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Framework / Cybersecurity / Other

DEF STAN 05-138 — Cyber Security for Defence Suppliers (Issue 4)

Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4 sets the cyber controls MOD suppliers must meet at Cyber Risk Profile Levels 0 to 3, applied through DEFCON 658 and the Cyber Security Model.



What it is

Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4 (cover title Cyber Security Standard for Suppliers) is the UK MOD standard that lists the cyber controls a supplier must meet at each of four Cyber Risk Profile levels, 0 to 3, assigned under the MOD's Cyber Security Model (CSM). It applies to all MOD procurements, MOD suppliers and their subcontract suppliers that have a relationship to one or more MOD contracts. Issue 4 is dated May 14, 2024 and was first published on gov.uk on May 23, 2024; the Cyber Security Model version 4 process it supports has applied to new risk assessments since December 3, 2025 (ISN 2025/07).

At a glance

PUBLISHER
UK MOD; published by DStan

TYPE
Standard

VERSION
Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4 (Cyber Security Model version 4); ISN 2026/01 interim covering text, March 30, 2026

EFFECTIVE
December 3, 2025 (Cyber Security Model version 4 process required for new risk assessments, ISN 2025/07)

DOMAIN
Cybersecurity

FAMILY
Other

REGION
United Kingdom

INDUSTRY
Aerospace & Defense

ADOPTION MODEL
Industry Requirement

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLEXITY
High

Source: gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-security-for-defence-suppliers-def-stan-05-138-issue-4

Why it matters

- **Four levels, one control table** Clause 3 lists every control against Levels 0 to 3, so a supplier can see exactly what its assigned level requires.
- **Evidence as a duty** Clause 2.4 requires a documented and implemented control with auditable evidence for each requirement.
- **Cyber Essentials built in** Control 0001 requires Cyber Essentials at every level and control 0002 requires Cyber Essentials Plus at Levels 2 and 3.

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How SmartSuite supports DEF STAN 05-138

Control Table by Level

Load the clause 3 controls for the assigned Cyber Risk Profile with owners, implementation status and linked evidence for each.

Risk Assessment Reference Register

Record each contract's Risk Assessment Reference, assigned level, questionnaire date, result and the annual anniversary review.

Cyber Improvement Plan Tracker

Track each gap, committed date, owner and closure evidence, and the plan agreed in the contract.

Subcontractor Flow Down

Record each subcontractor's level, reference, questionnaire outcome and any improvement plan in Third Party Risk Management.

Cyber Essentials and Certification Status

Track Cyber Essentials and Plus certificates and expiry against controls 0001 and 0002, and any DCC certification held.

Vulnerability and Exercise Calendar

Schedule the monthly vulnerability scans, response plan exercises and other recurring control activities with evidence attached.

Common framework mappings

CIS Controls v8.1 | Cyber Essentials | ISO 27001:2022 | ISO 27002:2022 | NIST CSF 2.0 | NIST 800-53 Rev.5 | SOC 2 | UK CAF v3.1 | CMMC 2.0

Official resources

DEF STAN 05-138 - Cyber Security for Defence Systems

Official document detailing cyber security requirements for UK defense systems.

gov.uk/government/publications/cyber-security-for-defence-suppliers-def-stan-05-138

UK Ministry of Defence Cyber Security Guidance

Provides implementation guidance for organizations applying DEF STAN 05-138 standards.

gov.uk/guidance/defence-cyber-protection-partnership

NCSC Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF)

The NCSC's CAF collection, the outcome-based framework that the MOD's cyber requirements sit alongside.

ncsc.gov.uk/collection/cyber-assessment-framework

MOD Industry Security Notices (ISNs)

The MOD's notices to industry, including ISN 2025/07 on the Cyber Security Model v4 and ISN 2026/01 and 2026/02 on Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4 and DEFCON 658.

gov.uk/government/publications/industry-security-notices-isns

Frequently asked questions

What are the four Cyber Risk Profile levels in Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4?

Clause 2.2 defines Level 0 Basic with 3 controls, Level 1 Foundational with 101, Level 2 Advanced with 139 and Level 3 Expert with 144. The MOD's Cyber Security Model risk assessment assigns the level according to the assessed cyber risk of the work, and the assigned level, not the supplier's own risk view, sets the minimum controls. They replace Issue 3's five profiles, N/A, Very Low, Low, Moderate and High.

Does Def Stan 05-138 require Cyber Essentials?

Yes. Control 0001 requires Cyber Essentials certification covering the scope needed for all aspects of the contract at every level, and control 0002 requires Cyber Essentials Plus at Levels 2 and 3. The supplier commits to maintain the certification for the duration of the contract.

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What is the role of DEFCON 658?

DEFCON 658 is the contract condition that carries the Cyber Security Model terms. It makes the Def Stan 05-138 controls for the assigned level contractual, requires the supplier to review its Supplier Assurance Questionnaire annually, and contains the obligations a supplier must place on its subcontractors.

What happens if a supplier cannot meet its assigned level?

It completes a Cyber Improvement Plan setting out when it will reach the required level, with timescales or the reasons it cannot comply. The plan forms part of the contract, and the MOD weighs it in supplier selection. Clause 2.5 also requires any control judged inappropriate or impractical to be documented and flagged to the MOD at bidding or as soon as it is identified.

Can certification replace the questionnaire evidence?

ISN 2026/02, dated March 30, 2026, says valid certification issued under the MOD's cyber certification scheme (DCC) at a level equal to or higher than the required level is to be accepted as satisfying the control requirement under DEFCON 658. For example, a Level 3 certificate covers Levels 0 to 2. The questionnaire and risk assessment steps of the Cyber Security Model process still apply to the contract.

License included / downloadable: Yes Def Stan 05-138 Issue 4 is published free on gov.uk as a PDF and is UK Crown copyright; the platform links to the official publication.

Full framework page and mappings: smartsuite.com/frameworks/uk-def-stan-05-138-cyber-security-for-defence-systems