

## **Video Submissions**

We at Channel U want to help all the artists out there in ensuring that the videos that you produce to represent your art are within the Ofcom guidelines that we have to adhere to.

We do not want you to go to unnecessary expense only to have it rejected so we have put together this guide to video submissions that explains the Ofcom regulations and our panel selection process.

Ofcom are pretty fair but strict and we have to abide by their regulations as if we don't we could get hit by large financial penalties or even worse closure of the channel which is not what any wants. So please read this section carefully as it gives you all the nitty gritty that you need.

### **Video Content – due to Ofcom regulations Channel U can not make any exceptions**

Channel U is licensed and regulated by Ofcom. By undertaking to broadcast your videos Channel U takes responsibility for the content contained. Your videos are Channel U's programming and must conform to the same rules as any programme show on the television.

The same rules apply to all programmes such as Eastenders and the Big Brother. In addition Channel U has further standards in terms of the showing of lyrical reference to violence and use of weapons.

The regulations under the Ofcom Programming Codes fall into three main areas:

1. To ensure that the widest possible range of television and radio services are made available and that each must be of high quality.
2. Through its powers Ofcom must provide adequate protection for audiences (what it likes to call Citizens and Consumers) against offensive or harmful material.
3. In addition, it has a duty to protect citizens from being victims of unfair reporting or any invasion of privacy.

The Ofcom Broadcasting Codes can be viewed online at the following address:

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/codes/bcode/>

To make things even more difficult, some laws laid down by Europe also apply to British broadcasting.

Ofcom places primary attention to the 'Protection of under the 18's and children'.

The rules say that 'Children are people under the age of fifteen years' and that:

- Due care must be taken over the physical and emotional welfare and the dignity of people under eighteen who take part or are otherwise involved in programmes.

This is irrespective of any consent given by the participant or by a parent, guardian or other person over the age of eighteen in loco parentis".

- "People under eighteen must not be caused unnecessary distress or anxiety by their involvement in programmes or by the broadcast of those programmes."

You MUST agree that all consents, clearances and other authorizations have been obtained from performers in the video, including parental consent, if any performer is under the age of 16 years (unless incidental). Incidental means a child or young person walking past or waiting at a bus stop during the filming of the video.

At this point it is important that you understand that Channel U viewers are VERY young:-

During the daytime approximately 10% of the viewers are UNDER 15 years old. Also 20% of the viewers are under 18 during the day time.

Television viewing figures for all TV station can be seen on the official UK TV ratings website, BARB. <http://www.barb.co.uk>

Overall 60% of Channel U viewers are under the age of 25.

### **Applying the Rules**

Channel U applies the rules as we think fit and appropriate. As said previously the same rules apply to all TV stations. However, stations such as MTV Base, Flaunt, Kiss TV and B4 for example are entitled to apply the rules as they think fit. MTV is a world-wide broadcaster supported by large legal teams and million of pounds. If they choose to show certain videos, images or play lyrics we refuse, it is their choice. Fines for breaking Ofcom Codes can be £50,000 and even the cancellation of a licence. Channel U cannot afford such fines or penalties.

### **Protecting Young People**

Twenty percent of the Ofcom Broadcasting Codes apply specifically to protecting young people and children.

Meaning of "children": Children are people under the age of fifteen years.

Meaning of "appropriate scheduling": Appropriate scheduling should be judged according to: the nature of the content; the likely number and age range of children in the audience, taking into account school time, weekends and holidays; the start time and finish time of the programme; the nature of the channel or station and the particular programme; and the likely expectations of the audience for a particular channel or station at a particular time and on a particular day.

Examining these in more detail, the definition of a child is clear.

However the nature of the channel or station and the expectations of the audience does allow some consideration in respect of the things we show. Channel U is an Urban music video channel and therefore not a channel showing Gardening programmes or Factual History programmes. People tune in to the station in the likelihood of knowing and understanding what they are likely to see and hear.

The reality is; it is your parents and other parents that see things on Channel U that they find objectionable or offensive. We understand that you, do not complain, it is other people that write letters to us and Ofcom about things they find offensive or unacceptable.

Ofcom is very specific about protecting young people watching in the daytime and makes several rules about drugs, alcohol, sex and violence.

- Drugs, smoking, solvent and alcohol – Under 18's (Daytimes) these should NOT be featured in any way unless in certain circumstances where a form of educational message is being delivered.
- Drugs, smoking, solvent and alcohol should NOT be condoned, encouraged or glamorised in any video that might be seen by people under 18. Violence and dangerous behaviour – Under 18's (Daytimes)

- Violence, its after-effects and descriptions of violence, whether verbal or physical, must not be shown when children are likely to watching.
- Verbal or physical violence that is easily imitated by children in a manner that is harmful or dangerous must not be shown in the daytime.
- Dangerous behaviour or the portrayal of dangerous behaviour that can be easily copied by children must not be shown.
- Offensive language, Sex and Nudity – Under 18's (Daytimes)

Clearly this must not be shown or heard at a time when young people are watching.

### **After 21:00 - The Watershed**

This is a time of the day when it is generally accepted that no children are watching television. This is the time when it is considered that only adult viewers are watching.

Ofcom states the following:

- Meaning of "the watershed": The watershed only applies to television. The watershed is at 2100. Material unsuitable for children should not, in general, be shown before 2100 or after 0530.

Like all television broadcasters we work on the assumption that people watching after 9.0pm are able to make decisions about what they see and hear. Adults are judged to be able to make appropriate decisions and choices about the content and nature of programming. For instance most swear words and some sexual images can be justified in the context of the programming. Many minor drug and violent references are, in most cases, regarded as passable in the context because adults can make informed decisions. In other words adults understand that some things are not for real and form part of a performance and therefore cannot or should not be influenced by them.

The watershed is not however the time to show everything or anything. The Ofcom Rules state that as a broadcaster, Channel U, must be able to justify ALL content that is shown.

### **We cannot approve:**

- Nudity – Images must not show genitalia etc. This applies even when partially covered by clothes/underwear.
- Sex Images – Stimulation etc (including breasts) and intercourse.
- Drug Images – Injecting, crack pipes, dealing, preparation of Class A drug material.
- Violent Images and lyrics – Beatings, gang fights, shootings or their after effects.
- Weapons – Images and lyrical reference to ANY weapon used in a way to cause harm such as guns, knives, hammers, swords, axes or any opportune item that could be considered a weapon. We reserve the right to decide.

We appreciate that the nature of Urban music and videos can sometimes reflect up front images and lyrics. However we have the right to maintain editorial privileges at the extreme but prefer to offer guidance contained here.

## **Getting your video on Channel U**

If you have read above you will know that the watershed starts at 9.0 pm. This is when we can exercise more freedom in judging videos for late showing.

In the daytime we are able to show around 200 to 230 videos each day (remember some are seen two three or four times over). In the night, the number of videos per night is usually just less than 100. Therefore, you have more chance of having your video played during the day, (nearly twice as much) than at night.

You must decide if you are making a video that you want to be seen in the day or just at night or both.

### **How we decide?**

Well you won't believe this but we start by wanting to include every video we look at, we do not start by looking to reject videos.

In most cases we do not look at the artist's name before watching the video, we just play the video. In this way we are not influenced by major or recognised names, this makes everyone equal and judged by the submitted video.

### **Who decides?**

No single person decides on the acceptance of a video. At least once a week a panel of three people view submissions.

A further process is also used (Ofcom compliance) for some videos that may contain lyrics or images that could breach Broadcasting Codes. In these cases we often provide feedback in the form of suggested edits or notify of an after 9.0pm play only.

### **What's the secret?**

There isn't one, unless you count common sense. We judge videos first on technical quality. This is all clear and explained but we still reject 50% of videos on poor or over modulated sound or video drop-out/pixilation etc.

### **The big issue?**

We receive 30 plus videos a week and the standards improve all the time.

Channel U has only around 300 videos on the playlist at any one time and in reality the standards increase regularly. We do receive videos that are clearly musically out of tune or just boring or lack talent. We also receive videos that embrace gun or drug culture. We have to make serious decisions and it is hard to reject. Where possible we offer guidance.

### **I've found the Channel U phone number**

We are a small company and cannot spend hours discussing individual video submissions. No amount of telephoning or emailing if going to influence, if anything it is going to work against you.

### **Can I bribe someone?**

No. An unapproved video is unlikely for technical reasons, even to be shown but in any event everyone knows at Channel U that unapproved videos could cost us our jobs not just through misconduct but because of compliance issues leading to fines and possible closure by Ofcom.

## **I met someone who said that they are from Channel U and can get my video on**

Most likely a liar and cheat. We understand there are people who claim to be 'agents' for Channel U that claim for a fee they can get a video on. Any individual claiming a fee to get a video submitted to Channel U is not genuine. However there are some reputable production companies that will handle the process but this isn't any different from the normal process. It is NOT a fast track.

## **Moaners and bucket mouths and those who make threats**

People who constantly harass staff go to the end of the queue or face rejection, get their video rejected.

## **Channel U is making a fortune and doesn't pay people**

We wish. Channel U is a small company; we also run another small pop video service. The facts are, there are five times more staff employed on Channel U than on an ordinary pop channel. This is because we have to make serious judgements about video submissions and overall Channel content. Pop videos are generally fully compliant but Channel U submissions have to be checked extensively in-house. It takes 160 man hours per week to register, view and respond to artists.

## **PRS and VPL**

We pay very large sums of money to the Performing Rights Society and Video Performance Limited. Only registered PRS members receive royalties and you should contact PRS regarding distribution of collected monies. In the case of VPL, artists DO NOT receive any royalty, this is payable only to record companies.

## **Loadsamoney?**

Channel U costs nearly £1million a year to operate. We do not hide that we collect some revenues from telephone services. Remember that the station is free to air and that you do not have to pay SKY subscriptions. What we offer is unique. We offer a platform and opportunity for hundreds of aspiring artists and are proud of our achievements.

Try taking your video into MTV and you won't get past reception let alone get a phone call.

## **Acceptable content for Channel U?**

Please understand what acceptable content is and think hard especially if you want your video showing in the daytime. If you are using a company to help you make your video show them a copy of these guidelines before you agree.

- Video submissions should not be longer than 3m minutes 40s. (Our preferred run time is between 3mins and 4mins.) Remember what could be a reasonable video could end up being rejected if it repeats and becomes boring by running longer than artistically necessary.

Remember that the Ofcom standards apply to lyrics AND visual images.

- **Swearing** - Swearing etc is not acceptable in the daytime. Try to think about editing a daytime version. Would excessive editing of swear words spoil the verse or rhyme?
- Editing or reversing swear words is fine but also check that the visual does not show the word mouthed. This could lead to a rejection, the video assigned as a night time only play or the video returned to you for further editing.
- This applies too to violent words, gun and drug references. Mag, Blade, six rounds, Merc, Bore..... are examples of words that will not be allowed on daytime videos. (this is not a definitive list)

Context - There are no exceptions except where the word is in context.

Clearly the lyric "standing at the bar" means what it says and is within the context of an accepted activity, "selling bars" has other meanings.

- Violent images including gang paraphernalia such as hoods, masks, sticks, dogs, knives etc is not suitable day time viewing. Remember that many young people are watching Channel U in the day time.
- Images and actions must therefore not give young people ideas or cause them to want to try things they have seen. This includes setting fire to spray cans, play fighting, causing damage and especially alcohol and smoking.
- Sexual images in the daytime should be tasteful and limited. Full nudity is not acceptable but this does not exclude a scene for example where a girl is in the shower covered by a towel, the shower curtain or a carefully placed prop. In other words, no nipples and crotch. Sexual lyrics should be limited and not refer to sexual intercourse or other sex acts.

For example "I want to squeeze you, stroke your body and feel you close" is acceptable. Wine and Butt images are common place in these videos. Remember that no intimate body parts, even if accidental, are allowed.

- **Weapons, gun and knife images or the effects use are NOT acceptable at any time.**
- **Weapons, gun and knife lyrics are NOT acceptable at any time.**
- **Drug and drug equipment images, including dealing, are NOT acceptable at any time.**
- **Drug and drug equipment lyrics, including dealing, are NOT acceptable at any time.**
- **The use of weapons, violence and drugs should not be glamorised.**

The only exceptions are if a video has an educational aspect in terms of advice and prevention. Even then this is still subject to approval.

Alcoholic drink images should be avoided in the daytime and drinking should not be glamorised.

Riotous and criminal behaviour that glamorises or encourages young people is not allowed during the day times. This includes things such as damage to property, setting fires, road offences and dangerous driving.

Dissing: Please do not diss other crews or individuals with the intention of causing trouble.

### **Other stuff to take note of**

Incidental messages - Do not have persons mobile number, e mail addresses etc on clothes or on the set whilst filming. Videos containing such images will be automatically rejected.

However if you are filming in the street and shop and street signs show certain names and telephone numbers, this is classed as incidental and in most cases is accepted.

Occult and the dark side - Try to avoid this, there are many rules concerning this area. Remember that such images, except comical can cause harm and upset to young children.

### **Tips**

Try not to copy everyone else's video, be different, make your video stand out and catch our attention.

Observe the run time and do not make your video unnecessarily longer than needed. If you can complete the performance in three and a half minutes do not add more for the sake of more exposure you are only increasing your chances of rejection.

Never spend your entire budget, hold a little back in case we request edits or re-submissions.

Be nice when you come into contact with Channel U staff.

Send in a full version of the lyrics in the correct order. Videos submitted without lyrics are rejected.

Never tell your friends and family that you have submitted your video and it will definitely be played. Please wait for notification.

**Never give money to an individual that says they can get your video on Channel U.**

Need help with Production? See the 'VIDEO PRODUCTION' section.