



# Universal *Classification* Schema

## Expert Council Terms of Reference



# *Terms of Reference*

## *Universal Classification Schema Expert Council*

### Introduction

These Terms of Reference (hereinafter: "Terms") establish the framework and guidelines governing the operations of the Expert Council of the Universal Classification. The Expert Council, herein referred to as the "Council," is tasked with overseeing the implementation, maintenance, and evolution of the Universal Classification Schema (hereinafter: "Schema").

By acknowledging and accepting these Terms, a duly authorized representative of your organization acting as a Member of the Council affirms that they have thoroughly reviewed, understood, and agree to abide by these Terms in their entirety, without exception or reservation. Such acceptance of these Terms constitutes a legally binding agreement between the Member and the Council.

These Terms delineate the rights, responsibilities, and operational protocols governing the participation of Members in the Council's activities. They serve as a cornerstone document, ensuring consistency, transparency, and integrity in the Council's endeavors. As custodians of this critical initiative, Members are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity, ethical conduct, and commitment to child protection.

Through collaborative efforts and unwavering dedication, the Council aims to advance the global fight against CSAM, harmonize terminology, and foster cross-sectoral collaboration. By adhering to these Terms, Members affirm their commitment to these objectives and pledge to contribute actively to the Council's mission.

All Members are urged to approach their responsibilities with diligence, professionalism, and a steadfast commitment to the principles outlined in these Terms. Together, meaningful progress can be made in combatting CSAM and safeguarding the well-being of children worldwide.

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## Article I: Name and Mission

### *Section 1: Name*

The name of this Group shall be the "Universal Classification Schema Expert Council," hereinafter referred to as "the Council."

### *Section 2: Mission*

The mission of the Expert Council is to oversee and ensure the continuous accuracy, relevance, and evolution of the Universal Classification Schema, hereinafter referred to as "the Schema" and its accompanying reference documentation. This vital endeavor is essential in addressing the ever-changing landscape of child sexual abuse material and upholding child protection standards. It is the purpose of the Expert Council to harmonize terminology, provide guidance, and facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders in the fight against CSAM.

## Article II: Background

### *Section 1: Overview*

The Universal Classification Schema was conceived to harmonize terminology related to child sexual abuse material. This revision process aims to ensure that the terminology remains accurate and relevant, taking into consideration the dynamic challenges posed by CSAM online.

### *Section 2: Revision of Terminology*

The revision of terminology provides an opportunity for a cross-cutting approach, engaging multi-disciplinary entities and individuals from various sectors and regions. This approach aims to ensure comprehensive and diverse perspectives, reinforcing a multi-sectorial approach to addressing CSAM.

## Article III: Objectives

### *Section 1: Objectives*

The objectives of the Expert Council are as follows:

- To maintain the Universal Classification Schema in alignment with emerging trends, best practices, and changing legislation.
- To implement terminology that respects the rights and dignity of children, avoids blame and stigma, and prevents re-victimization.
- To provide a platform for cross-sectoral, international collaboration in addressing issues related to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.
- To support data collection efforts on matters concerning CSAM.
- To enhance the legal, policy, and advocacy framework for the protection of children from sexual exploitation.

## Article IV: Membership Process for the Expert Council

### *Section 1: Membership*

Membership in the Expert Council is open to all stakeholders dedicated to combatting CSAM. Membership is free of charge. Membership in the Council is subject to a term limit of four years, at which time the organization or entity will have to reapply for membership. Interested organizations and individuals shall express their intent to join the council, which will be assessed by the Custodian for alignment with the Expert Council's mission and objectives.

### *Section 2: Application Process*

Interested organizations and individuals shall submit an expression of interest to the Schema Custodian. The application shall include a letter of intent outlining the reasons for seeking membership and a commitment to uphold the Expert Council's mission and objectives. Factors for consideration include proactive engagement in advancing child protection both domestically and internationally and the level of expertise in CSAM issues. Steps will be taken to encourage engagement with prospective members from underrepresented regions and sectors.

### *Section 3: Eligibility of Organizations and Representatives*

Organizations and their representatives applying for membership must demonstrate a consistent record of integrity and a reputation for upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct, especially concerning child protection. Any organization or individual with a history of criminal activity will be automatically disqualified from membership.

Applicants must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could compromise their objectivity or impartiality in the Expert Council's activities. This includes, but is not limited to, relationships with commercial initiatives, advocacy groups, or other entities that may have vested interests in the outcomes of the Expert Council's decisions.

Organizations and individuals must express a genuine commitment to advancing the mission and objectives of the Expert Council. This includes a proactive engagement in child protection efforts both domestically and internationally and a demonstrable level of expertise in CSAM issues.

### *Section 4: Conflicts of Interest During Participation*

All members of the Expert Council must promptly disclose any conflicts of interest that arise during their participation in the Expert Council's activities. Failure to disclose conflicts of interest may result in immediate review and potential forced exclusion. Members with identified conflicts of interest must recuse themselves from relevant discussions, deliberations, and decision-making processes to ensure the Expert Council's impartiality and integrity.

### *Section 5: Forced Exclusion in Case of Violations*



Any member found to have provided false information during the application process, engaged in activities contrary to the Expert Council's mission and objectives, or violated the established rules on conflict of interest may face forced exclusion from the Expert Council.

Allegations of violations will be reviewed through a transparent and fair due process, allowing the accused member an opportunity to respond and present their case. If the allegations are substantiated, the Expert Council reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including forced exclusion.

#### *Section 6: Procedure for Forced Exclusion*

The Expert Council may initiate a review of a member's conduct or eligibility based on allegations of violations of the membership criteria or established rules. The review may be triggered by a formal complaint from another member or the Secretariat of the Expert Council.

Upon receiving a complaint or identifying potential violations, the Expert Council shall appoint an impartial committee or designate an external entity to conduct a thorough investigation. The investigation shall include gathering evidence, interviewing relevant parties, and assessing the merits of the allegations.

The accused member shall be informed of the allegations and provided an opportunity to respond, present evidence, and refute the claims during the investigation. Following the completion of the investigation, the committee or designated entity shall present its findings and recommendations to the Expert Council. Based on the evidence and recommendations, the Expert Council shall deliberate and make a final decision regarding forced exclusion.

If the Expert Council decides to proceed with forced exclusion, the accused member shall be formally notified of the decision, along with the rationale and any applicable appeals process. The decision shall be communicated to all members and stakeholders as deemed necessary, ensuring transparency and accountability.

## Article V: Expert Council

### *Section 1: Chairing Arrangement*

The chair of the Expert Council shall be selected by the membership of the Council through a voting process. The term of the chair shall be limited to two years with the option for re-election. The chair must have served on the Council for at least one year, or been a member of the International Working Group of the Schema.

### *Section 2: Meetings*

The Expert Council shall convene at a minimum on an annual basis to review and discuss proposed updates to the Schema and training materials. Meetings may be held in person or virtually to accommodate the diverse membership. A quorum, representing at least 50% of the total membership, shall be necessary for meetings.

### *Section 3: Responsibilities*

The responsibilities of the Expert Council shall include, but are not limited to, evaluating proposed changes, reaching a consensus on their approval, and recommending updates to the Schema and training materials. The group shall provide a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and consensus-building among stakeholders.

### *Section 4: Voting Process*

All decisions requiring a vote shall follow democratic principles. A supermajority vote of 75% shall be required for the approval of proposed changes to the Schema and its related documentation. A majority vote will be required for all other decisions. The establishment of a quorum, representing at least 50% of the total membership, shall be necessary to validate any decisions.

## Article VI: Funding of the Expert Council



### *Section 1: Funding Responsibilities*

The Custodian, in its role as the Secretariat of the Expert Council, shall be responsible for securing and managing the funds required for the operational needs of the Expert Council. This includes but is not limited to expenses related to virtual or in-person meetings, logistics, communication, and other associated costs.

### *Section 2: Budgeting and Financial Oversight*

The Custodian shall prepare and present an annual budget for the approval of the Expert Council. The budget shall encompass anticipated costs for all planned activities, including meetings, communication strategies, and any other relevant expenditures.

### *Section 3: Meeting Costs*

For in-person meetings, the Custodian shall manage the budget allocation for venue expenses, travel, accommodation, and related costs. The Expert Council shall be regularly informed about the financial status and expenses incurred.

### *Section 4: Transparency and Accountability*

The Custodian shall maintain transparency in financial matters, providing regular updates to the Expert Council on the allocation and utilization of funds. Financial records shall be made accessible to all Expert Council members.

### *Section 5: Alternative Funding Sources*

In the event that additional funding sources are required, the Custodian, in consultation with the Expert Council, may explore and secure external funding opportunities while ensuring alignment with the Council's mission and objectives.

## Article VII: Custodian Selection and Responsibilities

### *Section 1: Custodian Selection*

As the facilitating organization for the creation of the Schema, INHOPE will serve as the Custodian. If at any time INHOPE elects to step down from this position or the Expert Council deems INHOPE no longer fit to serve as the Custodian, a new custodian organization can be selected by the Expert Council. The selection process shall be conducted through a nomination and voting process. Interested organizations may nominate themselves or others to serve as custodian. A vote shall be conducted among the members of the Expert Council, and the organization receiving the majority of votes shall be designated as the custodian. Additionally, the Expert Council reserves the right to initiate a vote of no confidence against the Custodian if deemed necessary. This vote may be triggered by concerns related to the Custodian's performance, integrity, or alignment with the objectives of the Expert Council. If a vote of no confidence receives a majority of votes, the Expert Council shall proceed with the selection of a new Custodian following the established procedures.

### *Section 2: Eligibility Requirements*

Organizations seeking to be nominated as a Custodian must adhere to stringent eligibility criteria to ensure the highest standards of integrity, ethical conduct, and commitment to child protection. These criteria include, but are not limited to:

- Integrity and Ethical Conduct: Organizations aspiring to be Custodians must demonstrate a consistent record of integrity and a reputation for upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct, particularly in the realm of child protection.
- Criminal History Check: Any organization or individual with a history of criminal activity related to child abuse will be automatically disqualified from consideration as a Custodian.
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure: Applicants must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that could compromise their objectivity or impartiality in the activities related to the Custodianship. This includes relationships with commercial initiatives, advocacy groups, or other entities with vested interests in the outcomes of the Expert Council's decisions.

**Commitment to Mission and Objectives:** Organizations must express a genuine commitment to advancing the mission and objectives of the Expert Council. This includes proactive engagement in child protection efforts at both domestic and international levels and a demonstrable level of expertise in addressing issues related to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).

**Financial Stability:** Organizations seeking to become Custodians must provide evidence of financial stability to ensure their capacity to fulfill the responsibilities associated with the Custodianship. This may include submitting financial statements, undergoing financial reviews, or providing any other documentation deemed necessary by the Expert Council.

### *Section 3: Custodian Responsibilities*

The custodian's responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to, serving as the secretariat of the Expert Council. The Custodian shall:

- Manage the day-to-day operations of the Expert Council, ensuring timely scheduling of meetings, accurate record-keeping, and efficient communication among members and stakeholders.
- Serve as the primary point of contact for all communications related to the Expert Council, guaranteeing the prompt and accurate dissemination of resolutions, decisions, and updates to members and relevant entities.
- Uphold the integrity of Expert Council documentation by archiving meeting minutes, resolutions, communications, and other crucial documents in a secure and accessible manner.
- Collaborate closely with Expert Council members, ensuring alignment with the Council's mission, objectives, and operational imperatives to bolster efficiency and impact.
- Maintain and update the Schema in accordance with Expert Council decisions. Furthermore, the Custodian shall ensure the timely dissemination of these updates to pertinent stakeholders, fostering transparency and compliance with current best practices and legislative requirements related to CSAM.

## Article VIII: Process for Updating Schema and Training Material

### *Section 1: Process*

The Expert Council shall adhere to a structured process for updating the Universal Classification Schema and its accompanying training materials. Proposed updates shall be reviewed, discussed, and approved by the Council. The custodian shall be responsible for implementing approved changes and ensuring their proper distribution.

### *Section 2: Nomination and Voting for Schema Changes*

Bi-annual meetings of the Expert Council will be scheduled to review and discuss proposed updates to the Universal Classification Schema and training materials. The specific timing and schedule of these meetings will be determined and communicated by the Custodian, ensuring adequate notice to all Council members. Members of the Expert Council may submit proposed changes to the Schema during the scheduled bi-annual meetings. Additionally, in urgent cases, proposed changes can be submitted through mediation by the Custodian. To facilitate efficient deliberation, Council members are encouraged to submit proposed changes to the Custodian at least one month before the scheduled meetings. The Custodian will compile and distribute the proposed changes to all Council members before the meeting. During the bi-annual meetings, the Expert Council will evaluate and discuss each proposed change to the Schema. The Custodian will facilitate the deliberation process, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to express their views. Subsequently, a formal vote will be conducted to determine the approval of each proposed change. Approval requires a majority vote by Council members in favor of the proposed changes. The results of the vote will be recorded and communicated to all members.

### *Section 3: Implementation of Approved Changes*

Upon the approval of proposed changes to the Universal Classification Schema by the Expert Council, the Custodian shall undertake the responsibility of implementing these approved changes. The implementation process involves incorporating the accepted modifications into the Schema and its accompanying training materials.

#### Tasks Include:

- Updating the Schema: The Custodian will ensure that the Universal Classification Schema is promptly updated to reflect the approved changes. This involves making necessary revisions to the Schema structure, terminology, and any other relevant components.
- Distributing Updated Materials: Following the update, the Custodian will be responsible for distributing the revised Schema and associated training materials to all Schema users. This dissemination process aims to ensure that stakeholders are informed and equipped with the latest version of the Schema.
- Notification to Users: The Custodian shall communicate the changes to all relevant parties, providing clear and concise information about the nature of the modifications and their implications. This communication is crucial for maintaining transparency and facilitating the seamless adoption of the updated Schema.
- Verification of Implementation: The Custodian, in collaboration with the Expert Council, may establish mechanisms to verify the successful implementation of approved changes. This may include seeking feedback from users or conducting assessments to confirm that the updates are effectively integrated into practice.

## Article IX: Conclusion

### *Section 1: Enactment*

These terms of reference for the Expert Council of the Universal Classification Schema shall be enacted upon approval by the Custodian. Amendments to these terms of reference may be proposed and ratified following the established procedures by the Expert Council.

These terms of reference serve as the foundational document guiding the activities and governance structure of the Universal Classification Schema Expert Council. The inclusion of application and selection processes, as well as a parliamentary procedure for Schema changes, ensures a robust and transparent framework for the Expert Council's operation and decision-making processes.