

Licensing Requirements for Money Service Operators

Money Service Supervision Bureau Customs and Excise Department



<u>Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-</u> <u>Terrorist Financing Ordinance (AMLO)</u>

- Under the AMLO, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) is the relevant authority for the supervision of MSOs.
- Money service means a money changing service or a remittance service.
- A person who operates a money service must obtain a licence.



Licensing Guide



Money Service Operators

Licensing Guide

Customs and Excise Department

August 2021

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Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, Chapter 615

Licensing Guide for Money Service Operators (MSOs)

Summary

1. The purpose of this notice

- This licensing guide will help you to find out:

 whether you need to apply for an MSO licence with us
 - . when and how to apply for an MSO licence
 - what fees you need to pay
 - what the fit and proper person test is for MSOs
 - what the suitable premises are for operating a money service

What is included in this licensing guide?

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Section I	Gives a brief overview of the role of the Customs and Excise
	Department (C&FD) as the relevant authority under the AMLO.
Section II	Explains who needs to apply for a licence as an MSO.
Section III	Explains who does not need to apply for a licence.
Section IV	Explains who is eligible for an MSO licence.
Section V	Explains how to apply for a licence as an M5O.
Section VI	Explains how to renew for an MSO licence.
Section VII	Explains the Commissioner of Customs and Excise (CCF)'s ability to
	suspend or revoke an MSO licence.
Section VIII	Explains the changes that need the prior approval of the CCE.
Section IX	Explains what to do if you have other business details changed after yo
	have been licensed.
Section X	Explains what to do if you cease your whole business or business in
	specified premises.
Section XI	Explains what to do to maintain an MSO licence.
Section XII	Explains what the Licensee Register contains and where to inspect.
Section XIII	Explains what disciplinary action is.
Section XIV	Explains the fee schedule of application for an MSO licence and its
	related issues.
Section XV	Explains whom you can contact if you need further advice.
Section XVI	Provides the list of documents required in support of the application for
	grant or renewal of an MSO licence

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- Fit and Proper (F&P) Person Criteria
 - The Commissioner of Customs & Excise (CCE) may grant a licence to an applicant only if he is satisfied that the individual/ each partner/ each director/ ultimate owner is a fit and proper person to operate a money service/ to be associated with the business of operating a money service.
 - In addition to the matters he must have regard to, the CCE may take into account any other matter that he considers relevant in determining whether an applicant is a fit and proper person.



The F&P Guideline was issued in April 2018.



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Guideline on Criteria for

Determining Fitness and Propriety

For the grant of a licence under section 30, in Part 5, of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, Chapter 615

April 2018

Guideline for Determining Whether an Applicant for a Licence to Operate a Money Service is a Fit and Proper Person

The Guideline sets out the criteria which will be followed by the Commissioner of Customs and Excise ("CCE") in determining whether the applicant for a licenice to operate a money service ("applicant") is a fit and proper person and to outline the considerations, which the CCE will have regard to in considering the grant of a licence to operate a money service ("licence").

- Section 30(3)(a), in Part 5, of the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance, Chapter 615 (AMLO³) provides that the CCE may genet a licence to an applicant only if he is satisfied that the individual/each partner/each director/ultimate owner is a fit and proper person to operate a money service/to be associated with the business of operating a money service.
- Section 30(4), in Part 5, of the AMLO details the matters the CCE must have regard to in determining whether an applicant is a fit and proper person. In addition to the matters he must have regard to, the CCE may take into account any other matter he considers relevant.
- 3. Whilst an applicant falling within section 30(4) will be subject to scratiny as to his fluxess and propriety to operate a money service, the CCE will have regard to the facts and circumstances of each individual applicant before determining whether he/she is a fit and proper person.

Application of the Guideline

The Guideline applies to every applicant for a licence under Section 30
of the AMLO. The Guideline is applicable to both the applicant for a
licence as well as to the person who will hold the licence.

Criteria for Determining Fitness and Propriety

- In assessing an applicant's fitness and propriety, the CCE will take into account the following factors, which will be considered in the context of all the facts and circumstances of each individual case:
 - a. Whether the person has failed to comply with any requirement imposed under the AMLO or any regulation made by the CCE.
 - Whether the person, being an individual, is an undischarged bankrupt or is the subject of any bankruptcy proceedings under the Bankruptcy Ordinance.
 - c. Whether the person, being a corporation, is in the course of being wound-up or where a receiver, or such other person having the powers and duties of a receiver, has been appointed in relation to or in respect of any property of the corporation.
 - Whether the person has failed to comply with any conditions imposed by the CCE on the licence.
 - Whether the person has been convicted of a criminal offence which is not listed in section 30(4)(a) and (b), in Part 5, of the AMLO, but which has a significant and negative bearing on his/her honesty, integrity and reliability.
- 6. The Guideline provides general guidance and are not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. In assessing the fitness and propriety of an applicant, each case will be considered on its own merits, taking into account all relevant factors including, but not limited to, the criteria set out in the AMLO and paragraph 5.
- For avoidance of doubt, the Guideline is advisory. An applicant for a licence to operate a money service or a licensee should seek legal advice where necessary if he/she has concerns about the AMLO and the application of its provisions to him/her.

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Supplementary F&P Guideline was issued on 8 January 2020.



CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT

Supplementary Guideline on Criteria for Determining Fitness and Propriety

January 2020

CCE will have regard to the facts and circumstances of each individual applicant before determining whether he/she is a fit and proper person.

4. Section 34, in Part 5, of the AMLO provides that the CCE may suspend or revoke a licence where the CCE is of the opinion that any of the individual/partner/director/ultimate owner in relation to the licence is no longer a fit and proper person to operate a money service/to be associated with the business of operating a money service.

Application of the Guideline

5. The Guideline applies to every applicant for a licence under section 30 and renewal of a licence under section 31 of the AMLO, as well as licensed money service operators (ic. licensees) which or who must satisfy and continue to satisfy after the grant of licence that they are fit and proper persons to be so licenseed. It follows that failure of any licensees to meet the fit and proper criteria may reflect adversely on the fit and proper person status and would be a ground for suspension or revocation of the licence by virtue of section 34, in Part 5, of the AMLO. For the purpose of this Guideline, unless otherwise specified, a reference to the "person" herein may mean an applicant for the grant or renewal of a licence or a licensee which includes an individual and a corporation as the case may be.

Examples of matters the CCE considers relevant

- The CCE takes into account the following matters which are examples regarded as any other matter that the CCE considers relevant in determining whether an applicant or a licensee is a fit and proper person in considering the grant of a license:
- a. Whether the person has failed to comply with any conditions imposed by the CCE on the licence.
- Whether the person has any record of non-compliance with the AMLO or relevant regulation, which resulted in the taking of

administrative action, prosecution, issue of written warning or has been disciplined by the CCE for the non-compliance.

- c. Whether the person is in compliance with guidelines promulgated for money service operators in the regulatory regime, such as the Licensing Guide and the Guideline on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism issued for Money Service Operators.
- d. Whether the person has the ability to carry out the money service business competently, honestly and fairly and, in a manner which is not detrimental, or likely to be detrimental, to the interests of the customers or members of the public. Examples are the contravention of any law designed for consumer protection, or the licensee has been the subject of any complaint made reasonably and in good faith relating to the licensee's conduct of carrying on the business.
- e. Whether the person has been the subject of any proceedings of a criminal or disciplinary nature or has been notified of any potential proceedings or of any investigation which might lead to those proceedings under any law in any jurisdiction.
- f. Whether the person has genuine intention and readiness to carry on the money service business to which it was proposed in the licence application. Examples are the person provided nil money service for a prolonged period after the grant of licence.
- g Whether the person has established effective anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism ('AML/CFT') systems to ensure compliance with all applicable requirements under the money service operator regulatory regime. Examples are the person must have a competent compliance officer of a sufficient level of seniority and authority within the licensee to oversee the establishment and maintenance of the company's AML/CFT
- h. Whether the person is equipped with the skills, knowledge,

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- Suitability of a particular premises used for the operation of a money service
 - Particular premises should be accessible by C&ED officers for carrying out their regulatory functions
 - Not suitable cases such as the premises are being used by other MSO or they are designated for other specified uses
- Information of a local place for storage of books and records (LPS) in Hong Kong
- Information of a local management office (LMO) in Hong Kong for operating money service business without a particular premises



◆ The Guidelines for Submission of Business Plan was issued on 8 January 2020.

Guidelines for Submission of Business Plan

by Applicant for Money Service Operator Licence/Licensee

These guidelines set out key elements that should be included in the business plan so as to allow the Money Service Supervision Bureau ("MSSB") to have a comprehensive understanding of the applicant's proposed money service business and its mode of operation. At a minimum, the applicant should include in the business plan the following items set out in the table below.

The business plan should ensure that the applicant pays attention to both the broad operational and compliance objectives of the new business. The MSSB is obliged to look into the applicant's entire business operation from the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing ("AML/CFT") perspective. As such, it is important that the applicant will provide all necessary information to MSSB for examination and has the necessary resources to execute the business plan and comply with both the statutory and regulatory requirements. Failure to provide this information may delay or hinder the processing of your application. In addition, the applicant is required to confirm in writing in the business plan that he/she is well aware of and will comply with the statutory requirement that if there is any change in the particulars that are provided to the Commissioner of Customs and Excise ("Commissioner") for the grant or renewal of money service operator ("MSO") licence, the licensee must notify the Commissioner in writing of change within one month beginning on the date on which the change takes place.

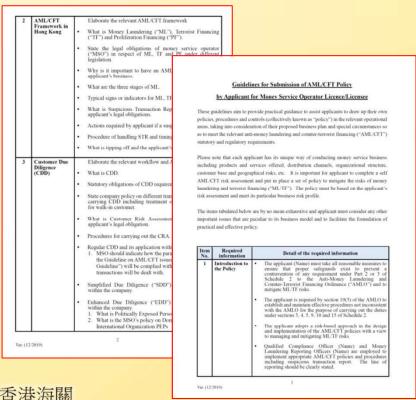
Item No.	Required information	Detail of the required information
1	Company name	Provide information on the company name, business name website address, business logo and trademark that will be used to promote the money service business.
2	Company history	Provide information on the applicant's history, the source of capital and whether the applicant is associated with or controlled by any entities or group company.
3	Key executives of senior management	Provide information on the key executives of the senior management including their nationality, employment history, qualification and education level.

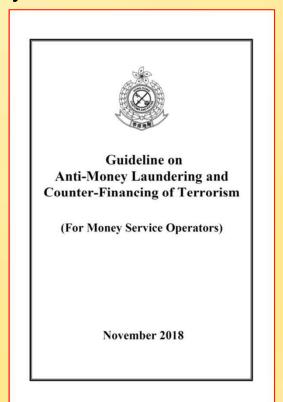
4	Location of key management	decision If there	is an	y back-end office function/purpose	in or outside Hong Kong, of this office and its
5	Customers and location of customers	custome	ers ii	ncluding their ge	potential and expected ographical location and rith the customers etc.
6	Business operation in Hong Kong and its key objective	place in locally. transacti handling	Hon The ion p g and nce f	g Kong and the rea business operation rocess such as place processing of or	siness operation will take son of obtaining a licence should detail the entire ring the transaction order, deer, movement of funds, uting and record keeping
7	Delivery channels of product and	offered	infor	mation on the type of the timeline of lau	of product and service to be nching these product and
	service offered	Elab are proc fore If fo rece over Elab again agen	10	Organizational structure	Organization of the group of companies in Hung Kong. Elaborate the group of companies (include the part company, local branches and subsidiaries), their the least on and respective functions. Attach an organizational chart the group of companies and provide a brief description a business carried out by each entity within the group. Organization of the international group of companies to the description and provide a brief description at pulse and the subsidiaries of the companies to the companies of the companies of the companies to the companies of the compa
8	Bank account	Prov busic acco Note If the acco detail	11	Local business premises	the group. If the applicant's business premises are shared by "oth businesses" (including businesses not belong to the applicant), elaborate the nature of the "other businesses". Elaborate whether the "other businesses" in the applicant business premises are also owned by the applicant direct or partner or staff of the applicant.
9	Profitability and financial information of the	Prov turn two			Elaborate whether the "other businesses" in the applican business premise <u>have any business relationships</u> with tapplicant. If yes, elaborate the nature of the busine relationships.
	business	the b	12	Local human resources	Management team of the applicant Elaborate the composition of the management team. To number of the members, their position, roles are seponsibilities (e.g. compliance functions, reposting asspicious transactions), full time part time, the reports lines. Employee of the applicant Elaborate the composition of the employees. Total numb of employees, their position, roles and responsibilities (compliance functions, reporting of suspicious transactions).
			13	Use of outsourced services	Trovide the name and nature of any outsourced servicused by the applicant for AML/CFT purpose.
					For example, external audit function, any specifi intermediary.
			14	Computerized / screening systems	Elaborate the computerized systems and other automati- systems used in the business.



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 Guideline on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism and Guidelines for Submission of AML/CFT Policy were issued and revised on November 2018 and January 2020 respectively.







Points to Note for Licence Application/Renewal







Licence Application/Renewal

- Application procedures
 - Form 1 & Annex for New licence
 - Form 2 & Annex for licence renewal (45 days before expiry)
- Requisite information and documents
 - Checklist attached to the Forms

(Refer to Licensing Guide for more details)





Common Issues in Licence Application/Renewal

- Failure in Fit and Proper Person Test
- Failure to submit required information or documents within specified period
- Proposed premises not suitable to be used for operation of a money service
- Breach of licensing requirements/conditions



Failure to take or pass the competent assessment





Common Issues in Licence Application/Renewal

- Breach of licensing requirements/conditions, such as
 - Failure to submit information of LPS/LMO
 - Failure to submit business plan/AML Policy
 - Business plan and AML Policy submitted not in compliance with guidelines issued by C&ED
 - Failure to submit quarterly Statement of Transaction in a timely manner
 - Failure to complete continuous training course/seminar within the specified period





- Anti-money Laundering/Counter-Terrorist Financing Policy (AML Policy)
 - Submitted standardised AML Policy based on template.
 - Failed to draw up policies and controls with reference to business nature and risk level
 - Failed to comply with the requirements under the AML Guideline and the Guidelines for Submission of AML/CFT Policy





- Non-compliance with the requirements under the AML Guideline in relation to, for example:
 - Establishment of an independent audit function
 - Conducting risk assessment
 - Establishment of procedure for ongoing monitoring
 - Maintenance of database of names of terrorists and sanction lists
 - Mechanism for submission of suspicious transaction reports
 - Policy for staff training







- Business Plan
 - Submitted standardized "Business Plan" based on template
 - Failure to elaborate on the entire delivery channel
- Particular premises for operation of a money service
 - Non-compliance with the specified use or the terms and conditions for the use of the premises under the tenancy agreement
 - Applicant who is neither landlord nor tenant cannot fully control the use of the premises.



Tenancy Agreement

Some applicants/licensees are not the landlord/tenant of the specified premises

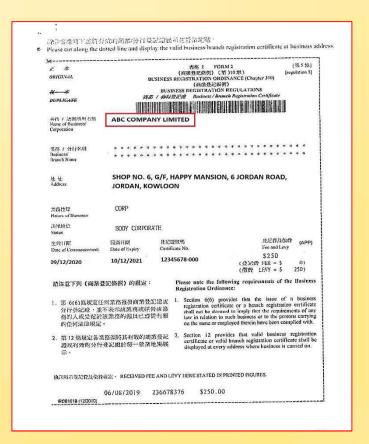
The use of premises are not suitable for money service operation

		Schedu 附表			
The Premises 物 業	Shop no. 6, G/F, Hap	ppy Mansion, 6 Jordan	Road, Jordan, Kowloo	on .	
The Landlord 業 主	· Ws. Veronica Ar	nn chan		.,	
Address 地址	:			Tel. No.:	
The Tenant 租客	: DEF Holdings Limite	ed	y. z		
Address地址	•			Tel. No.:	
Term 租期	: From :由 2019 年12	to to 2 月 20 日至 2	1021年12月	(both d	lays inclusiv 首尾兩 5
Rent 租 金	: HK\$ 15,000 per	rmouth Fifteen	thousand Hong	Kong dollars per	per mon
Security Deposit 保証金	: HK\$30,000/T	hirty thousan	d Hong Kong dolla	rs only.	
1. User 用途	Ms. Dee Siù Mei	Schedul 附表:		18	
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The name of company on the signboard must tally with the name of business/corporation as stated on the Business Registration Certificate.









- Inadequate knowledge on MSO business
 - Insufficient operation experience and academic qualifications
 - Incompetent senior management oversight
- Channel for money service operation
 - Failure to provide any bank account in the name of the company
 - Use of third-party bank account
 - Failure to provide any agreement for acting as agent
 - Failure to elaborate on measures taken to protect customer funds





- Source of Capital
 - Failure to elaborate on the source of capital
- Customer Due Diligence (CDD)
 - Failure to carry out CDD measures
- Screening and Enhanced Checking
 - Failure to set up/ use a screening system to identify politically exposed persons/ persons on UN sanction lists



- Duty to Keep Records
 - Non-compliance with the statutory and regulatory record-keeping requirements
- Suitable Agent
 - Assign/appoint irrelevant persons to deal with the licence application







Competence Assessment for MSOs

- ◆ Ensuring senior management of a licence applicant or licensee is equipped with fundamental knowledge and clear understanding of anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT)
- Maintaining a high level of compliance with the AML/CFT standards in the MSO sector







Competence Assessment for MSOs

- Licensing Guide is revised:
 - At least one member of the senior management of a licence applicant/a licensee pass the Assessment
 - The Assessment result will constitute a substantial weighting in determining the overall F&P person status
- Implementation timeline
 - New Licence Application: 1 June 2021
 - Renewal Application: due to expire since 1 July 2022





Eligible Person(s) for the Assessment

- The eligible person is someone who:
 - must be the senior management of the licence applicant/licensee;
 - has a direct involvement in making decision; and
 - is held accountable in the compliance functions and systems of the company.
- Senior Management is confined to:
 - Natural person: sole proprietor / partners
 - Legal person: sole director / directors





Mode and Scope of the Assessment

- 35 Multiple Choice questions (Chinese/English)
- Assessment time: 1 hrs & 15 mins.
- 7 modules of AML/CFT knowledge (each consists of 5 questions)
- "Pass" in the Assessment:
 - Not more than 2 mistakes in each module; and
 - Total score is 25 or above.





Modules of the Assessment

- ◆ The 7 modules are:
 - General knowledge on AML/CFT and Counter Proliferation Financing
 - Part 1-7 of the AMLO
 - Schedules to the AMLO
 - Guidelines promulgated by the C&ED
 - MSO's systems and controls (i) Institutional governance and strategy
 - MSO's systems and controls (ii) AML/CFT control areas
 - MSO's systems and controls (iii) Demonstrating and monitoring compliance



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Suggested Reference

- Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance (Cap. 615)
- Guideline on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism for MSOs
- Licensing Guide issued to MSOs
- Guidelines issued by C&ED to MSOs
- Circulars issued to MSOs

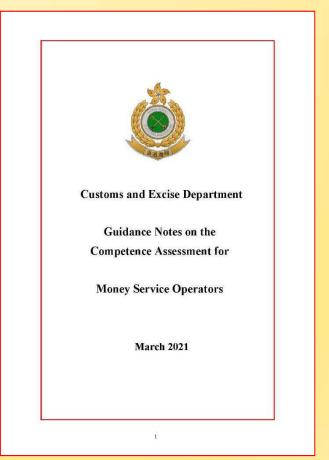
Website of the Money Service Operators Licensing System (https://eservices.customs.gov.hk/MSOS/index)



Information of the Assessment

 Guidance Notes on the Assessment for MSOs published by C&ED in March 2021









- The End -

Thank you!

Contact Information

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