



GENERAL POLICIES, FACILITIES AND GUIDELINES

CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED

1. INCORPORATING A COMPANY FOR SERVICES BUSINESS

1.1 Methods of Conducting Business in Malaysia

In Malaysia, a business may be conducted:

- i. By an individual operating as a sole proprietor, or
- ii. By two or more (but not more than 20) persons in partnership, or
- iii. By a limited liability partnership (LLP), or
- iv. By locally incorporated company or by a foreign company registered under the provisions of the Companies Act (CA) 2016.

All sole proprietorships and partnerships in Malaysia must be registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) under the Registration of Businesses Act, 1956. In the case of partnerships, partners are both jointly and severally liable for the debts and obligations of the partnership should its assets be insufficient. Formal partnership deeds may be drawn up governing the rights and obligations of each partner but this is not obligatory.

1.1.1 Company Structure

The Companies Act, 2016 governs all companies in Malaysia. The Act stipulates that a company must be registered with the SSM in order to engage in any business activity.

There are three (3) types of companies that can be incorporated under the Companies Act, 2016:

- i. A company limited by shares is a company formed on the principle that the members' liability is limited if any, unpaid on the shares taken up by them.
- ii. In a company limited by guarantee, the liability of the members is limited to the amount which the members have undertaken to contribute to the assets of the company in the event the company is wound up.
- iii. An unlimited company, is a company formed on the principle of having no limit placed on the liability of its members.

1.1.2 Company Limited by Shares

The most common company structure in Malaysia is a company limited by shares. Such limited companies may be incorporated either as a Private Limited Company (identified through the words "Sendirian Berhad" or "Sdn Bhd" as part of the company's name) or a Public Limited Company (identified through the words "Berhad" or "Bhd" as part of the company's name).

A company having a share capital may be incorporated changes its status into or remain as a private company if it:

- i. Restricts the right to transfer its shares
- ii. Limits the number of its members to 50, excluding employees in the employment of the company or its subsidiary and some former employees of the company or its subsidiary
- iii. Prohibits any invitation to the public to subscribe for its shares and debentures
- iv. Prohibits any invitation to the public to deposit money with the company for fixed periods of payable at call, whether interest-bearing or interest-free.

A public company can be formed or, alternatively, a private company can be converted into a public company subject to Section 41 of the Companies Act, 2016. Such a company can offer shares to the public provided:

- i. It has registered a prospectus with the Securities Commission; or
- ii. It has lodged a copy of the prospectus with the SSM on or before the date of its issue.

1.2 Procedure for Incorporation

To incorporate a company, an application must be made to the SSM through the MyCoID 2016 Portal by providing the following information:

- i. the name of the proposed company;
- ii. the status whether the company is private or public;
- iii. the nature of business of the proposed company;
- iv. the proposed registered address;
- v. the name, identification, nationality and ordinary place of residence of the member of the company;
- vi. the name, identification, nationality and ordinary place of residence of every person who is to be the director;
- vii. in the case of company limited by shares, the details of class and number of shares to be taken by a member;
- viii. in the case of company limited by guarantee, the amount up to which the member undertakes to contribute to the assets of the company in the event of its being wound up.

The application must be accompanied with a fee of RM1000 in the case of company limited by shares; or RM3,000 in the case of a company limited by guarantee.

Once the Registrar is satisfied with the information provided, a notice of registration will be emailed to the applicant. The notice serves as conclusive evidence that the requirements in respect of registration and matters precedent and incidental to the registration have been complied with.

Incorporation of Companies – Client’s Charter

SSM undertakes to process, approve and register a complete application in a speedy and efficient manner within the time period stated as follows:

Activity	Time
COMPANY REGISTRATION	
Incorporation of a company	1 day
Conversion of status	1 day
Change of company name	1 day
Commencement of business for public companies	1 day
Registration of charge	2 days
Approval of a trust deed	5 days
Registration of prospectus	3 days
Uncertified copy of company documents	30 minute
Certified copy of company documents	1 hour

* *Application for the approval of company name only, may be made without incorporating the company.*

** *Time taken begins from the moment payment is received until the certificate is issued.*

1.2.1 Requirements of a Locally Incorporated Company

A company must maintain a registered office in Malaysia where all books and documents required under the provisions of the Act are kept. The name of the company shall appear in legible Romanized letters, together with the company number, on its seal, official documents, publications, website and if any.

A company cannot deal with its own shares or hold shares in its holding company. Each equity share of a public company carries only one vote at a poll at any general meeting of the company. A private company may, however, provide for varying voting rights for its shareholders.

The secretary of a company must be a natural person of full age who has his principal or only place of residence in Malaysia. He must be a member of a prescribed body or is licensed by the Registrar of Companies. The company must also appoint an approved company auditor to be the company auditor in Malaysia.

In addition, a private company is required to have at least one (1) director whereas a public company must have at least two (2) directors. Each of the minimum directors(s) must have his principal or only place of residence within Malaysia. The minimum age of a director is 18 years and the CA 2016 does not specified any maximum age. A director of the company need not necessarily be a shareholder of the company.

1.3 Registration of Foreign Companies

A foreign company may carry on business in Malaysia by either:

- i. incorporating a local company; or
- ii. registering a branch in Malaysia.

Foreign company is defined under the Companies Act, 2016 as:

- i. a company, corporation, society, association or other body incorporated outside Malaysia; or
- ii. an unincorporated society, association, or other body which under the law of its place of origin may sue or be sued, or hold property in the name of the secretary or other officer of the body or association duly appointed for that purpose and which does not have its head office or principal place of business in Malaysia.

1.3.1 Registration Procedures

- i. An applicant must first conduct a name search in order to determine if the proposed name for the intended company is available. The name to be used to register the foreign company should be the same as registered in its country of origin.

Applications for reservation of name should be submitted to SSM through the MyCoID 2016 Portal with a payment of RM50 for each name applied. When the proposed company's name is approved by SSM, it shall be valid for thirty (30) days from the date of approval.

- ii. Upon approval, applicants must submit the following registration documents to SSM within thirty (30) days from the date of approval:
 - a. Application for Registration of Foreign Company under sec 562(1) CA 2016;
 - b. A certified copy of the certificate of incorporation or registration of the foreign company;
 - c. A certified copy of the foreign company's charter, statute or Memorandum and Articles of Association or other instrument defining its constitution;
 - d. If the directors residing in Malaysia who are members of the local board of directors of the foreign company, a memorandum stating their powers that are executed by or on behalf of the foreign company, should be submitted to SSM.
 - e. A memorandum of appointment or power of attorney authorising the person(s) (agent) residing in Malaysia, to accept on behalf of the foreign company, any notices required to be served on such foreign company;
 - f. Additional documents consisting copy of an application of reservation of name and copy email from SSM approving the name of the foreign company.

Note:

If any of the described registration documents are in languages other than Bahasa Malaysia or English, a certified translation of such documents in Bahasa Malaysia or English shall be required.

- iii. Registration fees shall be made to the SSM as per the following schedule:

Share Capital (RM)	Fees Payable (RM)
Up to 1,000,000	5,000
1,000,001 – 10,000,000	20,000
10,000,001 – 50,000,000	40,000
50,000,001 - 100,000,000	60,000
100,000,001 and above	70,000

In determining the amount of registration fees, the share capital of the foreign company should first be converted to the Malaysian currency (Ringgit Malaysia) at the prevailing exchange rate.

In the event a foreign company does not prescribe any share capital, a flat rate of RM70,000 shall be paid to SSM.

- iv. A Notice of Registration will be issued by SSM upon compliance with the registration procedures and submission of duly completed registration documents.
- v. Upon approval, the company or its agent is responsible for ensuring compliance of the CA 2016. Any change in the particular of the company or in the company's name must be filed with SSM within fourteen days from the date of change together with the appropriate fees. Any change in the share capital of the company must be notified to SSM within fourteen days of such change. Every company is required to keep proper accounting records. Annual return must be lodged with SSM once in every calendar year not later than 30 days from the anniversary of its registration date.

Note:

Foreigners are advised to seek the services of an advocate and solicitor, an accountant or a practising company secretary for further assistance.

1.4 LLP Structure

1.4.1 Features of an LLP

An LLP is a body corporate and has legal personality separate from its partners. Like any other body corporate, LLP has perpetual succession. Any changes in the partners will not affect the existence, rights or liabilities of the LLP. LLP has unlimited capacity and capable of suing and being sued, acquiring, owning, holding and developing or disposing of property. LLP may do and suffer such other acts and things as bodies corporate may lawfully do and suffer. An LLP is a business vehicle which would offer simple and flexible procedures in terms of its formation, maintenance and termination.

The registration fee for a new LLP and conversion is RM500. The fee for the application of reservation of name is RM30.

1.4.2 Who may form an LLP

An LLP may be formed by a minimum of two (2) persons (wholly or partly individuals or bodies corporate) for any lawful business with a view of profit and in accordance with the terms of the LLP agreement. Any individual or body corporate can be a partner.

However, an LLP formed for professional practice must consist of natural persons of the same profession and have in force professional indemnity insurance as approved by the Registrar.

Thus, LLPs may be set up by the following:

- i. Start Ups; or
- ii. Small & Medium Sized Businesses; or
- iii. Professionals; or
- iv. Joint Ventures; or
- v. Venture Capitals.

1.4.3 Procedure for Registration

To register an LLP, an applicant must provide the following information:

- i. proposed name of LLP;
- ii. nature of business;
- iii. address of the registered office;
- iv. name and details of the partners;
- v. name and details of the compliance officer;
- vi. the approval letter (in cases of professional practice).

The application for registration must be accompanied by a payment of RM500. Upon satisfaction of application to register LLP, the Registrar shall register the LLP and issue a notice of registration together with a registration number to the LLP. Notice of registration serves as conclusive evidence that the LLP has been registered. Registration does not mean that requirements of other written law relating to the business of the LLP have been fulfilled. The name of the LLP shall end with "Perkongsian Liabiliti Terhad" or abbreviation of "PLT".

1.4.4 Conversion to an LLP

Apart from new registration, existing entities may also convert into an LLP. The entities which are allowed to convert are:

- i. Conventional partnerships which have been registered under the Registration of Businesses Act, 1956 or any partnership established by two (2) or more persons for the carrying on any professional practice; or
- ii. Private companies incorporated under the Companies Act, 1965 or any previous corresponding law.

The eligibility criteria for a conventional partnership to convert into an LLP are as follows:

- i. Same partners and no one else;
- ii. At the date of application, the conventional partnership solvent ;
- iii. In cases of professional practice, an approval letter from the governing body.

The eligibility criteria for a private company for conversion are:

- i. Same shareholders and no one else;
- ii. There is no subsisting security interests in its assets;
- iii. At the date of application, the private company is solvent;
- iv. All outstanding statutory fees to government agencies has been settled;
- v. Advertisement has been placed in a widely circulated newspaper and the Gazette;
- vi. All creditors agreed to the conversion.

The effects of conversion are as follows:

- i. Vesting of assets of the conventional partnership or the private company into the LLP;
- ii. Pending proceedings may be continued, completed and enforced against or by the LLP;
- iii. Existing agreements, contracts shall have effect as though the LLP were a party;

- iv. In the case of a conversion from a conventional partnership to LLP, the partners shall continue to be personally liable (jointly and severally with the LLP) for liabilities and obligations incurred prior to the conversion.
- v. In the case of the conversion from a private company, the LLP will continue to be liable for the liabilities and obligations incurred prior to the conversion

1.4.5 Requirements of an LLP

An LLP must appoint at least one (1) compliance officer who may be either one (1) of the partners or persons qualified to act as a secretary under the Companies Act 2016. The compliance officer must be either a citizen or permanent resident of Malaysia and ordinarily resides in Malaysia. A person is disqualified to act as a compliance officer if he is an undercharged bankrupt or is disqualified to act as a director or secretary under the CA 1965.

An LLP must maintain a registered office in Malaysia where communications and notices may be addressed. The LLP has the obligation to keep at the registered office, a notice of registration issued under this Act, a copy of the LLP agreement, the register of name and address of each partners and compliance officer, a copy of the latest annual declaration and if any, a copy of any instrument creating a charge.

An LLP is required to keep accounting records as to show the true and fair view of the state of affairs of the LLP. There is no requirement for the appointment of auditor unless specifically provided for in the LLP agreement.

1.5 E-Services

E-Services were introduced as an alternative to the traditional method of conducting business with SSM i.e. via counter services. It allows for the lodgement of documents (MyCoID 2016 Services) and the procurement of corporate and business information. Corporate and business information can be purchased from e-Info and MyData. Payments can be made via credit card, direct debit or prepaid accounts.

MyCoID 2016 enables simultaneous registration with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (IRBM), the Social Security Organisation (SOCSO), Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation (SME Corp) and the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) once a company is incorporated at SSM via a single submission.

For further information please visit SSM website at www.ssm.com.my or www.ssm-einfo.com.my or www.mydata-ssm.com.my

2. GUIDELINES ON EQUITY POLICY

The Companies Act, 2016 does not stipulate any equity conditions on Malaysian incorporated companies. However, to increase local participation in business, the government encourages joint-ventures/partnership between Malaysian and foreign investors. Specific equity conditions may be imposed for specific approvals, operating licences, permits or registrations by the regulating Ministries/Agencies, depending on the activities undertaken. Specific equity policy for services activities covered in this series of guidebooks can be obtained from the relevant booklets.

2.1 Autonomous Liberalisation

Recognising the growth potential in the services sector, the Government liberalised 27 services sub-sectors on 22 April, 2009, with no equity condition imposed. These sub-sectors are:

Computer and Related Services

- (i) Consultancy services related to the installation of computer hardware;
- (ii) Software implementation services - systems and software consulting services: systems analysis services; systems design services; programming services and systems maintenance services;
- (iii) Data processing services - input preparation services: data processing and tabulation services; time sharing services and other data processing services;
- (iv) Data base services;
- (v) Maintenance and Repair Services of Computers; and
- (vi) Other services - data preparation services: training services; data recovery services; and development of creative content.

Health and Social Services

- (i) All veterinary services;
- (ii) Welfare services delivered through residential institutions to aged and the handicapped;
- (iii) Welfare services delivered through residential institutions to children;
- (iv) Child day-care services including day-care services for the handicapped;
- (v) Vocational rehabilitation services for handicapped;

Tourism Services

- (i) Theme Park;
- (ii) Convention and Exhibition Centre (seating capacity of above 5,000);
- (iii) Travel Agencies and Tour Operators Services (For inbound travel only);
- (iv) Hotel and Restaurant services (for 4 and 5 star hotels only);
- (v) Food Serving Services (for services provided in 4 and 5 star hotels only);
- (vi) Beverage Serving Services for consumption on the premises (for services provided in 4 and 5 star hotels only)

Transport Services

- (i) Class C Freight Transportation (Private Carrier License – to transport own goods)

Sporting and other recreational services

- (i) Sporting Services (Sports event promotion and organisation services)

Business Services

- (i) Regional Distribution Centre
- (ii) International Procurement Centre

- (iii) Technical Testing and Analysis Services - composition and purity testing and analysis services, testing and analysis services of physical properties, testing and analysis services of integrated mechanical and electrical systems, and technical inspection services and
- (iv) Management Consulting Services - general, financial (excluding business tax) marketing, human resources, production and public relations services.

Rental/Leasing Services without Operators

- (i) Rental/Leasing services of ships that excludes cabotage and offshore trades
- (ii) Rental of cargo vessels without crew (Bareboat Charter) for international shipping.

Supporting and Auxiliary Transport Services

- (i) Maritime Agency services
- (ii) Vessel salvage and refloating services

The Government had further liberalised an additional 18 services sub-sectors in 2012 to allow up to 100% foreign equity participation in phases. These sub-sectors are:

- (i) Telecommunications for Application Service Provider – ASP licence;
- (ii) Telecommunication for Network Service Provider – NSP and Network Facilities Provider – NFP licences;
- (iii) Courier services;
- (iv) Private Hospitals ;
- (v) Medical specialists Clinics ;
- (vi) Dental Specialists Clinics;
- (vii) Private Universities;
- (viii) International Schools;
- (ix) Technical and Vocational Schools ;
- (x) Technical and Vocational Schools for students with special needs;
- (xi) Skills Training Centres;
- (xii) Accounting (including audit) and taxation;
- (xiii) Architectural services;
- (xiv) Engineering services;
- (xv) Legal services;
- (xvi) Departmental and Specialty stores;
- (xvii) Incineration services; and
- (xviii) Quantity Surveying services.

The Government will be progressively undertaking liberalisation of the other services sub-sectors on an on-going basis.

Please refer to MITI website www.miti.gov.my or myservices.miti.gov.my/web/guest/autonomous for information on liberalisation.

2.2 Protection of Foreign Investment

Malaysia's commitment in creating a safe investment environment has attracted more than 8,000 international companies from over 40 countries to make Malaysia their offshore base.

Equity Ownership

A company whose equity participation has been approved will not be required to restructure its equity at any time as long as the company continues to comply with the original conditions of approval and retain the original features of the project.

Investment Guarantee Agreements

Malaysia's readiness to conclude Investment Guarantee Agreements (IGAs) is a testimony of the government's desire to increase foreign investor confidence in Malaysia. IGAs will:

- Protect against nationalization and expropriation
- Ensure prompt and adequate compensation in the event of nationalization or expropriation
- Provide free transfer of profits, capital and other fees
- Ensure settlement of investment disputes under the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes of which Malaysia has been a member since 1966.

Malaysia has concluded Investment Guarantee Agreements (IGAs) with the following groupings and countries (in alphabetical order):

Groupings

- Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC)

Countries

Countries		
Albania	Ghana	Peru
Algeria	Guinea	Poland
Argentina	Hungary	Romania
Austria	India	Saudi Arabia
Bahrain	Indonesia	Senegal
Bangladesh	Iran	Slovak, Republic of
Belgo-Luxembourg	Italy	Spain
Bosnia Herzegovina	Jordan	Sri Lanka
Botswana	Kazakhstan	Sudan, Republic of
Burkina Faso	Korea, North	Sweden
Cambodia	Korea, South	Switzerland
Canada	Kuwait	Syrian Arab Republic
Chile, Republic of	Kyrgyz, Republic of	Taiwan

China, People's Republic of	Laos	Turkey
Croatia	Lebanon	Turkmenistan
Cuba	Macedonia	United Arab Emirates
Czech Republic	Malawi	United States of America
Denmark	Mongolia	United Kingdom
Djibouti, Republic of	Morocco	Uruguay
Egypt	Namibia	Uzbekistan
Ethiopia, Republic of	Netherlands	Vietnam
Finland	Norway	Yemen
France	Pakistan	Zimbabwe
Germany	Papua New Guinea	

*USA & CANADA - Insurance Guarantee Agreement

**Indonesia notified termination 20th June 2014 and termination will come into force from 20th June 2015

Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes

In the interest of promoting and protecting foreign investment, the Malaysian government ratified the provisions of the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes in 1966. The Convention, established under the auspices of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), provides international conciliation or arbitration through the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes located at IBRD's principal office in Washington.

Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Arbitration

The Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Arbitration was established in 1978 under the auspices of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) - an inter-governmental organization cooperating with and assisted by the Malaysian government.

A non-profit organization, the Centre serves the Asia Pacific region. It aims to provide a system to settle disputes for the benefit of parties engaged in trade, commerce and investments with and within the region.

Any dispute, controversy or claim arising out of or relating to a contract, or the breach, termination or invalidity shall be decided by arbitration in accordance with the Rules for Arbitration of the Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Arbitration.

3. INCENTIVES FOR THE SERVICES SECTOR

Main Incentives for Services Companies

The major tax incentives for companies investing in the services sector are the Pioneer Status and the Investment Tax Allowance.

Eligibility for Pioneer Status and Investment Tax Allowance is based on certain priorities. The company must submit its application to MIDA before commencing operation.

(i) Pioneer Status

Companies undertaking the above activities are eligible for pioneer status which provides a tax exemption on 70% of the statutory income for a period of five (5) years.

(ii) Investment Tax Allowance

As an alternative to Pioneer Status, a company may apply for Investment Tax Allowance (ITA). The ITA provides for an allowance of 60% on the qualifying capital expenditure within five (5) years. The allowance can be offset against 70% of the statutory income for each year of assessment. Any unutilised allowance can be carried forward to subsequent years until fully utilised.