



# **TRAVELLER PROCESSING**

Effective Date: 01 June 2026

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Traveller Declaration	3
2.2	South African Traveller Management System (SATMS)	3
2.3	Manual Traveller Declaration (TC-01)	4
2.4	Ports With No Customs Presence (Non-Designated port)	4
2.5	Unaccompanied and Accompanied Baggage	4
2.6	Assessment of the Traveller Declaration	4
2.7	Payment of Customs duties and VAT	5
2.8	Unaccompanied Baggage and Accompanied Baggage	5
2.9	Re-importation of Goods	6
2.10	Re-exportation of Goods	6
2.11	Traveller refunds	7
<b>3</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1	Legislation	7
3.2	Cross References	8
<b>4</b>	<b>DISCLAIMER</b>	<b>8</b>

Effective Date: 01 June 2026

## 1 PURPOSE

- a) This policy provides guidance on how travellers must comply with Customs declaration obligations when entering or departing South Africa.
- b) It explains:
  - i) The declaration of accompanied and unaccompanied baggage;
  - ii) The use of the online traveller declaration platform; and
  - iii) The option for travellers to pre-declare goods prior to travel.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

### 2.1 Traveller Declaration

- a) Anyone entering or leaving South Africa must submit a traveller declaration, if they have goods to declare.
- b) Before entering or leaving South Africa, a traveller who has goods to declare, must declare their goods by completing:
  - i) An online declaration on the South African Traveller Management System (SATMS); or
  - ii) The traveller Card (TC-01).
- c) Drivers entering South Africa through the border posts **including** SACU registered vehicles, must register their vehicles for temporary importation on the SATMS.
- d) Obligations under Section 15 also apply to crew members.
- e) Those travellers that declare both personal and informal trade or commercial goods, two separate declarations must be made:
  - i) Personal or informal trade goods, and
  - ii) Commercial goods using a Goods Declaration. Refer to SC-CF-55 policy.
- f) Travellers in transit through South Africa are exempt from submitting traveller declarations if they do not leave:
  - i) The designated transit area, or
  - ii) The mode of transport on which they arrived.
- g) Failure to declare goods, understate values, or submit false documents may result in seizure, prosecution, or penalties.

### 2.2 South African Traveller Management System (SATMS)

- a) The SATMS can be accessed through:
  - i) The SARS website (See SC-PA-01-12);
  - ii) QR codes displayed at Customs ports of entry or exit (see SC-PA-01-13);
  - iii) The SARS Mobi Application (eFiling) users (see SC-PA-01-13); or
  - iv) The SATMS Mobi Application, available for download on any device (see SC-PA-01-13).
- b) On SATMS, travellers must complete and submit the traveller declaration.
- c) SATMS allows travellers to:
  - i) Declare goods.
  - ii) View duties and/or VAT payable.

**Effective Date: 01 June 2026**

- iii) Pay the duties and/or VAT online.

### **2.3 Manual Traveller Declaration (TC-01)**

- a) If SATMS is unavailable, the traveller must:
  - i) Complete a Traveller Card (TC-01), available at any Customs port of entry or exit; and
  - ii) Submit the completed card to a Customs Officer at the relevant port.
- b) The TC-01 is available in hard copy from a Customs office at any port's processing area.

### **2.4 Ports With No Customs Presence (Non-Designated port)**

- a) Travellers intending to enter or leave South Africa at a non-designated place must:
  - i) Submit a traveller declaration through SATMS before travelling; and
  - ii) Follow instructions from Customs after submitting the declaration.
- b) If Customs does not permit use of the non-designated place, SATMS will direct the traveller to the nearest designated port.
- c) Travellers using a non-designated port must submit their declaration through SATMS and not form TC-01.

### **2.5 Unaccompanied and Accompanied Baggage**

- a) Travellers may bring new or used personal effects, sporting, and recreational equipment as accompanied or unaccompanied baggage for personal use during their visit.
- b) The transport representative or their agent may act on the traveller's behalf for Customs presentation.
- c) Commercial goods in a traveller's baggage must be declared on Form SAD 500, unless they qualify under Schedule 4 item 410.04.

### **2.6 Assessment of the Traveller Declaration**

- a) Travellers should be aware of the duty and VAT-free allowances provided under Rebate Items 407.01, 407.02, and 410.04, as well as relevant laws and restrictions (refer to SC-PA-01-03 for details).
- b) If a traveller declares goods that exceed the allowable limit, or includes prohibited, restricted, temporary goods, or currency, the traveller must proceed to the Passenger Processing Area for processing.
- c) Travellers are permitted to carry a maximum of R 25,000 out of South Africa in South African banknotes without prior approval.
- d) If a traveller carries more than R 25,000, they need authorization from the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) and must declare it at Customs.
- e) Customs may conduct random checks based on risk profiling, which can include document reviews, behavioural analysis, and screenings.
- f) Searches of Goods:
  - i) Customs may search a traveller or baggage if risk indicators suggest an incomplete or inaccurate declaration.
  - ii) Searches are conducted when there are reasonable grounds to suspect:
    - A) Evasion of payment of correct duties and VAT.
    - B) The presence of prohibited or restricted goods.

**Effective Date: 01 June 2026**

- C) A specific risk has been identified.
- g) Detention of Goods:
  - i) Customs may detain goods to determine if they are liable to forfeiture, such as when:
    - A) Duties/VAT are unpaid.
    - B) Goods are prohibited.
    - C) Other government requirements apply.
    - D) Commercial goods are brought in baggage without a Goods Declaration (refer to SC-CF-55).
    - E) Goods are suspected to be undervalued.
    - F) Unaccompanied baggage or lost items are uncleared.
    - G) Re-imported goods lack proof of prior export.
    - H) Goods appear counterfeit and not for personal use.
  - ii) Detained goods may be released once all legal requirements are met.
  - iii) If no undeclared goods or contraventions are found, the traveller may exit the Passenger Processing Area (PPA).

## **2.7 Payment of Customs duties and VAT**

- a) Duties and taxes may be paid:
  - i) Online payment on SATMS; or
  - ii) At the Customs port of entry or exit, if the location is equipped for such payments by:
    - A) Cash (in South African Rand); or
    - B) Debit / credit card.
- b) If payment is not made, goods are marked for detention.
- c) If payment is made, the traveller must produce proof of payment to the Customs Officer to be allowed to exit the Passenger Processing Area (PPA) or Customs Office.

## **2.8 Unaccompanied Baggage and Accompanied Baggage**

- a) Travellers may bring new or used personal effects, sporting, and recreational equipment as accompanied or unaccompanied baggage for personal use during their visit.
- b) Customs Officers may detain and examine baggage to ensure compliance with the Customs and Excise Act or other applicable laws.
- c) In the case of unaccompanied baggage:
  - i) Transport representatives must present all unaccompanied baggage at the designated search area for inspection.
  - ii) Baggage must be inspected in the presence of the transport representative or their agent.
  - iii) If the agent or representative is unavailable after reasonable efforts, Customs may proceed with the inspection.
  - iv) The transport representative or agent is authorized to act on behalf of the traveller in presenting the baggage to Customs.
  - v) Customs may at any time, break any lock attached to the baggage if the keys thereof are not produced in demand.
- d) The detention / seizure of unaccompanied baggage:
  - i) If unaccompanied baggage contains dutiable, prohibited, or restricted goods, it must be detained or seized.
  - ii) The Customs Officer:
    - A) Records the goods on the PPS or TRD 1; and
    - B) Issue the TRD 1 and notice of detention to the transport representative or authorised agent.

**Effective Date: 01 June 2026**

- iii) Detained goods are released only after the traveller complies with the Customs and Excise Act and relevant import / export laws.
- e) If restricted goods are found in unaccompanied baggage the traveller must produce the required permits.
- f) Duties and VAT are leviable should an assessment of the unaccompanied baggage require payment.
- g) No person is entitled to any compensation for any loss or damage arising out of any bona fide action of a Customs Officer.

## **2.9 Re-importation of Goods**

- a) Personal effects for personal use or repair must be registered with Customs before departure to allow smooth re-importation.
- b) Upon return, the traveller must:
  - i) Declare goods repaired or altered abroad.
  - ii) Declare the repair costs, as duties apply to those costs.
  - iii) Submit invoices reflecting the cost of repairs.
- c) Registered personal effects are exempt from the payment of duties and VAT and they may be allowed to leave the PPA, if:
  - i) Re-imported.
  - ii) Retained their essential character.
  - iii) No repairs or alterations performed.
  - iv) The goods match those listed on the traveller's TRD 1.
- d) Only items with clear identifying features can be registered for temporary export to ease re-importation.

## **2.10 Re-exportation of Goods**

- a) Frequent travellers are not required to re-register goods for each departure; presenting the original TRD 1 serves as proof of prior registration.
- b) If Customs identifies a risk that goods may not be re-exported, a surety may be required and recorded on the TRD 1.
- c) Only goods with clearly identifiable features are registered for re-exportation to support accurate clearance.
- d) Personal effects temporarily imported for repairs must retain their original character upon re-export.
- e) Trailers imported with vehicles must be registered separately on the same TRD 1. If re-exported by another vehicle, travellers must retain a copy of the TRD 1.
- f) A TRD 1 is valid for six (6) months. Travellers staying longer must apply for an extension at any Customs Office at least thirty (30) working days before the TRD 1 expires.
- g) Prior to the TRD 1 expiry date, SATMS sends the traveller a reminder to declare the re-exportation of temporarily imported goods.
- h) An extension may be granted upon submission of a valid proof, such as a work permit or study contract.
- i) The re-export deadline must match the traveller's stay and be recorded on the TRD 1.

**Effective Date: 01 June 2026**

- j) Customs Officer must issue a detention notice and record the goods' details on the TRD 1.
- k) When the goods are being detained, the Customs Officer must ensure that the traveller understands:
  - i) The reasons for detention.
  - ii) The actions to be taken.
  - iii) That the detention is temporary until time of departure from South Africa.
- l) The traveller can request to have the existing TRD 1 for temporary import purposes extended.
- m) A physical inspection must be conducted to verify that the exported goods match the declared goods.
- n) Commercial goods must be declared on a Goods Declaration (refer to SC-CF-55).
- o) The Customs Officer evaluates whether the goods pose a revenue risk:
  - i) If no risk is identified, the traveller may exit the PPA.
  - ii) For high-value goods the traveller must lodge a provisional payment (PP):
    - A) If not lodged, the goods are detained and the system or TRD 1 is updated.
    - B) If lodged, payment is processed per the payment procedure in accordance with GEN-PAYM-01-G01 guide.

## 2.11 Traveller refunds

- a) A traveller may receive a refund if:
  - i) A provisional payment (PP) is acquitted upon departure; or
  - ii) Duties / VAT were overcharged or incorrectly assessed.
- b) The traveller must present their passport and previous TRD 1 at the exit port or Customs office.
- c) The Customs Officer may:
  - i) Reject the application for the refund; and
  - ii) Provide the traveller with reasons for the rejection of the application.
- d) Refunds are paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) or bank draft if the traveller is a non-resident without a South African bank account.
- e) Travellers without a South African bank account must provide the correct SWIFT or BIC code when departing.

## 3 REFERENCES

### 3.1 Legislation

TYPE OF REFERENCE	REFERENCE
Legislation and Rules administered by SARS:	<b>Customs and Excise Act No. 91 of 1964:</b> Section 15,38 <b>Customs and Excise Rules:</b> Rule 15 <b>Schedule 4 of the Act:</b> Rebate items 407.01, 407. 02, 410.04, and 490.00 <b>Value-Added Tax Act No. 89 of 1991:</b> Section 7(1)
Other Legislation:	<b>Promotion of Administrative Justice Act No. 3 of 2000:</b> Section 3
International Instruments:	<b>Revised Kyoto Convention: Specific Annex J Chapter 1</b> – Travellers

### 3.2 Cross References

DOCUMENT #	DOCUMENT TITLE
GEN-PAYM-01-G01	Payment Rules – External Guide
SC-CF-55	Goods Declaration – External Policy
SC-PA-01-03	Duty Free Allowances for Travellers – External Guide
SC-PA-01-06	Excess Currency – External Policy
SC-PA-01-12	SATMS Through the SARS website – External Guide
SC-PA-01-13	SATMS Through the Mobi-App – External Guide

The definitions, acronyms and abbreviations can be accessed via the following link: [Glossary | South African Revenue Service \(sars.gov.za\)](#)

## 4 DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this guide is intended as guidance only and is not considered to be a legal reference, nor is it a binding ruling. The information does not take the place of legislation and readers who are in doubt regarding any aspect of the information displayed in the guide should refer to the relevant legislation or seek a formal opinion from a suitably qualified individual.

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- Visit the SARS website at [www.sars.gov.za](http://www.sars.gov.za);
- Make a booking to visit the nearest SARS branch;
- Contact your own tax advisor / tax practitioner;
- If calling from within South Africa, contact the SARS Contact Centre on 0800 00 SARS (7277); or
- If calling from outside South Africa, contact the SARS Contact Centre on +27 11 602 2093 (only between 8am and 4pm South African time).