- ❖ To provide for regular audits to the required standard as defined in the license conditions.

Any directors overseeing the business of an Isle of Man licensee are of course subject to the general duties of Isle of Man company directors.

The following list expands on those general duties to outline the GSC's expectations of directors appointed to control the affairs of its licensees, and as may be expected these requirements often duplicate those that are expected of the designated official.

The Directors: -

- ❖ must have general knowledge, experience and skill appropriate for their post - the GSC does expect directors to have previous experience either as directors of previous businesses or of the gambling industry – preferably both.
- ❖ must understand the company's business - they should understand the business model and how money is generated and spent; they must understand any legal restrictions

that apply to the model, and they should have access to reports that allow them to assess the health of the model. They must be able to explain the model to the GSC's inspectors if asked.

- ❖ must act honestly - the continuation of a person's involvement in an Isle of Man licensee's affairs does depend on the maintenance of the very highest standards of personal probity. Under Isle of Man law, the Commission can only grant licences where they remain satisfied that the company is under the control of persons of integrity.
- ❖ must act reasonably - this obligation extends to the protection of players who use the company's services. The director must understand the mechanism the company uses to protect the funds of its players and must ensure at all times that the mechanism contains enough money to cover all players' interests. In addition, the director must ensure that its company protects the young and vulnerable by excluding or allowing to self-exclude respectively these groups. The terms and conditions under which players' contract with the company must be fair and transparent.
- ❖ must act in the interests of the company (members or if in trouble, creditors) - given that breaches of the licence conditions and the law can result in the suspension or cancellation of a licence, it is important that directors understand the licence conditions and the Isle of Man's law, their companies' compliance with these and their reporting obligations to the GSC in the event of breaches.
- ❖ must take steps to understand the affairs of the company they are managing - Directors must be able to report on any aspect of the company's operations within a reasonable timeframe if asked by the GSC to do so. This means that they must have access to all areas of the operation and understand the information that arises from the business when it is obtained. In addition, directors will be expected to pro- actively report to the GSC any exceptional circumstances that potentially put their business in financial or legal jeopardy.
- ❖ must avoid conflicts of interest or declare them - at the very least, where they operate on behalf of more than one company, they must have discussed this with the respective controlling interests and be able to declare that all companies on whose behalf the act are comfortable with their situation.
- ❖ must not profit privately from the company's business at the expense of the company.
- ❖ must act independently of intimidation, coercion, influence and so forth.
- ❖ must not distribute company money in a way that doesn't benefit the company.
- ❖ should attend regular board meetings to assist with (6)
- ❖ should ensure minutes are kept and are drafted promptly at board meetings.
- ❖ should ensure that significant transactions are approved and noted to provide an account of the decision-making process - the GSC must be notified in any event if the company intends to significantly reduce its player protection funding, even if the proposed reduction doesn't create a protection shortfall.
- ❖ should take legal/financial advice if they know their company is in financial difficulty.
- ❖ should apply to the courts for relief if they think they have been negligent, have breached their duty or trust, etc.

If further detail is required, we recommend prospective directors visit the Financial Supervision Commission's website and obtain a copy of the "Guidance Note on the

responsibilities and duties of directors under the laws of the Isle of Man”.

4.3 How many roles can an official perform?

There is no legal limit to the number of roles an official can perform, or indeed how many organisations for which they can perform those roles. However, the controllers of the operator must have fully considered the appropriateness of multiple appointments and ensure that consideration has been given, and appropriate action taken to mitigate conflicts of interest. In practice, there will be limits to what an individual can do before workload or conflicting priorities erode or destroy their competence (e.g. a director responsible for driving sales also being the MLRO).

The GSC’s view is that the number of roles any one person can undertake should be restricted to six per role, e.g. one person can be a Director of up to 6 licensees as well as an Operations Manager for 6 licensees. So long as the GSC remains satisfied that the required functions are being undertaken by a competent person, it is unlikely to intervene in order to moderate an official’s duties.

Competence will be measured simply by that official’s ability to meet the expectations of their role as outlined in section 4.2 of this guidance.

If the GSC has reason to believe that an official is no longer able to competently discharge their functions they will call upon the licence holder to remedy the situation.

If after a period of time, the situation persists, the GSC may revoke the licence or suspend it pending the removal of the official or realignment of that official’s competence.

The GSC does not intend at this stage to formally test competence although it will maintain a working relationship with officials.

In some cases, however, the GSC mandates this competence formally (such as during licence application); in other cases, it will expect it on an ad hoc basis (such as when a problem arises, or the GSC has a query or return for the licence holder).

The GSC view the OM/DO role as having substantial contact with the licence holder’s day-to-day operations and not just as a ‘middleman’ through which to pass queries and requests.

This guidance is separate from the integrity rules which govern the ongoing personal conduct of DOs and OMs.

4.4 Events that officials must notify to the GSC.

The GSC must be notified when any of the following occur:

- ❖ An official (DO, OM, Director or MLRO) is convicted in any jurisdiction of a criminal offence.
- ❖ An article appears in the media that suggests an Isle of Man licenced operation has a legal, financial or operational problem including accusations of player dissent, cheating, suspicions over software and so on
- ❖ A Designated Official ceases to be a director of the license holder.
- ❖ A new director is appointed to the company. Please note that all on- Island directors must appear before the GSC and be approved before they can assume their duties; at its discretion the GSC may approve non-resident directors in their absence provided they

appear before the GSC when next on the island and within a reasonable timescale, usually no later than six months after the GSC's approval has been given.

- ❖ The beneficial ownership of the operator changes
- ❖ An official (DO, OM or MLRO) dies
- ❖ An official (DO, OM or MLRO) is likely to spend a substantial period of time either consecutively or in aggregate off the Island.
- ❖ The licence holder wishes to extend a sub-licence to a third party either on or off the Island.
- ❖ The licence holder is planning to commence or cease operations on the Island.
- ❖ The licence holder is close to liquidation or receivership.
- ❖ The licence holder is being targeted for a merger or a takeover bid where the beneficial owners or officials are likely to be reviewed or changed.
- ❖ The licence holder draws upon deposits and reserves.
- ❖ A business partner is given access to Isle of Man based servers under the terms of the OGRA network services licence.

4.5 How many officials can a license holder have?

There is no limit to the number of Designated Officials a company can have provided multiple Designated Officials do not cause a problem based on mixed accountability or availability.

The GSC will not approve a situation where some queries have to be routed to one Designated Official and other queries to another, based on the nature of the query and will, in such a case, nominate the Designated Official with who it will communicate.

In addition to any number of DOs, an organisation can appoint one Operations Manager. As with Designated Officials, an operator may employ a number of operations managers but only one will be considered the prime contact at any given time.

4.6 Who can the Commissioners call on to attend hearings and who needs to be approved by the GSC prior to commencing their duties?

When an application is put before the GSC for approval and heard by the GSC (having been prepared by the Inspectorate) key personnel are invited to a hearing. This section details who must attend and who may attend.

Furthermore, throughout the lifetime of the licence, it is possible for key personnel to change. This section also details when those changes must be notified to the GSC and whether or not the key personnel must await the GSC's approval.

4.6.1 Personnel who must attend the application hearing.

The following list explains who must, and who may attend the GSC hearing to obtain approval.

The following people **must** attend the hearing:

- ❖ The Designated Official
- ❖ The Operations Manager (if appointed)
- ❖ The On-Island directors

The following people may attend the hearing:

- ❖ The Beneficial Owners
- ❖ The MLRO
- ❖ The Off-Island directors
- ❖ Any additional guests are welcome, by prior notification to the GSC.

4.6.2 Notifications and approvals when key personnel change

All changes and potential changes in key personnel must be notified to the Inspectorate as soon as they become known to the controllers of the licensee.

In addition, the GSC must complete certain procedures before certain key personnel can begin their duties. These are detailed below:

Changes in beneficial ownership

Beneficial owners may not become involved in an Isle of Man licensed gambling operation until the GSC has conducted and concluded its diligence checks. All changes in ownership must be notified to the GSC, who may apply percentage shareholding thresholds to determine the nature of the checks that are required.

Changes in Designated Official or Operations Manager

New DOs and OMs may not commence their duties until they have been approved by the GSC. The GSC may determine its approval ahead of time (in the case of a person likely to become involved in a licensee's activities in the future).

In any event, any new DO or OM who has not already been before the GSC must meet with the inspectorate within the following time scales:

- ❖ Designated officials: within 6 months of approval
- ❖ Operations managers: within 1 month of approval

Changes in directors

All directors of an operation must be approved by the GSC before they commence their duties. As with DOs and OMs the GSC may determine its approval ahead of time.

On-Island directors must meet with the GSC before they can become involved with an Isle of Man operator; new non-Island directors who have not already been before the GSC may be approved by the GSC without appearing before it but will be requested to meet with the inspectorate within six months of their approval.

5. Costs of holding a license

In addition to the application fee of £5,250, payable at the beginning of the application process, the following costs may occur in the acquisition and maintenance of an OGRA licence. Our licence fees are listed on our website [here](#)

A sub-licence can be obtained instead if the Isle of Man based business uses the technology platform of an existing Isle of Man full-licence holder.

Particular arrangements may be made with specific applicants to cover the GSC's costs of inspection where special inspection regimes prevail – these will be agreed prior to approval.

Currently no levy is charged on operators however operators are required to make a proportionate contribution towards advancing education and research into, as well as support for, problem gambling.

In addition, online gambling which registers players attracts online gambling duty on a sliding scale from 1.5% down to 0.1%, except where the online gambling activity is considered pool betting in which case the duty is equal to the UK duty rate (15% at the time of writing).

Applicants are advised to contact officials within the Isle of Man Customs & Excise if they wish to understand the taxation requirements of an operation that offers mixed services.

6. Surrendering a license

The GSC understands that the business landscape can change; sometimes this change can be foreseen, on other occasions it is identified with little in the way of notice. In either situation the GSC's main priority will be to ensure that customers are considered in all stages of the departing process.

A sign-posted transition and choice are two elements the GSC will insist upon.

This guidance is not exhaustive but will look to deal with the two most common scenarios to date, which are:

- ❖ An operator winds up its business as it is no longer financially viable.
- ❖ An operator wishes to migrate its business to another jurisdiction.

Where an operator identifies that its model is no longer financially viable, it is rarely a surprise. Good accounting practice will have given the operator the ability to identify criteria which, if manifested, would require a re-think of the business.

Good communication with the GSC throughout this process is essential but in summary the GSC's instruction will be that:

- ❖ Players must be given a minimum of 30 days' notice that the operator is winding down its business.
- ❖ It must be made clear to customers (via as many channels of communication as practicable) that funds must be withdrawn.
- ❖ Consideration must be given to any bets or bonuses that were accepted from the player but that the operator will no longer be able to satisfy.
- ❖ It must be made clear to customers what will happen to any player funds which are held after the operator ceases to hold a license.
- ❖ The GSC will consider the operators circumstance but will likely insist on regular

reports during the wind-down process, which will identify the number of players with funds still on account and the balance of the players wallet. The objective will be for the operator to evidence that it is pro-actively repatriating funds to players in good time.

Where an operator identifies that it wishes to re-locate its business to another licensing jurisdiction:

- ❖ (as above) the GSC will insist that players are given a minimum of 30 days' notice that the operator will be relocating its business and that customers will no longer be protected under Manx legislation.
- ❖ It must be made clear to customers (via as many communication channels as practicable) that they can either choose to close down their accounts with the operator OR they can continue to retain the account on the understanding that alternative legislation may apply as of a specified date.
- ❖ Any customer that does not wish to retain their account must be able to close their account and receive all monies due without penalty (i.e. consideration must be given to ante-post bets or bonus' etc. which the operator will not be able to satisfy in the time remaining in which it is under the regulation of the GSC)
- ❖ The GSC will consider the operators circumstance but will likely insist on regular reports during the wind-down process, which will identify the number of players with funds still on account and the balance of the players wallet. The objective will be for the operator to evidence that it is pro-actively repatriating requested funds prior to departure and that customers understood the impact of the operator's re-location should they choose not to close their account.

Specific queries regarding licence surrenders and re-locations must always be discussed directly with the GSC.

Appendices

Appendix A: standard OGRA licence conditions (non-network services)

These license conditions apply to the holders of an OGRA licence. Those operators wishing to obtain an OGRA network services licence should also review the modifications that pertain to this section when such a licence is obtained – see appendix H.

Schedule 2

General Conditions of this Licence

1. The licensee must ensure that the games, gambling software and financial software offered are demonstrably secure, reliable, and capable of being audited by the retention of detailed audit trails in accordance with the applicable legislation.
2. The licensee must ensure compliance with all applicable legislation including regulations that are in force from time to time and must seek approval for any changes made to the system in accordance with such rules or procedures as the GSC may from time to time require.
3. The licensee shall consider its own legal position in relation to accepting or negotiating bets, stakes or play ("business") from another jurisdiction in which the licensee wishes to conduct business and shall consult with the GSC in this regard. This condition does not apply in respect of software supply. For the avoidance of doubt the licensee shall not rely on any statement or policy of the GSC in respect of the legal system or laws of any jurisdiction other than the Isle of Man for the purpose of determining whether or not it is legal to conduct the licensed activity in such other jurisdictions.
4. The licensee must hold the following value of reserves in a mechanism approved by the GSC and/or.
5. Provide the following value of security in a form approved by the GSC: -
 - a. In respect of players' funds paid to it and which are held in a designated client account as specified by the Participants' Money Regulations, zero percent of those funds.
 - b. In respect of players' funds paid to it and which are not held in a client account as specified by the Participants' Money Regulations, one hundred percent of those funds.
 - c. All players' funds paid to the licensee are held on trust irrespective of the mechanism used to protect them and players must be told and agree to the treatment of any interest and capital that arises as the result of the funds being held by the licensee.
 - d. Before players' funds may be moved from a client account to an alternate protection mechanism, the GSC must approve the mechanism which is the destination of the players' funds. This condition does not apply in respect of software supply.

6. Where the accepting or negotiating of bets and/or player registration takes place the licensee must not operate, or be associated or linked with, online gambling sites not regulated by the Act except with the consent of the GSC. If the GSC approves the association or link any reference or linked access to the associated gambling sites must be made through a web page that indicates that the player is leaving the jurisdictional control of the Isle of Man.
7. The licensee shall permit all activities permitted by this licence and any associated transactions to be the subject of random audit by or on behalf of the GSC.
8. The licensee must, if so, requested by the Treasury, take an active part in any forum or consultative body established by the Treasury relating to the operation and regulation of online gambling in the Isle of Man.
9. OGRA license holders are required to make a proportionate contribution, over the course of each year throughout the duration of the licence, to one or more organisation(s) that conducts research into the prevention and treatment of gambling related harm, develops harm prevention approaches and/or identifies and funds treatment of those harmed by gambling.

All licensees will, by the March 31st each year, declare the nature, value and the organisation or cause to which the contribution was made.

10. The licensee must commence online gambling and/or software supply pursuant to this licence within 9 months of the licence being granted.
11. The licensee must fully comply with any anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism provisions that apply to the business and/or any type of gambling permitted under Schedule 1 of this license.
12. No general restriction may be imposed by the licensee to exclude residents of the Isle of Man from placing bets or stakes with Isle of Man licenced online gambling sites except with the agreement of the GSC.
13. The licensee must, if requested by the GSC supply sufficient information from an independent source(s) to demonstrate the probity of suppliers of any gambling or financial software it operates.
14. The licensee must operate through trading account(s) in a bank located in the Isle of Man unless agreed otherwise with the Treasury. In addition, any bank accounts for trading or gambling purposes should be located in the Isle of Man unless agreed otherwise with the Treasury. This condition does not apply in respect of software supply.
15. The licensee shall maintain accounting systems approved by the GSC and shall conform with such internal and external accounting practices as the GSC may require.
16. The licensee shall as soon as practicable, and in any case not later than six months after the end of every accounting year, deliver to the GSC a copy of its accounts in the form required by the Companies Act 1982 or as defined by United Kingdom G.A.A.P and certified by a qualified auditor.
17. The licensee is required to demonstrate to the GSC compliance with all Advertising Standards Authority Codes and Industry self-regulatory Codes or such

other Codes as may be applicable.

18. The licensee where the acceptance or negotiating of bets or player registration takes place is required to provide a hyper-link(s) on its website to any problem gambling organisation that may be specified by the GSC in writing from time to time.
19. In the event that the licensee enters into a business-to-business relationship with an entity that is not licensed by the Isle of Man Gambling Supervision Commission the licensee shall use its best endeavours to ensure that those entities adhere to the Gambling Supervision Commission's core principles, namely: -
 - ❖ To keep the gambling industry crime free.
 - ❖ To protect the young and vulnerable.
 - ❖ To ensure that the facilities offered by licence holders are fair and that players receive their true winnings.
20. Further the licensee shall not bring the Island or its reputation into disrepute either itself or through its relationship with third parties.
21. The licensee's licence, and its right to refer to the Isle of Man as its source of regulation, only applies to those services offered from the Isle of Man and by the party granted this licence. Services offered by the licensee from a jurisdiction other than the Isle of Man and/or by any part of its group shall not make reference either directly or indirectly to the GSC or the licence granted hereunder.
22. The licensee must not allow a person (or persons considered by the GSC to be acting in concert) to assume or increase ownership of the licensed company, directly or via other holdings or arrangements, unless: -
 - ❖ The ownership of the licensed company is wholly public; or
 - ❖ The ownership of that person (or those persons acting in concert) afterwards is 5 percent or less of the licensed company; or
 - ❖ The ownership of that person (or those persons acting in concert) has been approved by the GSC and noted in the minutes of a GSC meeting; or
 - ❖ The licensee has obtained the written permission of the inspectorate for that person (or those persons acting in concert) to assume or change their ownership prior to the GSC's approval.
23. The license of a company shall ordinarily be considered suspended if any person has ownership of the licensed company in contravention of this condition unless the GSC provides confirmation, in writing, that the licensed company can continue to operate.
24. In the event that the licensee fails to abide by any licence condition, the GSC shall be entitled to terminate the licence in accordance with the terms of section 13(4)(b) of the Online Gambling Regulation Act 2001.

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

COMING INTO FORCE (of licences)

A licence comes into force when it has been issued to the licensee. Prior to coming into force, an applicant will have received the GSC's approval for the issue of a licence.

A licence must be obtained and any fee paid prior to its issue.

When a licence comes into force, the licensee is subject to the compliance regime of the GSC and must start to submit all required returns and accounts. A licence coming into force does not oblige the licensee to immediately commence operations; a period of up to nine months is stipulated in the licence conditions to allow an operator to obtain hardware, software testing certificates and beta test results as well as other facilities before 'going live' with players.

The licence renewal date is the anniversary of the date the physical licence is issued and comes into force.

DESIGNATED OFFICIAL (commonly abbreviated to DO)

A person appointed by an applicant or licence holder from amongst its directors to represent that organisation's interests in the Isle of Man. Designated Officials should be resident on the Island. If a Designated Official cannot reside full time on the Isle of Man, they must appoint an operations Manager to represent them in their absence.

GRANTING OF APPROVAL (of licences)

Approval is the permission given by the GSC for the operator to conduct their business.

Approval usually occurs shortly after the GSC's hearing and is notified to the applicant and its representatives by the Inspectorate. Once approval has been obtained, the applicant has three months within which to obtain the licence. Failure to obtain the licence within this period results in the GSC's approval lapsing and a fresh application being required in order to re-obtain approval.

Approval may be granted on an organisation which has no immediate intentions to operate in the Isle of Man in order to give them comfort that they could establish in the Isle of Man with no further licensing requirements (assuming no changes occur between the granting of the licence and its coming into force). This is called a shadow licence.

MONEY LAUNDERING REPORTING OFFICER (commonly abbreviated to MLRO)

An individual responsible for reporting on anti-money laundering activities undertaken by a licensee. MLROs will only be approved by the GSC if they have experience in the role and have unfettered access to the board of the company.

NETWORK SERVICES LICENCE.

An OGRA licence which carries a schedule which permits an operator to allow a non-Isle of Man licensed business partner's players to use its infrastructure without the requirement to re-register those players.

OPERATIONS MANAGER (commonly abbreviated to OM)

A person appointed by an applicant or licence holder to represent the Designated Official on the Island in their absence.

Operations Managers are commonly sourced from corporate service providers (CSPs) whose officials automatically qualify as Operations Managers under section 10A of OGRA, but an Operations Manager may be any citizen who is resident on the Island and whom the GSC deems appropriate.

Currently the GSC considers anyone who meets the competency criteria laid out in section 4 of this guidance to be appropriate.

OGRA

The Online Gambling Regulations Act 2001 which sets legislative prerequisites for online gambling activity arising in the Isle of Man. OGRA is supported by a group of OGRA regulations, all of which can be accessed via the GSC legislation web page.

Appendix C: Summary of technical checks

Extracted from The Online Gambling (Systems Verification) (No. 2) Regulations 2007 as amended by the Online Gambling (Software Supplier Licensing) Regulations 2019.

Subject to the terms of the Regulations, before any gaming or lottery is conducted by a participant by means of any system the operator must produce to the Commissioners a certificate in writing by a party approved for that purpose by the Commissioners or be satisfied at the time that the software and services are listed on the GSC's register of certified software and services.

The obligation under Regulation 2(1) arises:

- ❖ prior to the Operator permitting the System to be accessed by any Participant; and,
- ❖ on or before the expiry of the periods specified in the Operator's licence under the Act.

The System must:

- ❖ follow the rules for Online Gambling published to the Participant or potential Participant prior to it placing any sums with the Operator for participation in Online Gambling
- ❖ provide over specified periods no more than the house advantage (if any) agreed by the Commissioners with the Operator
- ❖ integrate contingencies for loss of continuity of play.
- ❖ if utilised in any peer-to-peer game, ensure that over the specified periods that no one Player has any advantage over any other Player playing the same game.

Both the Online Gambling and financial transactions software must be congruent and secure.

The System must satisfy the following criteria for randomness for any Gaming or Lottery (save where different rules apply and have been approved by the Commissioners and published to the Participant or potential Participant prior to its participation), following Schneier: -

- ❖ the data must be randomly generated, passing appropriate statistical non static output results tests of randomness (e.g., Marsaglia's "Diehard" set of tests) uniformly distributed over the set range.
- ❖ the data must be unpredictable, i.e. it must not be computationally feasible to predict what the next number will be, given complete knowledge of the algorithm or hardware generating the sequence, and all previously generated numbers; and the series cannot reliably be reproduced, i.e. if the sequence generator is activated again with the same input (as exactly as humanly possible) it will produce two completely unrelated random sequences.

The Operator must disclose [to the accredited test facility] the methodology of any random seeding and any seeding must be proven to result in an unpredictable output.

The outcome of any Game or Lottery, as the case may be, and the return to the Participant, must be independent of the CPU, memory, disk or other components used in the computer or other device used by the Participant.

The Game or Lottery outcome, as the case may be, must not be affected by the effective bandwidth, link utilisation, bit error rate or other characteristic of the communications channel between the System and the computer or other device used by the Participant.

The System must be able to display for each Game or Lottery, as the case may be, the following information on the current page or on a page directly accessible from the current page via a hyperlink: -

- ❖ the name and rules of the Game and/or Lottery
- ❖ restrictions on play
- ❖ instructions on how to play, including a pay-table for all prizes and special features.
- ❖ the Participant's current account balance and currency or currencies utilised by the Participant to participate in the Game and/or Lottery.
- ❖ unit and total sums permitted to be played by a Participant in relation to the Online Gambling
- ❖ the return to the Participant, disregarding any exercise of skill by him.
- ❖ Pursuant to the testing of the System, the percentage of total sums returned to Participant in relation to all house Games or Lottery, as the case may be, offered by the Operator.

Any software utilised must be capable of providing for congruent and secure betting and financial transactions.

The System must be able to display the following information on the current page or on a page directly accessible from the current page via a hyperlink: -

- ❖ the rules regarding the placing of bets, including circumstances in which the Operator will void a bet, the treatment of errors, the treatment of late bets and the treatment of withdrawals and non-runners.
- ❖ restrictions on the placing of any bets
- ❖ the Participant's current account balance and the currency or
- ❖ currencies utilised to place bets.
- ❖ the means by which a winning bet will be determined.

The Operator shall ensure that the integrity of the Betting transactions can be assured and that Participant transactions are not lost through System failures or unauthorized modification or access by a third party.

Appendix D: The Client Account in more detail

Under the Online Gambling (Participants' Money) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Online Gambling (Participants' Money) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, operators may protect player funds to fulfil their obligations to licence condition 4 using a client account.

The client account mechanism does not displace other methods of fund protection and indeed can be utilised in conjunction with other approved methods to provide full protection.

To qualify as a player fund protection mechanism, the client account must:

- ❖ be held by a recognised bank (one licensed under section 7 of the Financial Supervision Act 2008); or
- ❖ an overseas deposit-taking institution (one that carries on the regulated activity of deposit taking within the meaning of the Financial Services Act 2008 outside the Island and is regulated for that purpose)
- ❖ include the words "client account" in its title.
- ❖ have been created for the purposes of protecting player funds; and
- ❖ be kept separate from money that isn't player money or money deemed as player money by the regulations.

The operator is required at all times to maintain sufficient funds in the client account such that if the company became insolvent, there would be sufficient money to refund all players' funds. Any player funds lodged with a third party (e.g. payment service provider) and due to the operator but not yet arrived, must be temporarily covered by the operator.

Three different categories of money are protected under the regulations and are deemed player money:

- ❖ Players' money.
- ❖ Money that the operator has recognised as on the player's account (what a player considers he or she has available when accessing their account online) even though that money may not yet have arrived from a payment service provider with whom the operator has a separate business arrangement regarding the frequency of reconciliation payments, etc. In this case, the operator must make up the shortfall until the money arrives in order to satisfy the requirement to cover all player funds at any given time; and
- ❖ Money that the operator may place into the account to anticipate future player funds and to reduce the number of transactions that are necessary to service the account. For example, an operator may lodge £1,000 in the client account, paying a single

charge for the transaction, then simply allocate the next fifty deposits of £20 internally using its systems whilst processing those deposits in some way other than transferring them into the client account.

The client account can be frozen under a number of circumstances:

- ❖ bankruptcy proceedings are in progress anywhere in the world relating to the licensee.
- ❖ The GSC has directed that the licensee be treated as in default.

The GSC has powers under the regulations to notify the banks holding the client accounts of a default situation so that they can exercise their duty of care over the client money.

A copy of the regulations can be found on the GSC's website

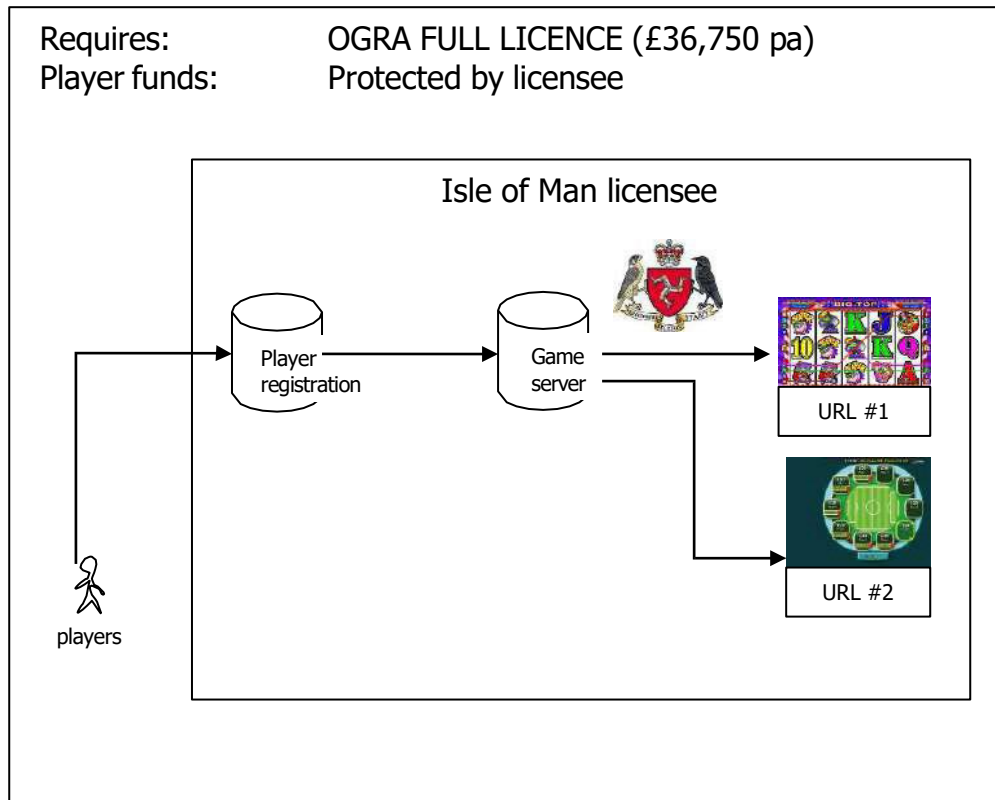
Appendix F:

A gazetteer of operating structures (including structures possible under the network services licence).

The following diagrams outline the essential operating architectures and licensing options for common gambling operations. Note that the terms "game server", "registration server", etc. are not intended to suggest that separate equipment is required.

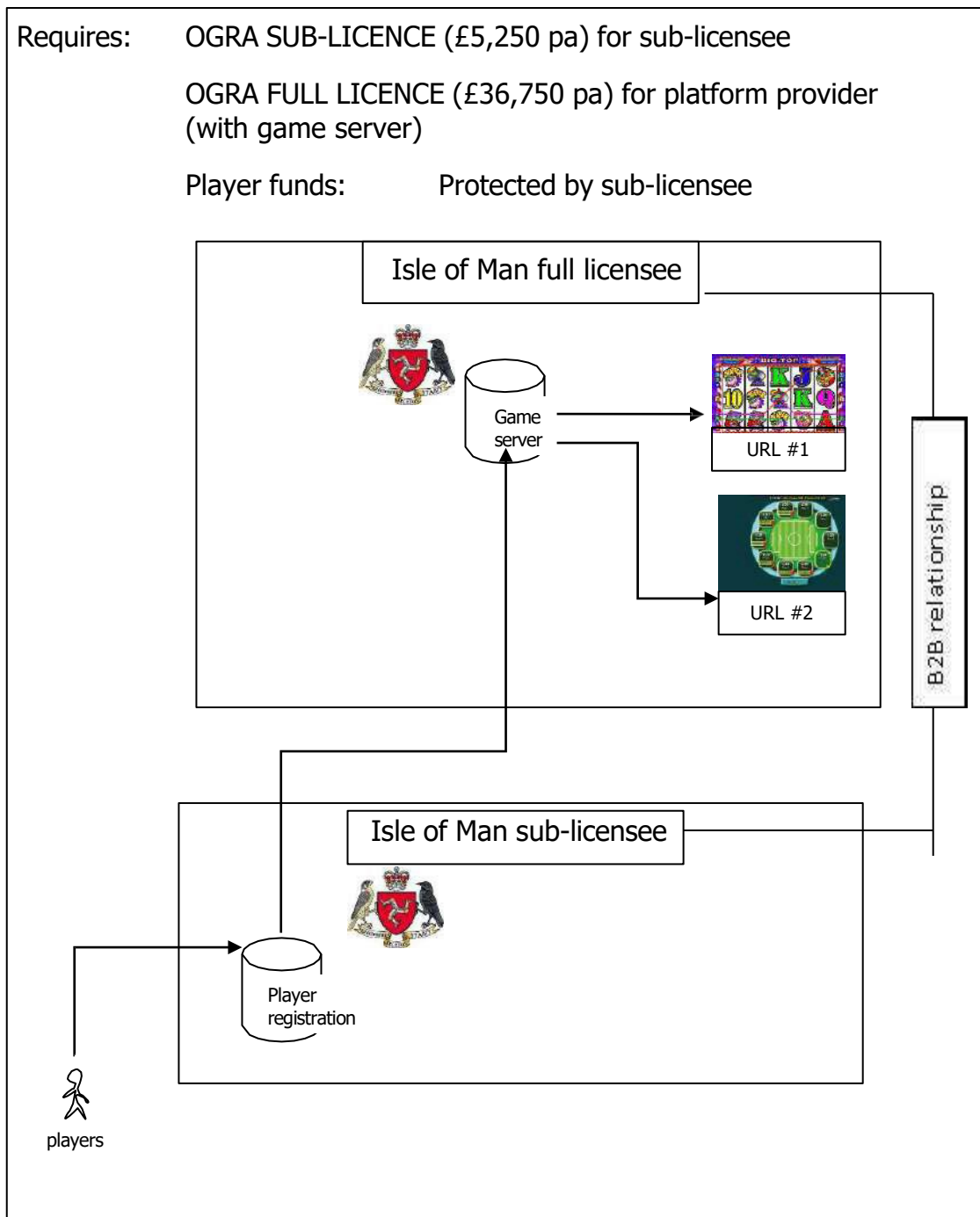
Standard B2C model

Players on the internet navigate to the licensee's registration page, register with the licensee. They can then access games on the licensee's game server which offers games on any number of URLs.



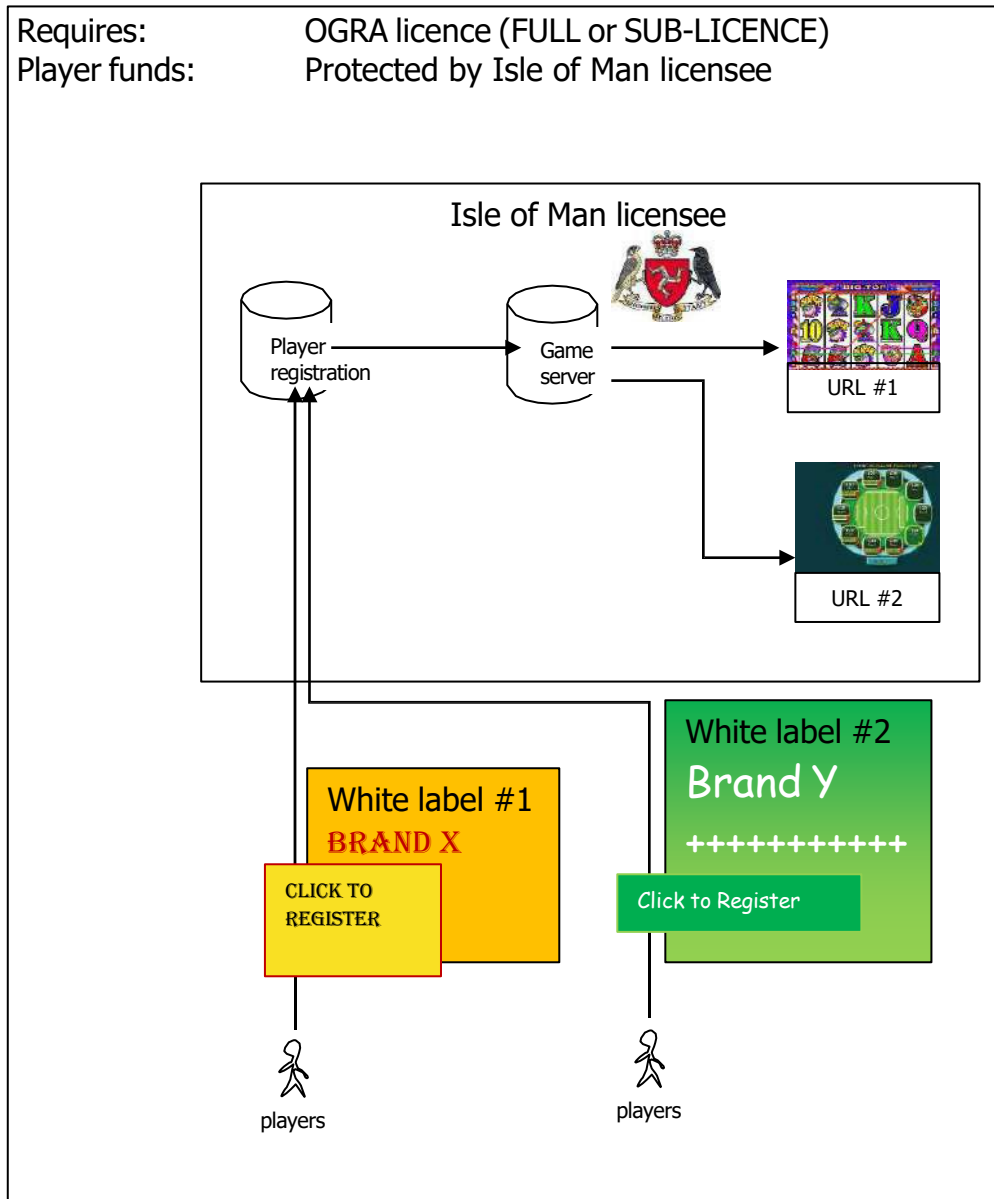
Sub-licensing

Players register with the sub-licensee. They may then access games provided by the IOM business partner's game server. The business partner must hold a full OGRA licence. To qualify as a sub-licensee, the operator may only use the services of one IOM-licensed software/platform provider at any given time. The full OGRA licensee however can offer its services to as many sub- licensees as it wishes and may register its own players directly as well.



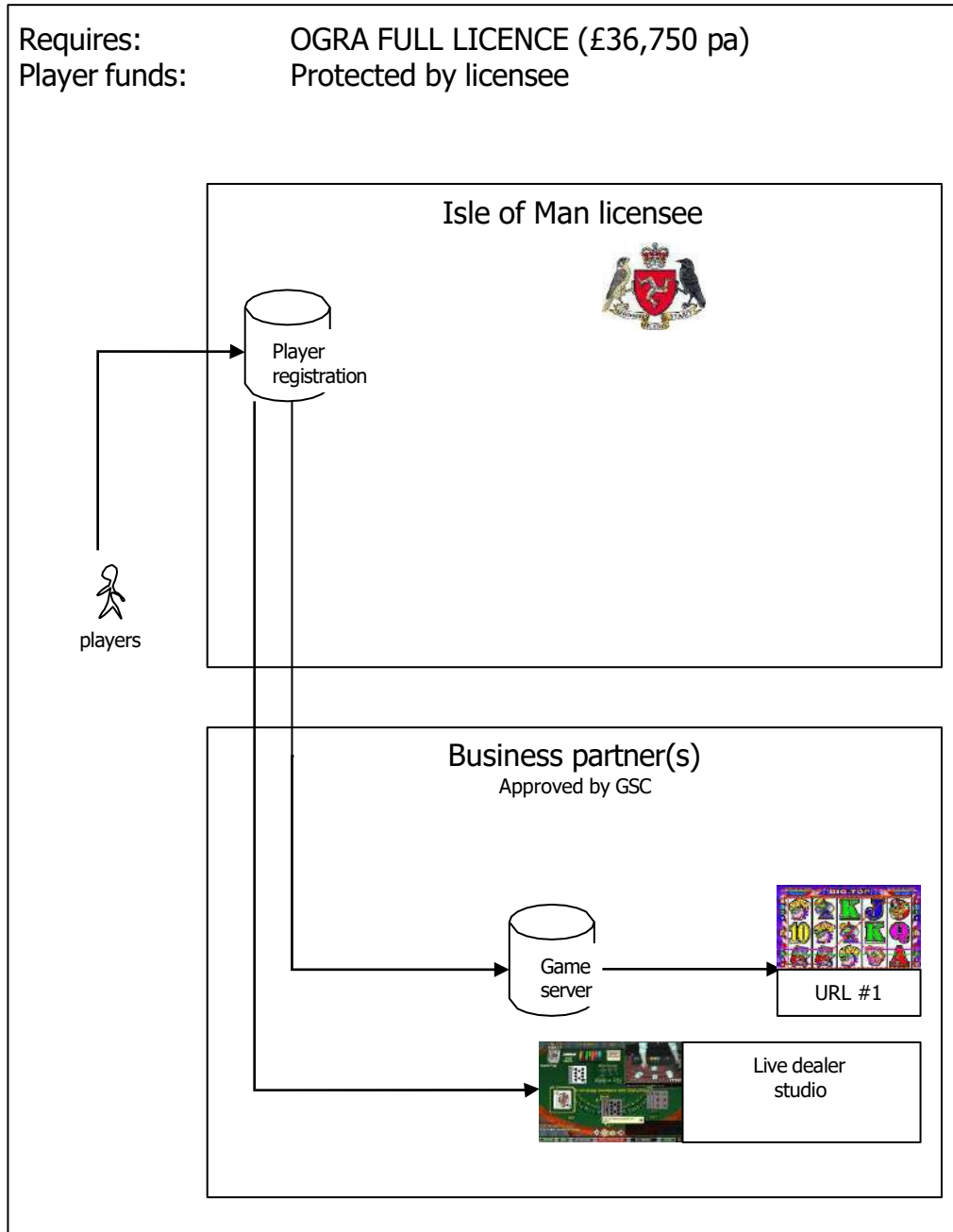
White labels

Players register with the licensee. The white label sites are treated as though they were different URLs of the licensee even though the control of the URL and its marketing (for instance) may be controlled by a different company and the games may be skinned differently to reflect the brand. The OGRA licence covers any number of white labels sites.



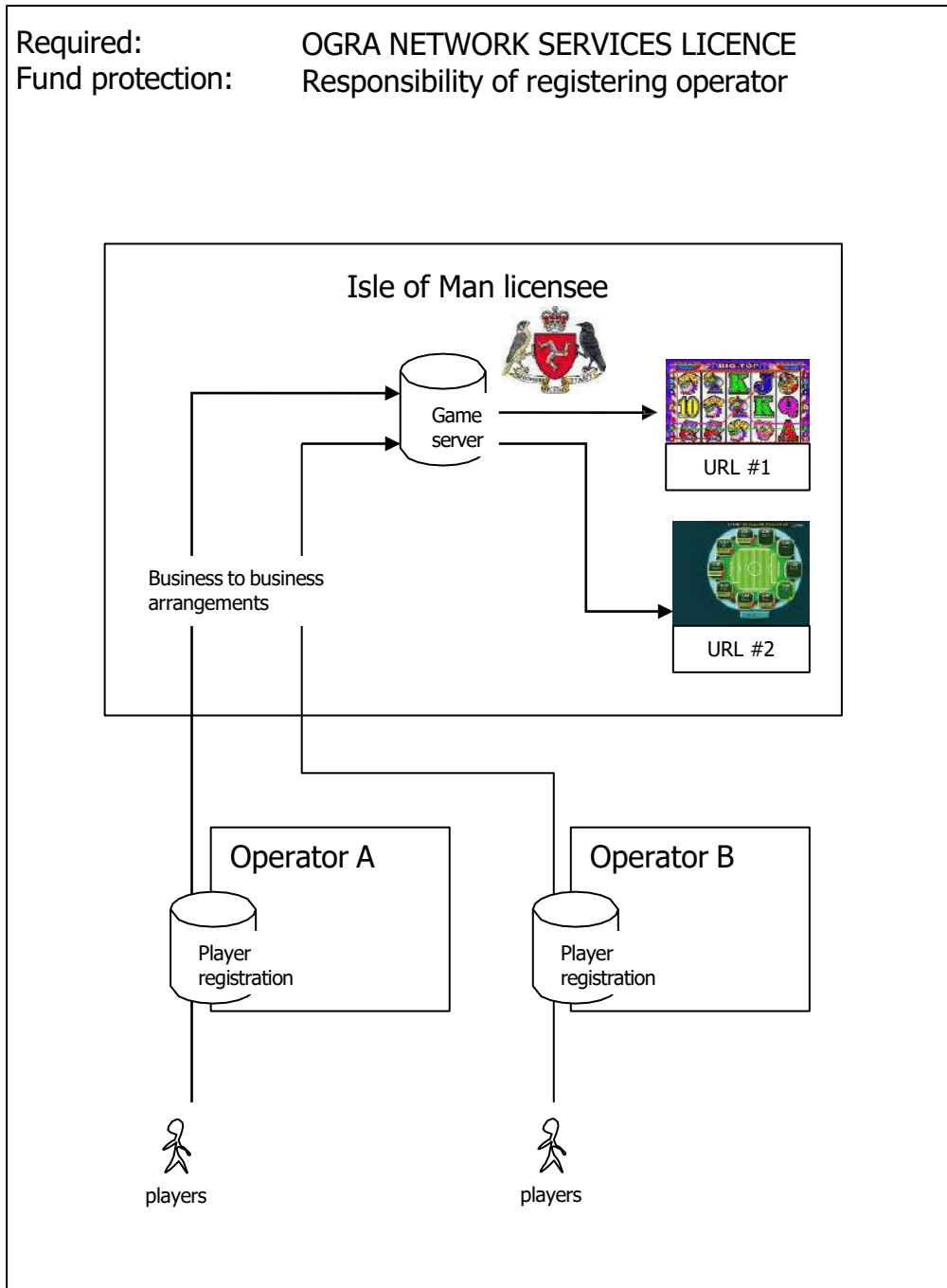
Remote gameplay (e.g. Live dealing operations, non-Isle of Man game servers/networks)

Players register with the licensee. When playing certain games, they are transferred to the game server of a business partner which is approved by the GSC. The GSC may seek enhanced player protection and data protection agreements protect players' interests.



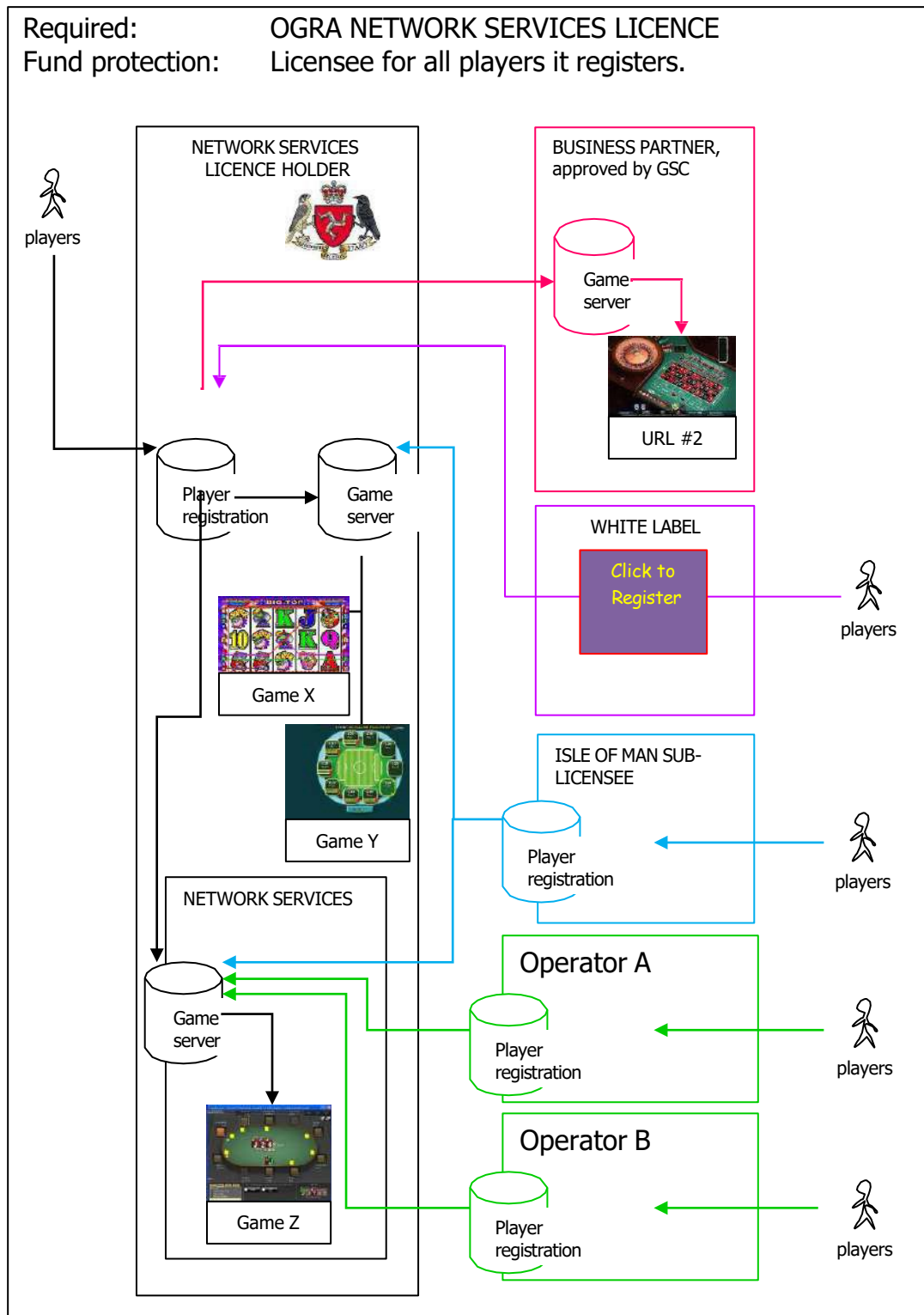
Operations under a network services licence – non-registered player activity only

Players register with their respective operators. Under a B2B agreement, those players may take part in games on the Isle of Man licensee's game server.



Combined activities under a network services licence

The diagram below shows the holder of a NETWORK SERVICES licence undertaking many types of activity under the single NETWORK SERVICES licence.



Additional models

While this appendix outlines most of the structures that commonly occur, the GSC always remains open-minded about future models. Operators wishing to effect variations or fresh architectures are invited to discuss them with the GSC who will always be happy to explain their consumer protection requirements within any given model.

Appendix G: The network services licence in detail

Introduction

On 20 July 2011, the Online Gambling Regulation (Amendment) (Network Services) Regulations 2011 came into effect.

These regulations made changes to a number of regulatory requirements relating to player registration, the technical specifications of gaming systems and to the fees structure.

This appendix summarises the changes and how they impact operators wishing to obtain the network services licence and may be useful for those seeking to understand the possible models available for licensing in the Isle of Man.

Summary of the network services legislation

Any licence issued which refers to "Network Services" becomes a network services licence. This reference will be noted on schedule 1.

A network services licence costs £52,500 per annum. When a network services licence is held, an operator may add a product which allows foreign-registered players to be supplied to the licence holder's server without obliging the licence holder to register those players.

The exclusion regulations confirm that the foreign operator supplying players to a network services operator does not require an Isle of Man licence.

Licensees will not be required to protect the funds of non-Isle of Man registered players that take part in games upon their equipment. The network services licence allows all of the privileges of the OGRA full licence and so the licensee will remain accountable for protecting the funds of any players who they do register.

The network services licence in detail

The current OGRA licence consists of seven parts – a front page, five schedules, and an amendment summary.

- ❖ The front page cites the operator's details and carries the seal of the
- ❖ GSC.
- ❖ Schedule 1 details the activities the operator may undertake.
- ❖ Schedule 2 outlines the general conditions that apply to all activities.
- ❖ Schedule 3 left blank (used only for network services)
- ❖ Schedule 4 left blank (used only for network services)
- ❖ Schedule 5 outlines any live studio facility approved for use under the license along with any specific requirements the operator must adhere to, and in the case of a sub-licence the full licensees from whom the sub-licensee can source facilities.

The network services licence also consists of seven parts – a front page, five schedules, and an amendment summary.

- ❖ The front page serves the same function as the current front page.
- ❖ Schedule 1 details the activities. It is the inclusion here of the words “Network Services” which creates the network services license, and which obliges the annual fee to shift from £36,750 to £52,500.
- ❖ Schedule 2 outlines general conditions that apply to all activities.
- ❖ Schedule 3 outlines the specific conditions related to non-network games.
- ❖ Schedule 4 outlines the specific conditions related to network services offered.
- ❖ Schedule 5 outlines any live studio facility approved for use under the license along with any specific requirements the operator must adhere to, and in the case of a sub-licence the full licensees from whom the sub-licensee can source facilities.

It should be noted that existing OGRA licence holders will continue with their existing licences unless they wish to move to a network services licence, at which point the licence is re-issued.

The application process

The application is essentially the same as the OGRA application process. There are some differences in the process to include checks on elements that apply to network services only and to exclude checks that are not relevant.

Where a licensee intends to undertake network and non-network activity, the GSC will examine the new element before allowing it to be added to the licence, just as it does when an operator wishes to add a new product.

In the case of an existing operator upgrading to a network services licence, the GSC will examine the network services to be offered. In the case of a network services operator wishing to add gaming products, the gaming products will be examined.

The compliance routine

While much of the compliance checks are common to all OGRA licence holders, one of the licence conditions in the new schedule 4 obliges the network services operator to notify the GSC when adding a network services partner (a foreign operator supplying players). The GSC need not approve the partner before it is added but the GSC will use this information to perform periodic sweeps of the internet to ensure that the partner isn't attracting adverse publicity to the Island.

Version Control

Date of revision	Revision summary	Version
31 March 2009		1.1
15 January 2010		1.2
14 October 2010		1.3
16 December 2010		1.4
26 September 2011		1.5
14 December 2011		1.6
29 October 2012		1.7
17 April 2013		1.8
4 March 2015		1.9
19 May 2017		1.10
16 May 2018	Amendment of the requirement to provide two hard copies of the entire application bundle to one hard copy	1.11
22 February 2019	Various amendments allowing for licensing under the new 2019 software supplier regulations. Appendix A general conditions of license replaced with new conditions to reflect software supply. Changes Appendix C extract from the Online Gambling (Systems Verification) (No. 2) Regs 2007 amended to reflect changes made by the Online Gambling (Software Supplier Licensing) Regulations 2019	1.12
16 July 2019	regulations added. Appendix E AML Checklist removed. Appendix G renamed Appendix F Appendix H renamed Appendix G	1.13
6 July 2023	Changes to application and license fees	1.14
23 August 2023	Update to Player Funds	1.15
15 February 2025	Updates to format and definition of AML roles	1.16