

VIDEO GAMES CONSULTATION

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Submission from

ALEX GRAHAM

CHAIR

MEDIA LITERACY TASK FORCE

November 2008

VIDEO GAMES CONSULTATION

DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

I write to support the submission to the Department's Video Games Consultation of the British Board of Film Classification.

The BBFC is a member of the Media Literacy Task Force and as such supports and affirms the Task Force's belief that education is the best long-term form of empowerment for the users of digital media, including video games.

I, therefore, support the BBFC's case specifically because it believes that a significant duty of a statutory video game classifier is educating the public, particularly given the extent of ignorance about video game classification. It carries out an extensive video game education programme, targeting in particular schools and parents.

To further its education commitment, the BBFC has three education websites.

These are:

- Parents BBFC, (www.pbbfc.co.uk, 6.23 million hits in the year to November 2008, including 800,000 hits in October alone), providing detailed information about film, video and video game classification decisions for parents and carers;
- Students BBFC, (www.sbbfc.co.uk, 2.63 million hits so far in 2008), a website dedicated to students ages 12+ but with most focus on students on GCSE and AS/A2 and equivalent level courses;
- Children's BBFC, (www.cbbfc.co.uk, 1.1 million hits so far in 2008), the website for under 12s, but more specifically, those aged 5 -11 years.

All three sites contain specific tailored resources on video games. On www.pbbfc.co.uk there is Extended Consumer Advice (ECA) about every video game classified. ECA offers detailed examples of what issues each game raises and what parents can expect to find if they purchase or play it. The site also has a Parents Information Centre which has introductions to the categories, a guide to video games and glossaries of gaming terms and genres.

On www.sbbfc.co.uk there is a dedicated Games Portal which collates case studies, timelines, news articles (on subjects such as children's games, violent games, the Byron Review), research materials and other educational resources for teachers and students.

On www.cbbfc.co.uk there is information for parents and teachers alongside a dedicated Games Room which offers young site users the chance to play games, improve their gaming vocabulary, place the games they play in context and explore the issues raised by games, either alone or with parents and carers.

The BBFC, working with the charity Film Education, has also developed an interactive DVD ROM for use in the classroom. This resource offers teachers and pupils a hands-on introduction to how and why films, DVDs and video games are classified and empowers them as students and consumers. Feedback from teachers so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

Other education initiatives involving video games include: in-house seminars available to individuals and school groups; collaboration with other media education specialists including the Media Teachers Association, Film Education and the BFI; *ad hoc* talks and training with adult groups including professional groups (Local Authorities, INSET days for media teachers) and community groups (such as the Round Table); working with school tour providers such as NST to provide tailored sessions in-house. In 2007, the BBFC spoke to 15,000 students in this way.

Outside specific Education initiatives the BBFC has an established commitment to wider media literacy, for example through its membership of the Media Literacy Task Force, offering increasingly detailed information about decisions, category symbols, specific works and the BBFC guidelines.

Alex Graham
Chair, Media Literacy Task Force
November 2008