



TRAVELLER PROCESSING

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE	3
2	POLICY STATEMENT	3
2.1	South African Traveller Management System (SATMS)	3
2.2	Manual Traveller Declaration	3
2.3	Assessment of Traveller Declaration	4
2.4	Processing of Unaccompanied Baggage	5
2.5	Re-importation of Goods	6
2.6	Re-exportation of Goods	7
2.7	Traveller refunds	8
3	REFERENCES	8
3.1	Legislation	8
3.2	Cross References	8
4	DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	9
5	DISCLAIMER	9

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

1 PURPOSE

- a) This policy directs how travellers must comply with their declaration obligations when entering or departing South Africa.
- b) It aims to describe the:
 - i) The declaration of:
 - A) Accompanied baggage (travels with the traveller); and / or
 - B) Unaccompanied baggage (shipped separately);
 - ii) The use of:
 - A) The Online declaration platform; and
 - B) The Option to pre-declare goods prior to travel.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 South African Traveller Management System (SATMS)

- a) The South African Traveller Management System (SATMS) enables both incoming and outgoing travellers to complete as well as submit travel declarations online.
- b) Any traveller entering or departing South Africa through a port may submit an online traveller declaration by following the steps in SC-PA-01-12 and SC-PA-01-13.
- c) SATMS can be accessed via the:
 - i) SARS website; or
 - ii) SARS Mobi Application or QR Code scan.
- d) The traveller is able to access the electronic Traveller Declaration either through the:
 - i) SARS website (refer to SC-PA-01-12);
 - ii) QR Code, available on display throughout the Customs ports (refer to SC-PA-01-13);
 - iii) SARS MobiApp (eFiling) users (refer to SC-PA-01-13) or
 - iv) SATMS MobiApp, available for download on any device (refer to SC-PA-01-13).
- e) The SATMS allows travellers to view the applicable duties and VAT payable.
- f) If a traveller declares both personal and informal trade or commercial goods, two separate declarations must be made:
 - i) Personal or informal trade goods via SATMS, and
 - ii) Commercial goods using a Customs Clearance Declaration (CCD). Refer to SC-CF-55 policy.
- g) Failure to declare goods or submission of understated values or submission of false documents may result in seizure, prosecution, or severe penalties.

2.2 Manual Traveller Declaration

- a) If the traveller is unable to declare on SATMS, they must:
 - i) Complete a Traveller Card (TC-01); and
 - ii) Submit it to a Customs Officer at the Customs Port of entry or exit.
- b) The TC-01 is available in hard copy from a Customs Officer at the processing area of any ports of entry or exit.

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

2.3 Assessment of Traveller Declaration

- a) Travellers entering or leaving South Africa must go through the Passenger Processing Area with their luggage and declare any dutiable goods using the online system, if applicable.
- b) No goods to declare:
 - i) Travellers may bring certain items duty- and VAT-free under Rebate Items 407.01, 407.02, and 410.04. Refer to SC-PA-01-03.
 - ii) Using the Green Channel confirms the traveller has nothing to declare and is within duty-free limits.
 - iii) Customs may conduct random checks based on risk profiling.
 - iv) If allowances are exceeded or risks identified, travellers must be given a chance to declare goods before assessment or search.
 - v) Risk checks may include document reviews, behaviour analysis, and screenings.
 - vi) If needed, the traveller will be escorted to complete a **traveller** declaration before further action.
- c) Goods to declare:
 - i) Travellers must use the Red Channel to declare dutiable, restricted, or prohibited goods.
 - ii) Customs Officers must:
 - A) Be familiar with allowances under Rebate Items 407.01, 407.02, and 410.04, **including** applicable laws and restrictions.
 - B) Grant full rebates where goods do not exceed duty-free limits (see SC-PA-01-03).
 - iii) Travellers may also be directed to the Red Channel if found in possession of goods requiring declaration, including:
 - A) Goods exceeding duty-free allowances.
 - B) Restricted / prohibited items (e.g., firearms).
 - C) Items carried on behalf of others.
 - D) Commercial goods or those needing formal clearance (e.g., diamonds).
 - E) Items for re-importation, carnet imports, or excess currency.
 - iv) Travellers must complete a **traveller declaration**;
 - v) Customs Officers must:
 - A) Scan the traveller's passport;
 - B) Assess the declared goods;
 - C) Generate a TRD 1; and
 - D) Print and issue the TRD 1 to the traveller.
 - vi) Travellers must electronically sign the TRD 1 if satisfied with its contents.
 - vii) If errors arise, the Customs Officer must get Operations Manager approval before issuing an amended TRD 1 for the traveller to review and sign.
- d) 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 as baggage without a CCD (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; or
 - H) Goods appear counterfeit and not for personal use; and
 - ii) Detained goods may be released once all legal requirements are met.
- e) Calculation and payment of duties and VAT:
 - i) **The traveller is allowed to select:**
 - A) Pay Now; or
 - B) Pay Later – if funds are insufficient. In this case, goods stay with Customs until payment.

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

- ii) If payment isn't made, goods are marked for detention.
 - iii) The Customs Officer must process the payment according to GEN-PAYM-01-G01guide.
 - iv) Use the exchange rate from the traveller's boarding date (refer to SC-CR-A-03).
- f) Searches of goods:
- i) Customs may search a traveller or baggage if risk indicators suggest an incomplete or inaccurate TRD 1 declaration; and
 - ii) The searches of traveller and / or their baggage must be carried out when there are reasonable grounds:
 - A) To suspect:
 - I) Evasion of payment of the correct duties and VAT;
 - II) The presence of any prohibited or restricted goods; or
 - B) Subject to a specific risk identified.
- g) If no undeclared goods or contraventions are found, the traveller may exit the PPA.
- h) If a contravention is suspected, the Customs Officer must issue form SC-PA-01-01-A03 to the traveller.
- i) Crew members must declare their goods, just like other travellers.
- j) All drivers, including those from SADC or SACU, must register their vehicles for temporary importation when crossing South African borders.

2.4 Processing of Unaccompanied Baggage

- a) Unaccompanied baggage does not qualify for duty-free allowances under Rebate Items 407.01, 407.02, and 410.04 and must be detained by Customs.
- b) Customs Officers may detain and examine unaccompanied baggage to ensure compliance with the Customs and Excise Act or other applicable laws.
- c) Transport representatives must present all unaccompanied baggage at the designated search area for inspection.
- d) Baggage must be inspected in the presence of the transport representative or their agent.
- e) If the agent or representative is unavailable after reasonable efforts, Customs may proceed with the inspection.
- f) The transport representative or agent is authorized to act on behalf of the traveller in presenting the baggage to Customs.
- g) Customs may at any time, break any lock attached to the baggage if the keys thereof are not produced in demand.
- h) The Customs Officer must complete SC-CC-11-A03.
- i) The transport representative or authorised agent must insert onto SC-CC-11-A03 his / her:
 - i) Name;
 - ii) Permit number;
 - iii) Signature; and
 - iv) Date.

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

- j) The Customs Officer must:
 - i) **Attach** the signed SC-CC-11-A03 to the unaccompanied baggage; and
 - ii) **Seal it** in the presence of the transport representative or the authorised agent.
- k) 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 system; and
 - B) Issue the TRD 1 and notice of detention to the transport representative or authorised agent.
 - iii) Detained goods are released only after the traveller complies with the Customs and Excise Act and relevant import/export laws.
- l) If restricted goods are found in unaccompanied baggage the traveller must produce the required permits.
- m) Duties and VAT are leviable should an assessment of the unaccompanied baggage require payment.
- n) No person is entitled to any compensation for any loss or damage arising out of any bona fide action of a Customs Officer.

2.5 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) Use the Red channel to declare goods repaired or altered abroad;
 - ii) Declare the repair costs, as duties apply to those costs; and
 - iii) Submit invoices reflecting the cost of repairs.
- c) The Customs Officer must:
 - i) Scan the traveller's passport and **traveller** declaration to retrieve the TRD 1 captured at departure.
 - ii) Confirm the TRD 1 on the system matches the traveller's copy.
 - iii) Verify goods against the TRD 1:
 - A) No duties / VAT apply if repairs were under warranty.
 - B) If repair costs were incurred, invoices must be submitted and duties / VAT calculated accordingly.
 - C) For unregistered goods:
 - I) Detain goods pending proof of local purchase or previous import duties / VAT.
 - II) Request a deposit for possible contravention (e.g., mis- or non-declaration). (refer to SC-CO-01-02)
 - iv) Release detained goods once a provisional payment is made in line with SC-CF-25, pending required documentation.
 - v) Assess and collect duties / VAT for unregistered goods per GEN-PAYM-01-G01 guidelines. Issue a payment receipt to the traveller.
 - vi) Allow the traveller to exit the PPA.
- d) Registered personal effects are exempt from the payment of duties and VAT and the may be allowed to leave the PPA, if:
 - i) Re-imported;
 - ii) Retained their essential character;
 - iii) No repairs or alterations performed on the goods;
 - iv) No charge on repairs due to, for instance, warranty services; and

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

- v) The goods are the same as on the traveller TRD 1.
- e) Only items with clear identifying features can be registered for temporary export to ease re-importation.
- f) Registered personal effects that return unchanged and identifiable are exempt from duties and VAT.

2.6 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 months. Travellers staying longer must apply for an extension at any Customs Office at least 30 working days before the TRD1 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.
- j) The Customs Officer must:
 - i) Scan the traveller's passport and TC-01; and
 - ii) Capture goods details for re-exportation onto the TRD 1 if not already captured.
- k) The traveller must present the items for inspection.
- l) A physical inspection must be conducted to verify that the exported goods match the declared goods. The Customs Officer may elect to supervise the export.
- m) Goods that are not personal effects must be declared on CCD (refer to SC-CF-55).
- n) The Customs Officer evaluates whether the goods pose a revenue risk:
 - i) If no risk, the traveller may exit the PPA.
 - ii) For high-value goods:
 - A) The traveller must lodge a provisional payment (PP) for high-risk goods:
 - B) If no lodged, the goods are detained and the system updated.
 - C) If lodged, payment is processed per the payment procedure.
- o) To issue a notice of detained goods, the Customs Officer must record the goods' details on the TRD 1.

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

- p) 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; and
 - iii) That the detention is temporary until time of departure from South Africa.
- q) The traveller can request to have the existing TRD 1 for temporary import purposes extended.

2.7 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 scans the passport and selects the TRD 1 to amend for processing the refund on the system.
- d) Where the details of the goods do not match on the goods on the system, the Customs Officer:
- i) Rejects the application for the refund; and
 - ii) Provides the traveller with reasons for the rejection of the application.
- e) The traveller verifies and signs the amended TRD 1 electronically using the signature pad.
- f) Refunds are paid via EFT or bank draft if the traveller is a non-resident without a South African bank account.
- g) Travellers without a South African bank account must provide the correct SWIFT or BIC code when departing.
- h) The Customs Officer must print the TRD 1.
- i) The Customs Officer gives the traveller their passport and the amended TRD 1.
- j) The traveller is allowed to exit the PPA by the Customs Officer.

3 REFERENCES

3.1 Legislation

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

3.2 Cross References

DOCUMENT #	DOCUMENT TITLE
GEN-PAYM-01-G01	Payment Rules – External Guide
SC-CF-55	Clearance Declaration – External Policy
SC-PA-01-03	Duty Free Allowances for Travellers – External Guide
SC-PA-01-06	Excess Currency – External Policy

Effective Date: 30 June 2025

SC-PA-01-12	SATMS Through the SARS website – External Guide
SC-PA-01-13	SATMS Through the Mobi-App – External Guide

4 DEFINITIONS, ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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

5 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.

For more information about the contents of this publication you may:

- Visit the SARS website at 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).