Notary Public in Singapore: Role, Duties and Common Services

Notary General · https://help.law.com.sg/faq/what-are-the-common-singapore-notarial-services/

A Notary Public in Singapore is a practising lawyer appointed by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) to certify and witness documents intended for use overseas. Notarial services ensure your documents are legally recognised locally and abroad. This guide explains the notary's role and duties, the two most common services, certified true copies and witnessing of signatures, and helps you determine which service you need.

What is a Notary Public and who appoints them?

A Notary Public in Singapore is typically a practising lawyer appointed by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL) under the Notaries Public Act and its internal guidelines.

The primary responsibility of a Notary Public involves attesting to deeds, contracts, and other legal instruments intended for international use. They provide authenticated certificates of proper document execution, marked with their signature and notarial seal.

A key distinction from other legal officials is that a Notary Public is in a position to witness a document signed in front of him which is in a foreign language, unlike Commissioners for Oaths who do not have this capacity.

What are the duties and functions of a Notary Public?

A Notary Public serves as an officer of the law with three primary responsibilities:

1. To attest or certify under official seal deeds and other documents, including wills or testamentary documents, conveyances of real and personal properties, and powers of attorney.
2. To authenticate such documents under signature and official seal in a manner that renders them acceptable as proof to judicial or other public authorities in the country where they are to be used. This may be accomplished through issuing a notarial certificate regarding due execution of

documents or by drawing them as public instruments.

3. To administer oaths and declarations for use in proceedings.

Reference: Brooke's Notary.

What are the common notarial services?

Certified true copy of documents

What it is: A Notary Public verifies that a photocopy or scan is an exact, unaltered replica of the original document. See our full guide on certified true copies.

When you need it: submitting documents to overseas institutions (eg. universities, employers, governments); legal processes requiring verified copies (eg. immigration, visa applications).

Examples: passports, NRICs, or birth certificates; educational certificates (diplomas, transcripts); marriage certificates, bank statements, or court orders.

Important notes: the Notary must physically inspect the original document, and digital scans alone are insufficient; certified copies may require further authentication (eg. Apostille) for overseas use.

Witnessing and attesting signatures

What it is: A Notary Public observes you signing a document, confirms your identity, and certifies that you signed voluntarily and understood its contents. See our full guide on witnessing and attestation.

When you need it: signing legal documents for use outside Singapore (eg. affidavits, powers of attorney, property agreements); forms requiring notarisation for foreign authorities (eg. adoption papers, tax declarations).

Examples: statutory declarations for overseas use; affidavits for overseas court; powers of attorney for international transactions; sale and purchase agreements involving foreign parties; corporate resolutions (eg. company director signatures).

Important notes: all signatories must appear in person with valid photo ID; the Notary does not provide legal advice, and only verifies the signing process.

How do I decide which service I need?

If you need to...	Choose this service
Submit a photocopy abroad	Certified True Copy + Apostille*
Prove you signed a document	Witnessing and Attesting Signatures + Apostille*
Verify a document's authenticity	Certified True Copy + Apostille*
Execute a foreign legal form (eg. POA)	Witnessing and Attesting Signatures

*Apostille: a certification for Hague Convention countries. Non-Hague countries may require consular legalisation.

How are signed documents authenticated?

For high-risk documents (eg. corporate agreements), Notaries may:

- Require SingPass verification to confirm a signatory's signature and/or authority.
- Contact issuing institutions (eg. banks) for confirmation.
- Request a statutory declaration from the document holder.

Example: A director uses SingPass Authentication to authenticate his signature on a company resolution.

Does the Notary Public give legal advice?

No. In engaging our Notary Public's notarial services, please note that our Notary Public is performing his function as a notary public and not as a lawyer.

If you are signing a document, eg. affidavit, statutory declaration, agreement, power of attorney, before the Notary Public, no legal advice will be rendered. For any advice or issues relating to your document, please check with your recipient or the party that prepared the document, eg. your lawyers and banks.

Prior to attending our office, please ensure that your document is prepared, printed and complete. For example, if you are signing a statutory declaration form or bank form before our Notary Public,

please ensure that all particulars and details of the document are duly filled and completed, and ready for execution.

How do I know a Notary Public is genuine?

Just as there are fake documents being produced for notarisation, there may be people who claim to be a Singapore Notary Public when they are not duly appointed by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL).

To verify if a particular Notary Public is genuine, please visit SAL's Notary Public Directory at legalisation.sal.sg/Directory.

How do I prepare for my appointment?

For certified true copies:

1. Bring the original document.
2. Digital documents: forward the original PDF (no screenshots) via email to us.
3. Ensure the copy is clear and complete (no missing pages).

For witnessing signatures:

1. All signatories must attend with original photo ID (eg. passport, NRIC).
2. Provide the final version of the document (unsigned).
3. Confirm if your document requires additional steps (eg. translation, Apostille).

Frequently asked questions

Can a Notary Public certify a true copy of a translation? Yes, if the original translation is provided to the Notary. The Notary certifies the copy as a true copy of the translation produced, and does not certify the accuracy of the translation itself.

How long does notarisation take? Simple tasks take 15 to 30 minutes. Complex documents (eg. multi-page contracts) may require longer.

Is a Notary the same as a Commissioner for Oaths? No. Commissioners administer oaths for documents used in Singapore, while Notaries handle international documents.

Can I use a screenshot for a CTC? No. Only original digital files (eg. PDFs from issuers) are accepted.

What does notarisation cost? Notarial fees are regulated. See Notary Public Fees in Singapore.

Common scenarios

1. Applying for a work visa in Germany, submitting your university degree: Certified True Copy plus Apostille from the Singapore Academy of Law.
2. Selling a property in Australia, needing to sign a power of attorney remotely: not possible. Singapore Notaries cannot witness remote signings; all parties must be present in person.
3. Overseas employer requests a notarised copy of your passport: Certified True Copy of your passport.
4. Submitting a utility bill available only online: the Notary inspects the digital bill on your device or the original PDF downloaded, and certifies a printed copy.
5. A director abroad needs to authenticate a company resolution: use SingPass Authentication to confirm authenticity of the signed resolutions; the Notary verifies authority via ACRA. Client to provide a current business profile of the company.

Final tips

- Always confirm requirements with the document's recipient (eg. Apostille, translation).
- Digital does not mean self-printed: self-scanned copies cannot be certified.
- Check if your country requires consular legalisation (eg. Vietnam, UAE).
- Notaries may refuse certification if authenticity is unverifiable.
- Notarial fees are regulated. Ask for a quote in advance.

Book a notarial appointment

To engage our Notary Public for certified true copies, witnessing of signatures or other notarial services, book an appointment at book.law.com.sg.