

C. PCT 1588

February 27, 2020

Madam,
Sir,

This Circular is addressed to your Office in its capacity as an International Searching Authority, International Preliminary Examining Authority and/or designated/elected Office under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT). It invites your Office to provide information concerning the use of e learning resources for the training of substantive patent examiners.

BACKGROUND

./ At its twelfth session, the PCT Working Group discussed a document (see document PCT/WG/12/6) which presented the responses submitted by Offices in reply to Circular C. PCT 1559, dated February 22, 2019, that had been sent to Offices regarding training of substantive patent examiners. Paragraph 23 of this document proposed a one time survey to Offices on e-learning resources, as follows:

"23. The International Bureau therefore proposes to carry out a one-time survey to explore the policies of Offices with respect to utilizing e-learning resources from various sources for the training of their patent examiners; it would further cover their policies for developing e-learning resources as part of an Office's training infrastructure, and for sharing of resources with other interested Offices or potential users. The survey would further seek to gather the Offices' views on the utility of e-learning, on gaps in existing e-learning resources, and on cooperation in developing and sharing such resources."

The Working Group approved the above proposal (see paragraph 84 of the Summary by the Chair of the session, document PCT/WG/12/24).

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COMPILATION OF E-LEARNING RESOURCES

A Compilation of E-learning Resources for Patent Examiners prepared by the International Bureau was presented at the tenth session of the PCT Working Group in 2017 (see document PCT/WG/10/PRESENTATION/E-LEARNING). This Compilation was further updated based on the responses of Offices to PCT Circulars C. PCT 1529 and 1559 and additional research by the International Bureau. Updates were presented at the subsequent sessions of the Working Group.

A recently updated and slightly revised Compilation including further resources is available at https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=469361. It includes links to a variety of e-learning resources, such as individual examples of different types of e learning resources on various topics, as well as websites aggregating such individual resources. The Compilation illustrates the different types of e-learning resources covered by this survey, such as recorded or live webinars, tutored or fully self-paced distance learning courses, as well as the diverse fields covered by them.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

./ All Offices are invited to fill in the Questionnaire attached to this Circular.

Many Offices may not yet have policies on the use of e-learning resources for the training of substantive patent examiners, or else may not yet have developed or deployed such resources. In particular, smaller Offices, which may not have sufficient resources to develop their own e-learning resources, could however greatly benefit from such resources available from other Offices. Such Offices are therefore particularly invited to explain their views on the utility of and access to e-learning resources and their respective needs.

RESPONSES TO CIRCULAR

Replies to this Circular (preferably by returning an electronic copy of the filled-in Annex attached to this Circular; an electronic copy of the Annex is available from the WIPO website at <https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/circulars>) should be returned by March 16, 2020, preferably by e-mail, to Mr. Kenichiro Natsume, Senior Director, PCT Legal and International Affairs Department at : pcticd@wipo.int. For clarifications, please contact Mr. Lutz Mailänder, Head, International Cooperation on Examination and Training Section at : lutz.mailander@wipo.int.

Responses received prior to the above deadline will be taken into account in the preparation by the International Bureau of a working document on the issue of the use of e-learning resources for the training for substantive patent examiners for discussion at the thirteenth session of the Working Group, scheduled to take place from May 25 to 29, 2020.

Yours sincerely,



John Sandage
Deputy Director General

Enclosure: Annex : Questionnaire on the use of e-learning Resources for the Training of Substantive Patent Examiners

ANNEX TO CIRCULAR PCT C. PCT 1588

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE USE OF E-LEARNING RESOURCES FOR THE TRAINING OF SUBSTANTIVE PATENT EXAMINERS

The availability of e-learning resources has steadily increased over the last years and particular resources have become more sophisticated. Various Offices have engaged in the development of e-learning resources as part of their efforts to develop a training infrastructure for new recruits and experienced examiners. While resources developed by IP institutions usually cover core competencies of patent examiners, other (non-IP) institutions have developed other e-learning facilities catering not exclusively to patent examiners but addressing skills useful for examiners as well, for example, technology specific skills such as searching dedicated databases for bio-sequences.

Examples of e-learning resources which can be accessed through the internet can be found in a Compilation of E-Learning Resources prepared by the International Bureau at https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=469361. The section of the sheet, 'Specific e-Learning resources' of the Compilation, illustrates a variety of topics currently covered; within this section, column D indicates different types of e-learning resources (media), and column F, the variety of access options.

When answering the questions, please note:

This questionnaire covers only e-learning resources that are suitable for the training of technical competencies of patent examiners and not for the training of behavioral or organizational competencies.

For the purpose of this Questionnaire, reading materials for self-study which are downloadable from intranet or internet sites are not considered as e-learning resource, even though some have been included in the Compilation.

An electronic Word copy of the Annex, which facilitates the filling in through some automated features, is available from the WIPO website at <https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/circulars>.

Responding Office:

Name of contact person:

Position:

Email address:

Questions

Obligatory or recommended (voluntary) use of e-learning for the training of substantive patent examiners

1. Has your Office established a policy on the obligatory and/or voluntary use of e-learning resources for the training of substantive patent examiners of your Office?

- Yes
- No, there is no policy yet on the use of e-learning resources (please skip Questions 2, 3, and 4, and go to Question 5)

2. If your answer to Question 1 was Yes: Is the use of e-learning resources an **obligatory** part of the training of substantive patent examiners of your Office (e-learning resources developed by your Office or by other institutions or a combination of both)?

- Yes, use of certain e-learning resources is an obligatory part of the initial training of newly recruited examiners¹
- Yes, use of certain e-learning resources is an obligatory part of the further vocational training of examiners after the initial training¹
- No

3. If your answer to Question 1 was Yes: Does your Office expressly recommend to the examiners of your Office **voluntary** use of particular e-learning resources (e-learning resources developed by your Office, by other institutions, or a combination of both)?

- Yes, our Office recommends use of particular e-learning resources endorsed by our Office (please go to Question 4)
- Yes, our Office recommends the voluntary use of e-learning resources in general without endorsing particular e-learning resources (please skip Question 4 and go to Question 5)
- No (please skip Question 4 and go to Question 5)

¹ Use of further e-learning resources may be voluntary.

4. If your Office has endorsed the obligatory or voluntary use of certain e-learning resources developed by other institutions, please indicate them below (please include URL if possible):

[Click here to enter text.](#)

5. Please indicate below your views regarding the utility of e-learning resources for the training of the patent examiners of your Office and your plans for developing policies on the use of e-learning resources²:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Development of and access to e-learning resources for training of substantive patent examiners

6. Has your Office developed e-learning resources used for the training of patent examiners at your Office?

- Yes, our Office developed all of the e-learning resources used for the training of patent examiners at our Office
- Yes, our Office developed some but not all of the e-learning resources used for the training of patent examiners at our Office
- No

7. If your answer to Question 6 was Yes, are the e-learning resources developed by your Office accessible through the internet for external users (for example examiners of other Offices)?

- Yes, the e-learning resources are accessible for anybody without prior registration
- Yes, the e-learning resources are accessible for anybody after prior registration (only for identification of the user)
- Yes, access to the e-learning resources is however controlled (not accessible for anybody; access is only possible after individual selection/nomination of learners and/or after payment of a fee)
- No

² Observations on access to and development e-learning resources are covered by Question 10.

8. If your answer to Question 6 was Yes, please indicate below those e-learning resources developed by your Office that are accessible for external users and that are not yet listed in the Compilation of e-Learning Resources prepared by the International Bureau:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

9. Do you have any observations on the Compilation of e-Learning Resources prepared by the International Bureau (https://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=469361), for example, items missing, editorial aspects, ...?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

10. Do you have any observations or suggestions regarding availability, access and development of e-learning resources, for example, topics missing among currently available e-learning resources, support needed for developing, deploying or accessing such resources, options for cooperation and sharing,?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Incentives for using e-learning resources

11. Are your examiners permitted to use part of their working time for voluntary e-learning?

Yes

No

12. Has your Office put in place any other incentives for the voluntary use e-learning resources?

Yes

No

13. If your answer to the Question 12 was Yes, please indicate below which incentives have been put in place?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Other

14. Do you have any other observations or suggestions regarding the use of e-learning resources, for example, assessing success of learning, certification of successful participation, WIPO's role in facilitating the use of or access to e-learning resources,?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

[End of Annex and of Circular]