

ANNEX III

ADVANCED LEVEL SUBCOMMITTEE PROCEDURES

The procedures for the Advanced Level Subcommittee (ALS) are designed to accomplish the goals of the reformed IPC. This should be carried out in the most cost effective manner possible by optimizing resource utilization. Accordingly, the ALS procedures should be guided by the following principles:

- Taking advantage, to the maximum extent possible, of existing document classification data within ECLA, FI, and USPC classification places in reclassification work performed by ALS.
- Avoiding redundant intellectual work done by the ALS and the IPC Revision Working Group (IPC/WG).
- Ensuring the quality of the advance level, i.e., that classification places accurately reflect the patent documents classified in the advanced level of the IPC.
- Responding quickly to emerging technologies to ensure the reformed IPC is an effective search tool.
- Maximizing the use of equivalent titles or definitions within existing ECLA, FI and USPC classification places in IPC revisions.
- Prioritizing the reclassification work on all IPC revision projects based on the projected availability of resources at the offices performing the reclassification work.
- Completing the reclassification of documents in approved advanced level projects within the shortest practicable time frame given constraints at each ALS office in order to facilitate prior art searches at all offices and maintain search file integrity.

ALS Procedures

The following statements supplement and provide further detail to the procedures set forth in “Revision Policy and Revision Procedure for the Reformed IPC” (IPC/CE/33/12, Annex IV).

(a) The members of the Subcommittee will communicate in an appropriate way to continuously evaluate revision proposals, prioritize all reclassification work for IPC revision projects, and approve advanced level revisions.

(b) The Subcommittee will review all proposed advanced level IPC revision projects forwarded for consideration by the International Bureau, as well as those proposed by members of the ALS in accordance with the criteria set forth in the document “Revision Policy and Revision Procedure for the Reformed IPC” (IPC/CE/33/12, Annex IV). A current list of all proposed advanced level projects will be posted on the IPC website, along with the status of each proposal as specified in CONOPS 2.6.1. The IPC/WG will not approve any project proposals separately submitted by an office to equivalent areas of the core level when overlapping advanced level proposals are being acted on by the ALS or within their project back file.

(c) In consultation with the IPC/WG, the ALS may assume responsibility for IPC core level revision proposals under consideration by the IPC/WG when the revision proposals impact the advanced level in order to avoid redundant work by the ALS and IPC/WG.

(d) For the purposes of completing the reclassification work required for any revision project, the Subcommittee will review and prioritize on a semi-annual basis all IPC revision requests approved by either the IPC/WG or the ALS. Priority will be assigned on the basis of the availability of a rapporteur for advanced level projects, and the availability of reclassification resources at each ALS office for any IPC project requiring reclassification of documents. In recognition that situations regarding reclassification resources can change, the relative priority of the reclassification work may be changed at any time upon agreement of all ALS offices.

(e) The following procedures will be used for each revision project for which the ALS has responsibility:

- Each ALS office designates an expert as contact from which they select a rapporteur.
- Initial project scope is determined and adjusted based on comments. The ALS will propose an advanced level scheme and post on the e-forum. Interested IPC/WG offices can post their comments on the e-forum within a specified time period.
- ALS offices divide the list of patent documents comprising PCT minimum documentation.
- ALS offices test the provisionally agreed scheme by placing documents, modify the scheme based on this testing, and finalize the scheme in the advanced level when unanimously agreed to by the ALS. Remaining documents are reclassified into the scheme within an agreed to period.

(f) IPC revision projects that require reclassification of the back file can only be approved, if all ALS offices agree on the usefulness from a cost/benefit perspective. Based on the mutual agreement of all ALS offices, an initial time frame will be determined for completion of reclassification work on the project and adjusted when necessary based on unforeseen circumstances.

(g) Newly proposed projects that merely clarify wording of existing advanced level classification places and with no significant document reclassification work required will be approved whenever a qualified majority of ALS members deem them useful.

[Annex IV follows]