

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee
Task Force on Business Liaison Groups**

***E-services and Measures to Improve Guidance and Support
for Licensing of Hotels, Guesthouses, Clubhouses, Karaoke
Establishments and Entertainment Trades***

Purpose

This paper briefs members on the initiatives taken forward by the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) to provide e-licensing services and improve guidance and support services for licence application.

Background

2. To strive for continuous improvement in its licensing services, OLA devises new business facilitation measures from time to time to enhance the quality of the services with a view to reducing trades' compliance burden. To meet the rising expectations and changing needs of the businesses under the "new normal", the Government has pledged to implement e-licensing services for all licensing applications by mid-2022 as part of our commitment to develop Hong Kong into a smart city.

New Business Facilitation Measures

Provision of online services for licensing

3. To enable the business community to apply for their licences, make payment, collect licences and track application status online without the need to visit the licensing offices in coping with the new challenges posed by the pandemic, OLA will provide e-licensing services for all 12 licences under its administration (as listed at Appendix) in phases from end 2021 to mid-2022 –

- (a) E-submission: Licence applicants will be allowed to fill in and submit their licence application forms and supporting documents (except layout plans) online through the government's central e-form platform anytime and anywhere. Applicants can also make use of iAM Smart for login, authentication and digital signing.
- (b) E-payment: After approval of the application, general demand notes for payment of licence/permit fees and related charges will be issued to applicants who can opt to make payment online through internet banking, PPS, Faster Payment System or e-cheque.
- (c) E-licence: Licence applicants can also choose to receive the licences in electronic copy online through emails without the need to collect them in person at service counters.
- (d) E-tracking: The Application Tracking Facility Open-up system for hotel/guesthouse licensing has been revamped and launched since October 2020 to facilitate applicants' online checking of the application status.

4. The above e-initiatives will enhance the user experience, reduce the time and costs of applications and increase access by the trades to licensing services, especially during the pandemic. They will benefit the corresponding trades including hotels, guesthouses, clubhouses, karaoke establishments, amusement game centres and other entertainment related trades.

Enhanced guidelines on licensing requirements of ventilation systems

5. The ventilation requirements for licence applications for hotels, guesthouses, clubhouses and karaoke establishments are currently under the purview of fire services requirements and specified as part of the General Fire Safety Requirements in the Letters of Requirements¹ (LoR) or scattered among different parts of the LoR. To help applicants better understand the specific requirements to facilitate their compliance and ensure speediest processing, the ventilation requirements will be extracted and presented under

¹ A Letter of Requirement is a document setting out the licensing requirements which the licence applicant needs to comply with before a licence can be granted to the premises.

a “designated” item or section for easy follow-up by the applicants and their works contractors. The initiative will be implemented by end 2021.

Enhancement of online search function for licensed hotels and guesthouses

6. The online search function for licensed hotels and guesthouses on both OLA’s webpages and Mobile App will be enhanced such that the information of licensed premises will no longer be categorised into hotels or guesthouses. Cross-category searching will be allowed and patrons can more readily search licensed hotels/guesthouses solely based on their names or addresses. The enhanced online search function will facilitate patrons to choose licensed premises or report unlicensed premises to OLA, which will better protect the interest of the trades as unlicensed premises could be identified more easily. The initiative will be implemented by end 2021.

Provision of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on Hotel and Guesthouse Licence Application

7. Although a series of comprehensive guidelines were issued to promulgate the updated licensing requirements since 1.12.2020, many trade members requested to have brief materials on popular topics for their reference. In response, OLA has devised a set of FAQs on Hotel and Guesthouse Licence Application and present the licensing requirements in layman’s terms and in a concise manner. The above-mentioned FAQs have already been posted on the website of OLA for easy reference by applicants since end June 2021.

Way Forward

8. Members are invited to note the content of the paper and offer comments, if any. They are also encouraged to make greater use of the e-licensing services to be provided to reap the benefits.

Appendix

12 licences under OLA to be provided with e-licensing services

1. Hotel/Guesthouse Licence
2. Club-House Certificate of Compliance
3. Bedspace Apartment Licence
4. Karaoke Establishment Licence/Permit
5. Amusement Game Centre Licence
6. Amusements with Prizes Licence (Annual)
7. Amusements with Prizes Licence (Short-term)
8. Trade Promotion Competition Licence
9. Mahjong/Tin Kau Licence
10. Tombola Licence
11. Public Dance Hall Licence
12. Lottery Licence