

Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement
(Hereinafter referred to as "CEPA")

Application Procedures for Hong Kong Service Supplier (HKSS) Certificate

Frequently Asked Questions

1.	<p>What is the definition for "Hong Kong Service Supplier" (HKSS)? Are there any changes to the definition in the Second Agreement Concerning Amendment to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services (Amendment Agreement II)?</p>
	<p>"Hong Kong Service Supplier" (HKSS) include "juridical persons" (法人) and "natural persons" (自然人). Generally speaking, a "juridical person" means any legal entity duly constituted or organised under the applicable laws of Hong Kong, including corporation, partnership and sole proprietorship, etc. and has engaged in substantive business operations in Hong Kong. A "natural person" means a permanent resident of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).</p> <p>Generally speaking, "juridical persons" and "natural persons" will be able to enjoy CEPA preferential treatments provided that they fulfill the definition and related requirements set out in Annex 3 of CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services as amended.</p> <p>The definition of HKSS is amended under the Amendment Agreement II where the requirement on HKSS as a juridical person to engage in substantive business operations in Hong Kong for three years is removed in most services sectors, whereas the period requirement of substantive business operations remains in only a few services sectors.</p>
2.	<p>What are the services sectors that will maintain the period requirement on HKSS to engage in substantive business operations in Hong Kong upon implementation of Amendment Agreement II?</p>
	<p>There are only very few services sectors that will still maintain the period requirement on HKSS to engage in substantive business operations in Hong Kong upon implementation of Amendment Agreement II, including legal services (3 years), construction and related engineering services (5 years), all insurance and insurance-related services (5 years), air transport ground services (5 years), and third party international shipping agency services (5 years)</p>
3.	<p>Do all HKSS have to apply to the Trade and Industry Department (TID) for a Hong Kong Service Supplier Certificate (HKSS Certificate), before they can apply for preferential treatment under CEPA?</p>
	<p>HKSS as a juridical person should apply to TID for a HKSS Certificate, and then apply to relevant Mainland authorities for providing services in the Mainland with CEPA preferential treatments. Each HKSS Certificate is valid for 2 years. Upon the expiry of the HKSS Certificates, its holders may, according to their individual needs, apply for renewal of the certificates. Renewal of HKSS Certificate is entirely voluntary.</p> <p>HKSS who wants to enjoy CEPA preferential treatments as a natural person is <u>not</u> required to apply for a HKSS Certificate.</p>

4.	<p>For majority of the services sectors where the period requirement for HKSS to engage in substantive business operations in Hong Kong has been removed, does it mean that no supporting documents will be required for application for HKSS Certificate?</p>
	<p>No. The documentary requirements for application for HKSS Certificate are set out in Article 6.1 of Annex 3 (Definition of “Service Supplier” and Related Requirements) to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services as amended. Details are available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/files/2025/ntss012025_a.pdf</p> <p>In general, applicants are required to fill out an application form and provide a Statutory Declaration attested by an attesting officer recognised by the Mainland (i.e. China Appointed Attesting Officer), as well as provide the following documents for <u>the latest year (or the latest financial year, as the case may be)</u> to substantiate that it has fulfilled the eligibility criteria of a HKSS -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of Incorporation; • Business Registration Certificate and Complete Extract of Information on the Business Register; • Audited financial statements; • Profits Tax Returns furnished to the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) and Tax Assessments or correspondences issued by IRD; • Employer’s Return of Remuneration and Pensions furnished to IRD; • Computerised Land Register or Lease; • Licence, permit or confirmation letter issued by relevant authorities, organisations in Hong Kong relevant to the nature and scope of business in Hong Kong as required by the laws of Hong Kong; and • Documentary requirements for certain services sectors according to requirements specified in Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended. Examples of such services sectors include “all insurance and insurance related services - insurance companies”, “banking and other financial services (excluding insurance and securities)”, “legal services”, “maritime transport services”, “value-added telecommunications services”, etc. <p>For services sectors that still maintain the period requirement on HKSS to engage in substantive business operations in Hong Kong after implementation of Amendment Agreement II (see Question 2), applicants should provide supporting documents for <u>each of the applicable years</u>.</p>
5.	<p>We are a start-up company, are supporting documents still required for application for HKSS Certificate?</p>
	<p>Applicants are required to provide supporting documents (including audited financial statements, Profits Tax Returns furnished to the IRD, Tax Assessments or correspondences issued by the IRD, etc.) to fulfill the documentary requirements set out in Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended and to prove their status as a “juridical person”, who have engaged in substantive business operations in Hong Kong.</p> <p>According to Article 7 of Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended, in order to apply to the Mainland’s examining authorities for enjoying CEPA preferential treatments, HKSS should still submit to the Mainland’s examining authorities the documents and information, statutory declaration and HKSS Certificate as required under Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended.</p>

6.	<p>Can foreign investors enjoy the preferential treatment under CEPA?</p> <p>Foreign investors providing services, whether in the form of “natural person” or “juridical person”, are eligible to enjoy the preferential treatment under CEPA on the condition that they fulfill the definition and requirements for HKSS set out in Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended.</p>
7.	<p>How to apply for a HKSS Certificate?</p> <p>TID is responsible for handling applications for HKSS Certificate. Application is open to eligible enterprises (including corporations, partnerships and sole proprietorships, etc).</p> <p>Applications should be sent electronically, by post or in person to the Customer Service Centre of the Hong Kong Service Supplier and Hong Kong Investor (HKSS&HKI) Certification Section. Applications for HKSS Certificate in banking and other financial services (excluding insurance and securities) sector should be sent to the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA). The application will be referred to TID for processing after HKMA has completed its preliminary assessment. Information on the address and office hours of the Customer Service Centre of the HKSS&HKI Certification Section is available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/our_work/cepa/other_information/contact.html</p> <p>Details of the application procedures and current fee for HKSS Certificate are set out in the latest relevant Notice to Service Suppliers issued from time to time by TID which is available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/2025/ntss012025.html?categoryId=7</p>
8.	<p>How long does it take for processing a fresh HKSS Certificate application?</p> <p>Under normal circumstances, TID will complete the processing of an application within 14 clear working days from the date of receipt of a duly completed application form accompanied by all the requisite supporting documents.</p> <p>If the application form and/or the accompanying documents are not properly completed or have discrepancies, the processing time will be longer.</p>
9.	<p>Can I apply for additional copies of the HKSS Certificate to facilitate presentation to various Mainland’s examining authorities for enjoyment of CEPA benefit?</p> <p>HKSS Certificate holders can apply to TID for issue of Certified True Copy (CTC) of their valid HKSS Certificates. Details of the application procedures for CTC and current fee are set out in the latest relevant Notice to Service Suppliers issued from time to time by TID which is available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/2025/ntss032025.html?categoryId=7</p>

10.	<p>Do eligible HKSS Certificate holders have to apply for renewal of the HKSS Certificate, or make a fresh application for a HKSS Certificate in order to continue to enjoy the preferential treatment under the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended? If HKSS Certificate holders need to apply for renewal of HKSS Certificate, when should the application be lodged? How long does it take for processing the application?</p>
	<p>All HKSS Certificate holders who continue to fulfill the definition and related requirements of HKSS set out in Annex 3 to the Agreement on Trade in Services as amended during the validity period of the HKSS Certificate are eligible to enjoy preferential treatment under CEPA.</p> <p>Enterprises who wish to extend the validity of their HKSS Certificates should submit applications for renewal to TID within the period of 60 days before and 180 days after the date of expiry of their HKSS Certificates. The renewed HKSS Certificate will be valid for two years from the date of expiry of the previous certificate. TID will complete the processing of a renewal application within 5 clear working days from the date of receipt of the duly completed application form and all requisite supporting documents. If the application form and/or the accompanying documents are not properly completed or have discrepancies, the processing time will be longer.</p> <p>If the HKSS Certificate has already expired for over 180 days, the holder may submit fresh application for HKSS Certificate by following the requirements and procedures set out in the latest Notice to Service Suppliers. Under normal circumstances, TID will complete the processing of an application within 14 clear working days from the date of receipt of the duly completed application form and all requisite supporting documents.</p> <p>Details of the renewal procedures and current fee for HKSS Certificate are set out in the latest relevant Notice to Service Suppliers issued from time to time by TID which is available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/2025/ntss022025.html?categoryId=7</p>
11.	<p>If an enterprise is engaged in a range of services in Hong Kong, how should it fill in the application form and what services sector will be shown on the HKSS Certificate?</p>
	<p>To facilitate Mainland's examining authorities in verifying the application for preferential treatment under CEPA from the holder of the HKSS Certificate, the HKSS Certificate shows the services sector/sub-sector in which the HKSS concerned is currently engaged in Hong Kong. In deciding on the services sector/sub-sector to be shown on the HKSS Certificate, applicants may refer to the relevant requirements in the latest relevant Notice to Service Suppliers issued from time to time by TID which is available on the following TID webpage -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/detail.html?categoryId=7</p> <p>Under normal circumstances, HKSS Certificate holders may apply to the Mainland's examining authorities to enjoy CEPA benefits in services sectors not limited to the services sector the applicant is currently engaged in Hong Kong and therefore, the HKSS providing a range of services can apply for one HKSS Certificate. If necessary, HKSS Certificate holders may apply for CTC of their valid HKSS Certificates for presentation to different Mainland's examining authorities at the same time. Please refer to Question 9 on the application for CTC for details.</p>

12.	Can an applicant request amendment of the name of the service supplier printed on the HKSS Certificate when applying for renewal?
	<p>HKSS Certificate holders who wish to amend the name of service supplier printed on the HKSS Certificate due to change of its enterprise name should furnish an application for amendment of HKSS Certificate in accordance with the procedures set out in the latest relevant Notice to Service Suppliers issued from time to time by TID which is available on the following webpage, together with the application for renewal -</p> <p>https://www.tid.gov.hk/en/tradecircular/2025/ntss032025.html?categoryId=7</p> <p>To facilitate the trade, TID accepts applications for amendment and renewal furnished in tandem and supported by the same set of common supporting documents.</p>
13.	We are a bank. Do we need to lodge our renewal application to the HKMA as in the case of our application for the original Certificate?
	<p>To facilitate the trade and reduce processing time, TID and HKMA have agreed that applications for renewal of HKSS Certificate in banking and other financial services (excluding insurance and securities) sector should be lodged with TID direct, instead of routing through HKMA first.</p>

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