

FAQs on STP-Plus

1) What is STP-Plus? What is the difference between STP and STP-Plus?

The STP programme comprises of two tiers, namely the STP and the STP-Plus. In order to achieve the STP or the STP-Plus status, companies must meet the requirements under the STP Guidelines or the STP Criteria, respectively.

The STP Criteria is an enhanced version of STP Guidelines. The STP Criteria contains a set of minimum criteria which is mandatory for the “STP-Plus” certification.

As for the STP Guidelines, there are no minimum criteria but companies are required to adopt the 8 security elements under the STP Guidelines to enhance the security of their operations and supply chains.

2) Why is there a need for STP-Plus?

When the STP programme was introduced in 2007, Singapore Customs adopted a flexible approach through the STP Guidelines. This is due to different levels of awareness and degree of readiness among the industry. Having worked with the industry for more than one year, Singapore Customs finds that many companies have also put in place robust security measures and best practices that exceeded the STP Guidelines and thus are ready to progress to a higher level. The industry is also generally more aware of the importance of supply chain security.

Singapore Customs is in the process of discussing mutual recognition of programmes with other customs administrations, and some of these programmes entail meeting minimum criteria. In order to achieve compatibility of programmes, the STP needs to be aligned with international standards.

3) What are the minimum criteria under the STP-Plus?

The STP minimum criteria are stated in the “STP Criteria” document. A company must meet all minimum criteria stated in the STP Criteria before the STP-Plus status could be accorded to the company.

4) What are the additional benefits for a STP-Plus company?

The STP-Plus serves as an enhanced “trust mark” or “quality mark” that a company’s supply chain security measures are comparable to international security best practices and standards. The STP Plus status also attests to a company’s good compliance records as a trusted partner of Singapore Customs

Other than enjoying the current benefits offered under the STP programme, Singapore Customs is also negotiating Mutual Recognition Arrangements with countries having comparable supply chain security programmes to facilitate the importation of cargoes that are exported by STP-Plus certified companies.

Benefits will continue to evolve as Singapore Customs continues to work with other agencies to explore trade facilitative benefits for companies. We also welcome feedback or suggestions from companies on the type of benefits they would like to have for STP Plus.

5) How will the introduction of STP-Plus affect companies?

For existing STP companies:

The existing STP status of certified companies will not be affected. The STP remains a voluntary programme. However, if a company already has robust security measures in place, Singapore Customs encourage the company to be certified under the higher status i.e. the STP-Plus and enjoy the potential benefits offered under the STP-Plus. For companies that already have robust security measures and best practices that exceeded the STP Guidelines, minimal effort will be required to upgrade to STP-Plus.

For new companies that are not STP-certified:

The STP will remain a voluntary programme. Companies who wish to be certified under the STP can choose to be certified under the STP Guidelines or STP Criteria. The company could do an initial self-assessment against the STP Guidelines and Criteria to gauge how robust their security measures are.

The STP applicant will continue to apply for the STP programme as per existing procedures and indicate whether the company is targeting for STP or STP-Plus status. Based on assessment and findings from the on-site validation, Singapore Customs will award the STP-Plus status to the company if the company meets all minimum criteria stated in the STP Criteria. For companies that cannot meet the minimum criteria but are able to fulfil the requirements under the STP Guidelines, the STP status will be accorded.

6) What are the application, validation and certification processes for companies that are interested in STP Plus?

For an existing STP company:

An existing STP company is strongly encouraged to conduct its initial self-assessment against the STP Criteria to gauge how robust its security measures are. Should an existing STP company be interested in the STP-Plus, the company could inform Singapore Customs. An existing STP company is not

required to submit new applications for STP Plus as Singapore Customs will capitalise on existing security profile and documents, as far as possible and highlight the additional measures that the company need to provide or to improve on in order to qualify for the STP-Plus. Alternatively, the company may also submit an updated security profile to Singapore Customs.

Once Singapore Customs has assessed that an existing STP company is ready for STP-Plus, Singapore Customs will arrange with the company to conduct an on-site validation to validate only on the additional measures to meet the requirements under the STP Criteria.

Subsequently, if the company is able to meet all minimum criteria under the STP Criteria, the company will be accorded with the STP-Plus status. However, if the company is unable to meet any of the minimum criteria under the STP Criteria, Singapore Customs could work with the company to improve its security measures to meet the STP Criteria.

For new companies which are not STP-certified:

The application, validation and certification processes are similar for both STP Guidelines and STP Criteria. The company is strongly encouraged to do its initial self-assessment against the STP Guidelines and the STP Criteria to gauge how robust its internal security policies, processes and procedures are.

A company who wishes to apply for the STP or STP-Plus status should lodge a formal application with Singapore Customs. The same form is used for both STP and STP Plus applications. The company should submit the application together with a security profile of the company and the relevant support documents. This will be followed by an on-site validation after Singapore Customs conducts a paper assessment of the company's security profile.

Based on the assessment and findings from the on-site validation, Singapore Customs will accord the company with STP-Plus status if the company is able to meet all minimum criteria under the STP Criteria. However, if the company is unable to meet any of the minimum criteria under the STP Criteria, Singapore Customs could work with the company to improve its security measures to meet the STP Criteria.

7) How long will the application process for STP-Plus take?

For an existing STP company:

For an existing STP company, the process will be expedited since the company has already submitted its security profile and has been validated against the STP Guidelines. Singapore Customs will work with the company and highlight

additional measures that the company will need to implement or improve on in order to qualify for the STP Plus.

For a new company that is not STP-certified:

The duration of the application process will depend on the complexity of a company's business operations and the number of sites involved. If a company has most of the security elements/measures in place and complete documentation is provided together with the STP application, the whole application/certification process will be made smoother. The officer who receives the company's application will be able to provide an indication of the timeframe.

8) Can a company first apply for STP and then upgrade to STP-Plus?

Yes. A company is not ready for STP-Plus can first target to meet the requirements under the STP Guidelines and obtain the STP status. Once the company has improved its security measures and feels that it is ready for STP Plus, the company can inform Singapore Customs who will then work with the company for the upgrade.