

Guidelines for ISRC Agencies

ISRC Registrant Applications & Appointments

17th June 2015 - Version 1 [rev 2 – terminology aligned with ISO 3901:2019]

Each ISRC Agency is required to allocate ISRC Prefixes to producers of sound recordings within its territory. This note sets out the steps required to do this and gives some illustrative examples. It is to be treated as a guideline and may be adapted according to local circumstances so long as the principles in the ISRC Standard and Handbook are implemented.

1) APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRANT CODE

Legal producers of sound recordings or music video recordings (record labels or artists if they release their own recordings) may apply for ISRC Prefixes. The legal producer or current owner of the rights of a recording should normally assign it an ISRC. Ensuring that the applicant understands this may avoid improper assignment of ISRC to recordings owned or controlled by other parties.

The applicant needs to provide certain details. The ISRC Agency should consider using a template document or web-based process. The applicant needs to provide information as follows:

1. Country in which the applicant is based
2. Statement that the applicant owns rights in recordings¹
3. Whether a Prefix is already held and whether the application is for another one
4. Details of applicant as below (this could be for a company or an individual)
 - a. Registrant Name: business name or title / first name / last name for an individual
 - b. Contact Name (if registrant is a business) or artist name
 - c. Address including street, town, country and postal code
 - d. Telephone number
 - e. Email address (note that a generic email address such as isrc_admin@label.com is preferred because staff move jobs)
 - f. Website URL (if available)

The date of receipt of the application should be captured.

2) ISRC AGENCY REVIEW PROCESS

ISRC Agencies should only allocate an ISRC Prefix to applicants headquartered or having operations in a territory for which the ISRC Agency is responsible.

ISRC Agencies should not decide whether to allocate a Registrant Code to an applicant based on their membership of, or standing with, any organization².

The ISRC System is open to all bona fide producers of sound and music video recordings, including individuals, partnerships and corporations. A National Agency may check with an applicant to make sure that the applicant understands what the ISRC System is for and what their obligations are³.

¹ If the National Agency has chosen to appoint ISRC Managers a separate process is followed.

² ISRC Handbook (3rd Edn.) section 3.4.2.

³ ISRC handbook (3rd Edn.) section 4.2

The details provided within the application⁴ need to be checked as follows:

- a. Is the information provided within the application clear and complete?
- b. Is the application directed to the correct Agency?
- c. Does the applicant already have an ISRC Prefix on record? A further Prefix will normally only be needed if the applicant assigns more than 100,000 codes a year. If they wish to use a different Prefix for a different label or imprint, they should be encouraged to use the same code for all the labels under the same ownership.
- d. Raise any other queries with the applicant at this time

Checks may be implemented by checking that data fields contain valid data and by automated database lookup of prior registration data, for example.

3) ALLOCATION OF AN ISRC PREFIX

Given a satisfactory application, prepare the ISRC Prefix to be allocated, comprising:

- Agency code element (two upper case letters allocated to the Agency)
- Registrant code element (three characters – upper case letters or digits)

The country code element will have been allocated to the Agency by the International ISRC Registration Authority and will often be the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 code for the territory within which the Agency has been appointed. Any different arrangements will have been notified by the International ISRC Agency.

ISRC Agencies should not accept requests for ‘personalised’ registrant code elements comprising particular characters significant to the registrant, since this gives the false impression that an ISRC code indicates ownership, and it can lead to mistakes such as allocating the same registrant code element twice or leaving many unallocated Prefixes. Registrant code elements should preferably be allocated in a sequence.

If possible avoid using the letters ‘O’ and ‘I’ in the three characters of a registrant code element, due to potential confusion with digits ‘0’ and ‘1’. (These letters do appear in certain country codes but as digits do not appear in a Country Code there is no potential for confusion here).

The system for allocating ISRC Prefixes should incorporate some form of explicit check to ensure that the same Prefix has not been allocated previously.

Once the ISRC Prefix has been allocated, record the allocated Prefix along with the date of allocation and the details of the applicant into a register of ISRC Prefixes⁵.

⁴ Details of the application need to be held and checked regardless whether the application was made using email, document template or a web-based process etc.

⁵ It is necessary to retain applicant details so that any anomalies with ISRCs assigned under the ISRC Prefix can be followed up if necessary. Since the register of ISRC Prefixes will contain personal details of the applicant, the ISRC Agency should ensure that a registration with the relevant authorities covers the ISRC Prefix database and data should be managed in accordance with local data protection and privacy regulations.

4) ISRC AGENCY NOTICE/LETTER GRANTING CODE

The ISRC Agency should provide the ISRC Prefix to the applicant, along with information that will assist with correct usage of the Prefix. It may use a template letter or email. This should contain:

1. Notice of appointment as an ISRC Registrant (and a statement of thanks for using the ISRC system)
2. Confirmation of the ISRC Prefix to be used
3. A brief explanation of how to use the Prefix, including the 'year of reference' and the 'designation code'
4. An instruction that the Prefix may not be used to identify a recording that is owned by another party. (The applicant should be told that other parties should apply for their own ISRC Prefix. If appropriate the applicant may apply to be appointed as an ISRC Manager in the event they wish to assign ISRCs for third parties.)
5. Appropriate reference to the resources available at the ISRC website (such as the ISRC Handbook), or to local language translations of it
6. A reminder that details of assigned ISRCs and the recordings to which they are assigned should be retained indefinitely by the Registrant in a database or spreadsheet
7. A recommendation that assigned ISRCs should be registered in appropriate databases (e.g. for collective management/performance rights) and quoted whenever the recording is supplied to a partner such as a retailer, distributor, digital aggregator, streaming service or broadcaster. ISRCs should be encoded into CDs and other formats wherever possible.

ANNEX – TEMPLATE LETTER: REGISTRANT APPOINTMENT

The following template may be adapted according to local circumstances⁶ and used to notify Registrants of their ISRC Prefix.

Dear _____

Confirmation of Appointment as ISRC Registrant

Thank you for applying to use the ISRC system, the internationally standardised system for identifying sound recordings and music video recordings.

Following your request, I am pleased to provide you with the following ISRC Prefix:

ISRC Prefix: <ISRC Prefix>

To assign an ISRC you need to use the Year of Reference which is the last two digits of the year in which the ISRC is assigned – so for a recording assigned an ISRC in 2015 it is “15”.

You then give the recording a Designation Code – which should start at 00001 and increase by one for each new recording. When the Year of Reference changes, you should reset to 00001.

You assemble an ISRC by combining the ISRC Prefix, Year of Reference and Designation Code so the first ISRC you assign should appear as:

ISRC < ISRC Prefix >-15-00001

The ISRC Prefix allocated to you has worldwide validity. You must use the above ISRC Prefix to form your ISRCs no matter where in the world your recordings may be distributed.

This should ensure that no different recordings have the same ISRC and; each distinct recording has one unique ISRC.

Full details of this process are at: <https://isrc.ifpi.org/isrc-standard/isrc-structure>

This Prefix Code is allocated uniquely for use by you or your company, so that you can create ISRCs that uniquely identify recordings for which you or your company owns the sound recording copyright. It is not permitted to assign ISRCs to recordings when the sound recording copyright is owned by other parties. If someone asks you to assign a code to their recording, you should advise them to apply for their own ISRC Prefix. General rules on assigning ISRC can be found at <https://isrc.ifpi.org/why-use-isrc/when-to-assign>

You can use your ISRC Prefix to identify sound recordings and music video recordings. You should however keep a record of whether the ISRC was assigned to a sound recording or a music video recording. Further information on this topic can be found at <https://isrc.ifpi.org/why-use-isrc/music-videos>.

Please remember that a record of each ISRC issued per recording produced must be kept by you, together with details of the recording. You should supply the ISRC for each recording alongside the

⁶ Following the paragraph with bold text about assigning ISRC to owned recordings only, those ISRC Agencies which do appoint ISRC Managers may add: *If you wish to assign ISRCs on behalf of other parties as part of your business, you should apply to us to become an ISRC Manager. We will be happy to explain how to do this.* Those ISRC Agencies operating national registers of ISRC or databases of recording data, or which offer additional services to assign ISRC, may elaborate their specific procedures as appropriate.

recording when you pass it (or information about it) to someone else (such as a retailer, distributor, digital aggregator, streaming service or broadcaster. You should include the ISRC when mastering CDs and where possible include it in digital files containing the recording.

You should also ensure the ISRC is sent alongside repertoire details that you register with Collective Management Organisations that manage rights and pay royalties for broadcast and public performance.

Comprehensive information on ISRC can be obtained on the ISRC web site <https://isrc.ifpi.org/>.

For further information, please contact <insert here the contact information for ISRC support>

Kind regards
