The BIC: frequently asked questions

What is a BIC?
BIC stands for **B**usiness **I**dentifier **C**ode and is used to identify a business or entity anywhere in the world. It consists of a combination of eight numbers and letters. A BIC is a reliable and universal way of identifying a business because it removes the potential for error in misspelling a name or address or being confused with an entity with a similar name.

Who sets the standard for BIC?
The BIC is an independent and internationally recognised ISO standard (ISO 9362). ISO is the International Organization for Standardization.

Who can get a BIC?
BICs are issued to organisations in a wide range of industrial sectors as an identifier for data processing. This includes banks, multi-national brands and small businesses.

What is Swift's role in assigning BICs?
Swift serves as the registration authority that allocates and issues the BIC. Swift is appointed by ISO to ensure that ISO 9362 is maintained and implemented effectively in accordance with the ISO 9362 documentation.

Does having a BIC mean that an organisation is a Swift customer or has access to the Swift network?
No. A BIC does not indicate any customer relationship with Swift, nor does it confer any access or authorisation to send or receive financial messages on the Swift network.

Financial institutions and other qualified entities that want to transact over the Swift network have a BIC for identification purposes <u>and</u> are subject to specific eligibility requirements and additional screening to become Swift customers, connect to the network and use Swift's financial messaging services. Those institutions that meet these eligibility criteria are often referred to as 'connected BICs.' BICs solely used for identification purposes are often referred to as 'unconnected BICs.'

What checks are done on organisations that request a BIC?
Applications for BICs are subject to a review and validation process against public information to verify the existence and identity of the requesting organisation. More information is available on BIC registration procedures at www.iso9362.org/.

For any organisation seeking a BIC and connection to the Swift network, additional eligibility requirements apply as defined in the Swift Corporate Rules (available here) and additional due diligence is carried out.

Does a BIC imply or confer additional credibility to an organisation?
A BIC simply identifies an organisation as verified through public information in line with ISO 9362 documentation, and does not provide any representation of or guarantee about its activities. Individuals and organisations need to do their own due diligence before engaging in any business relationships.

Swift customers that wish to do business with another connected entity are required to perform their own due diligence and apply adequate KYC principles to their counterparts before exchanging messages and doing business over Swift. Swift provides a relationship management application that helps banks not to receive messages from other counterparties without having exercised due diligence and agreed their business relationship, so one connected BIC cannot communicate with another in an unsolicited way.

Can an organisation have more than one BIC?
Yes, many organisations use multiple BICs so they can identify a specific branch or department within an organisation (e.g. the London branch of a bank will have a different BIC from the New York branch).

How much does it cost to get a BIC?
There is no charge for the assignment of a BIC.

Can you buy or sell a BIC?
BICs cannot be bought, sold or transferred.

What happens to a BIC when an organisation no longer exists or no longer requires a BIC?
When an organisation no longer exists for any reason, such as an acquisition or shutters operations, the BIC is considered to be 'expired' but it continues to exist as an identifying code. There can be situations where third may still need to use the BIC as an identifier of an organisation that has ceased to exist.

Where can I find a list of BICs?
You can see a list of all BICs issued in the ISO BIC Directory here.