

Software Licensing



Unfortunately, because software is so valuable and because computers make it easy to create an exact copy of a program in seconds, software piracy is widespread. From individual computer users to professionals who deal wholesale in stolen software, piracy exists in homes, schools, businesses and government. Software pirates not only steal from the companies that make the software, but with less money for research and development of new software, all users are hurt. That's why all software piracy — even one copy you make for a friend — is illegal.

- Business Software Alliance

What is a Software Licence?

Any time software is purchased, it should come with a licence. A licence sets down the conditions under which the software can be used. There are also copyright laws that prohibit the copying of software on to more than one machine without proper licensing.

When a new computer is purchased, it often comes with software pre-installed. The associated licences, registration cards and warranties for this software are all included with the documentation that accompanies the PC. In a school situation, it is very important that all software used has a proper licence. The licensing agreement (also known as EULA- End User Licence Agreement) that comes with each piece of software should always be consulted – it is not advisable to simply click the 'I agree' button when loading software onto a machine!

Illegal copying or distribution of software can result in substantial fines and/or a prison sentence.

Types of Software Licences

When purchasing software, it is necessary to ensure that the licence purchased is appropriate for the intended usage within the school. Generally speaking, there are three types of software licences to choose from:

- Single Licence
- Multiple User License
- Site Licence

Single Licence

A single licence permits the software to be loaded onto one machine only. Often a backup copy of the software can be made (in case the original software is damaged or lost).

Multiple User Licence

A multiple user licence allows software to be installed on a large number of machines, but only a certain number of people can use the program at any one time.

Site Licence

A site licence allows unlimited use of a software program throughout the school, or states the maximum number of machines on which it can be installed. Site licences for educational software often include the facility for teachers to install the software on their home computers. This feature is commonly called WAH (Work at Home). Some Licensing Agreements organised by NCTE with software producers includes WAH features.

When purchasing software ensure that the correct licensing documentation is received from the vendor. This documentation should be stored in a safe place and should be available for inspection if required.

Choosing a Licence

If the school has a network in place (i.e., computers connected together allowing resources, files, printers, etc. to be shared), then a network version of the software is often required. This would usually mean a site licence needs to be purchased for the software, but a multiple user licence may suffice. Much will depend on how many PCs the software will be installed on and how many people will be using the software at any one time.

A recognised software dealer should be able to give any extra advice that might be needed. A list of some Irish software suppliers can be found at the following link:

www.softwarecentral.ie/AdviceSupport/SuppliersPublishers

Registration

Having received new software and an appropriate licence, the software should be registered in the school's name. This involves filling in the registration form or card that comes in the product packaging. This can be posted back to the software developer/manufacturer or emailed to a dedicated registration address. Most software companies also provide an online registration facility. Registering the software may entitle the school to cheaper upgrades of the product in the future.

Software Use and Management Policy

A Software Use and Management Policy should be drafted and approved by staff. This document should contain the following elements:

- A **Software Use Policy** prohibiting the use or installation of non-licensed software in the school
- A **Software Acquisition Policy** to ensure that only licensed software is installed on the school's computer infrastructure.
- A **Schedule and Inventory** of software and licences, including information on the location of all associated documentation and invoices. You can download a Inventory document from www.softwarecentral.ie/AdviceSupport/SoftwareInventory
- A **Check System** for periodic and random checks to ensure compliance.

A person should be appointed with overall responsibility for implementing this policy. They should make all staff fully aware of the procedure in relation to software licensing.

Other Licensing Considerations

Educational Pricing

Many software companies, such as Adobe, Apple and Macromedia, offer educational prices for their software. This allows schools to purchase programs at greatly reduced prices. Microsoft has a 'Select' agreement, which is exclusively available to Irish schools through Fujitsu Siemens.

Always ask your recognised software dealer for information about educational prices when you are making your purchases.

Freeware/Open Source

Some software downloaded from the Internet (or from discs on computer magazines) is free. Read the accompanying text to clarify the terms and conditions governing the use of such software.

Shareware

Other software downloaded from the Internet (or from discs on computer magazines) can be what is termed 'shareware'. This kind of software is generally free for a certain period of time, after which you have to pay a small fee to use it. Do check to see if it can be used for educational purposes free of charge.

Relevant Web Sites**Becta**

http://schools.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=re&catcode=ss_res_pro_bps_sof_04

Becta is a British agency which provides advice and support to the educational sector in the UK. The link refers to it's resources on software licensing.

Business Software Alliance

www.bsa.org/ireland

BSA is a representative body, made up of the world's commercial software industry. BSA educates consumers on software management and copyright protection.

Software Central

www.softwarecentral.ie/AdviceSupport/LicensingInformation

Software central page of software licences for Microsoft.

Note: While the advice sheets aim to act as a guide, the inclusion of any products and company names does not imply approval by the NCTE, nor does the exclusion imply the reverse. The NCTE does not accept responsibility for any opinions, advice or recommendations on external web sites linked to the NCTE site.

This Advice Sheet and other relevant information are available at:

www.ncte.ie/ICTAdviceSupport/AdviceSheets