Transition from Security Agencies Grading Exercise (SAGE) to Security Agencies Competency Evaluation (SACE)

<u>FAQs for Private Sector Service Buyers</u>

1. **What is Security Agencies Competency Evaluation (SACE)?**
- The new SACE framework will replace the current Security Agencies Grading Exercise (SAGE).
- SACE focuses on the assessment of core and elective competencies of Security Agencies (SAs).
- SAs are rigorously assessed against four competency indicators across nine core competencies in training, operational processes, command, control and communications (C3), and manpower. Technology adopted by SAs to enable competency development in these areas are also considered during assessment.
- All SAs must pass all the core competencies in order to be eligible for a licence to continue operations as an SA.

2. **How different is SACE from SAGE?**

	SAGE	SACE
Performance	SA is assigned a grade (A, B, C & D) based on the points they obtain, and their overall position relative to the industry's performance.	Assessment will be based on core and elective competencies to assess whether an SA is competent in achieving key security outcomes. SAs will be assessed on whether they pass or fail each competency. An SA has to pass all core competencies to be eligible for licence renewal.
Assessment Period	Annual assessment from Jun to Sep (in the same year)	Assessment will be conducted year round. For existing SAs, assessment is tied to the SAs' licence renewal date, and will usually commence 6 months before the expiry of the licence. For new SAs, assessment will be scheduled after an application is received.
Licensing requirement	SAs with two consecutive 'D' grades may not have their licence renewed	Passing SACE will be a licensing criterion. SAs which fail SACE assessment will not be eligible for licence renewal or be eligible to be granted a licence (for new SAs).

3. **Why the transition from grading to competency assessment?**
- The security industry has sufficiently matured. SAGE grade assigned based on relative performance had lost its usefulness in raising professionalism and capabilities of security industry.
- SACE assessment reflect the core and elective competencies of security services in key security functions such as access control, patrol and surveillance, and incident management.
- Evaluation of SAs under SACE will be done in batches based on date of expiry of existing licences. For the first batch of agencies with licences expiring in Jan 2022, PLRD has notified them on 1 Aug 2021 to prepare for the SACE assessment commencing Sep 2021.
- Elective competencies will be implemented from Jan 2023 onwards.

4. How can Service Buyers transit to the new SACE?

- The existing SAGE grade is valid till 31 Dec 2021. From 1 Jan 2022 onwards, security service buyers would not be able to specify the SAGE grading of providers required in their tender requirements.
- During the transition period for SAs, namely from 1 Jan 2022 until they receive outcomes of their SACE assessment for licence renewal, their licences would remain valid.
- SAs are notified of timelines and assessment processes about six months before their licence expiry dates. Buyers are encouraged to work closely with their incumbent SA to minimise any potential disruptions to provision of security services.
- It's an offence under the Private Security Industry Act to provide security services without a valid SA licence. Service buyers should ensure that the SAs they have contracted possess a valid licence, on an annual basis.

5. How does SACE help in the selection of SAs for security services contract?

- With SACE, service buyers can be assured that SAs have been assessed to be competent to perform key security functions namely access control, patrol & surveillance. Only SAs that are assessed to have passed all nine core competencies will be eligible for licence renewal or be eligible to be granted a licence (for new SAs)*.
  *SAs will also need to meet the other stipulated licensing criteria before being granted a licence.

- An SA which has passed the nine core competencies would have the following competencies:

  - ✓ Deploy trained and qualified security officers
  - ✓ Invests in continuous professional development and skills upgrading of security officers
  - ✓ Able to conduct routine training exercises (one exercise for each of the three scenarios stipulated by PLRD within six months prior to SACE notification)
  - ✓ Able to conduct red-teaming exercises (three exercises within six months prior to SACE notification)
  - ✓ Has in place a Business Continuity Plan to ensure continuity of business operations in two out of four crisis scenarios (i.e major disaster, IT-related incidents, terror related incidents and diseases outbreak)
  - ✓ Able to operate a physical 24-hour command centre or operations room
  - ✓ Deploys a robust system for supervisory checks
  - ✓ Has in place robust SOPs and systems to respond to and manage security incidents
  - ✓ Has in place processes to (a) ensure Progressive Wage Model (PWM) are paid in accordance to deployment grades, (b) track hours of work, (c) ensure security officers have access to Key Employment Terms and itemised payslips, and (d) track utilisation of leave entitlements.

- From Jan 2023, service buyers can select SAs which have passed Elective Competencies and meet enhanced security requirements. In the interim, service buyers should continue to evaluate and select SAs based on track record, uniqueness of their security requirements and quality of security solutions to achieve desired security outcomes.

- SAs which pass an additional five Elective Competencies in addition to the nine core competencies will be eligible for a 2-year licence. Details of the Elective Competencies will be made available on the SPF website subsequently.

6. Why can't the elective competency assessment be implemented together with the core competency assessment?

- SPF has adopted a phased implementation for core and elective competencies to allow SAs lead time to prepare and build up capabilities for the elective competencies, as well as transit to new contracts.

7. With the SACE validity to be 1 year, should contract period for security services be shortened to one year?
- SACE is tied to licence renewal to allow SAs to focus on competency development and raise industry standards over time. Service buyers may establish longer contract durations to ensure stability in security services and lower amortised cost for use of technology solutions.
- The competencies assessed under SACE will be reviewed periodically to align with technological and industry developments, with the intent of increasing overall industry standards. This will help to spur SAs to invest in training and technology to deliver high quality security services.

8. How would I know if a security agency has met the Core competencies under SACE?
- PLRD will publish SACE results on the SPF website wef 1 Jan 2022.
- PLRD will also issue a SACE report card to SAs for the SACE results. Service buyers may request for a copy of the SACE report card from the SAs for verification purposes.
- PLRD will inform Security Agencies of their SACE results at least 2 months before their licence expiry. Security Agencies who are able to meet all other licensing criteria will be informed of their licence renewal status about 1 month before their licence expiry.

9. What should I do when my security agency fails the SACE assessment?
- As passing SACE's core competencies will be a licensing criterion, an SA which fails the SACE will not be eligible for licence renewal. Such an SA would be given at least 2 months prior to licence expiry to wind down and cease operations.

10. Will SACE increase cost for security services?
- Contracts for security services must meet the wage requirements for security officers as mandated under the Progressive Wage Model (PWM). The PWM requirement remains as a licensing condition for SAs to obtain or renew their licences and covers all Singapore citizens and permanent residents employed by licensed SAs. Details of the PWM requirements and basic wage levels can be viewed at the MOM website.
- It is crucial for service buyers to do their part in uplifting essential workers in the security sector by supporting the PWM which provides a clear career pathway for security officers' wages to rise along with training and improvements in productivity, and is reviewed periodically to ensure sustainable wage growth. By doing so, service buyers can also enjoy better service standards and quality.

If you require clarifications, please write to us at:
- (a) SPF_Licensing_Feedback@spf.gov.sg (for SACE related queries)
- (b) MHA_Security_OBC_Helpdesk@mha.gov.sg (for Outcome-Based Contract related queries)