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ORGANIZATION

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Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)

Common Quality Framework for International Search and Preliminary Examination

REPORT ON QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

prepared by the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO)

The Authority should provide general background information relevant to the quality management system (QMS) as set forth in this template.

The descriptions below each main heading of this template should be considered examples of the type and arrangement of information that should be included under each heading. Each Authority may provide additional information beyond that set forth in this template as desired.

This report is not merely an update of last year's CIPO QMS report; it represents a comprehensive overhaul designed to provide a broader and clearer view of CIPO's QMS, with a focus on PCT. As a result, highlighting each individual change would be impractical for readers. For details on quality-related developments at CIPO in 2025, please refer to the "2025 Highlights" section in Article II and the selectively tracked changes.

ARTICLE I. INTRODUCTION (PARAGRAPHS 21.01 - 21.03)

In this introduction, each Authority should include a summary of all changes to their quality management system that have taken place since the previous report on their Quality Management System, and any other matters considered to be interest in relation to quality management.

If applicable, the Authority may at this point indicate any recognized normative reference or basis for their quality management system besides Chapter 21, such as ISO 9001, under the heading "Normative Reference for QMS"

For example: "Normative reference for QMS: ISO 9001, EQS (European Quality System)"

Each Authority should then provide at least the information indicated in the descriptive boxes, under the following headings. Authorities may include process charts if this would facilitate the understanding of an aspect of the report.

Normative reference for QMS: ISO 9001:2015

ARTICLE II. 2025 Highlights

In March 2025, CIPO successfully completed its second ISO 9001:2015 surveillance audit following the 2023 recertification with no non-conformities identified. The next recertification audit is scheduled for March 2026.

In September 2025, CIPO launched an initiative to work towards replacing its internal international applications management system (InterApp) and related components and adopt WIPO's electronic Patent Cooperation Treaty (ePCT) solution. The timeline for completion of this initiative is not yet determined. The initiative includes:

- Implementing WIPO's ePCT solution to manage international patent applications;
- Deploying an in-house solution to address functionality not covered by ePCT (CIPO's internal workflow management for the receiving office and examination tasks, the QC process and payment reconciliation); and
- Decommissioning legacy systems such as InterApp, PCT e-filing, International QC Tool, e-Post Connect and supporting components.

To reinforce our commitment to delivering a consistent and high-quality client experience, CIPO's Patent Branch established a dedicated Service Excellence Team within the Patent Services and Strategic Affairs Division in February 2025. Led by a Program Manager – Service Excellence, this team is focused on ensuring that our patent products and services meet the evolving needs of our clients. The team is responsible for creating and implementing strategies within the branch that aim to elevate customer service, and for responding to external stakeholder feedback. The team also supports internal clients including examination and operations.

Additionally, the following initiatives launched in 2025 further demonstrate our dedication to client service:

- Modernized Client Feedback Tool - Replaced the legacy Online Feedback Mechanism with a streamlined, user-friendly web-based application to enhance direct communication with CIPO (April).
- Mandatory Examination Interviews for national examination - Introduced mandatory interviews in specific cases where defects persist, improving examination timeliness and quality (June).
- Strategic Hiring Initiative - Undertook a large-scale recruitment effort to expand service capacity and support the timely delivery of high-quality patent examination. Additional resources were added to the Quality, Service Excellence, PCT and PPH teams. Each team welcomed another project coordinator.

The Quality Control (QC) questions that CIPO uses in the QC of both Chapter I and Chapter II PCT International search and examination products were further reviewed and updated in April 2025. Additionally, an alternative, more flexible solution to the existing International QC tool has been prepared and will be launched in April 2026.

In April 2025, ISA/IPEA annotated forms and the *ISA & IPEA Training and Reference Manual* were updated.

CIPO continues to stabilize and continually improve the Next Generation Patents (NGP) system, launched in July 2024 and used for processing national applications. NGP introduced a modernized client-facing portal (MyCIPO Patents), an internal integrated financial management system, and a modernized internal system for national applications, replacing TechSource.

Administrative tasks are automated where possible, improving efficiency and reducing manual intervention. International classification processes have also been incorporated in NGP. CIPO continues to enhance NGP functionality and performance through ongoing updates in view of user feedback, ensuring the platform meets evolving client and operational needs.

ARTICLE III. 1. LEADERSHIP AND POLICY

21.04 Confirm that the following are clearly documented, and that this documentation is available internally:

(a) The quality policy established by top management.

(b) The roles and names of those bodies and individuals responsible for the QMS, as specified by top management.

(c) An organizational chart showing all those bodies and individuals responsible for the QMS.

CIPO Patent Branch Quality Policy:

The Patent Branch is committed to ensuring a consistent client experience that delivers quality patent products and services in an efficient and timely manner, creating certainty in the marketplace and stimulating innovation.

The Quality Management System (QMS) ensures:

- That our quality objectives are met;
- That national products and services adhere to the requirements of the Patent Act and Rules;
- That international products and services adhere to the Patent Cooperation Treaty and Regulations;
- A better understanding of clients' needs and expectations; and
- Continual improvement of our processes to meet expectations on quality, cost, and timeliness.

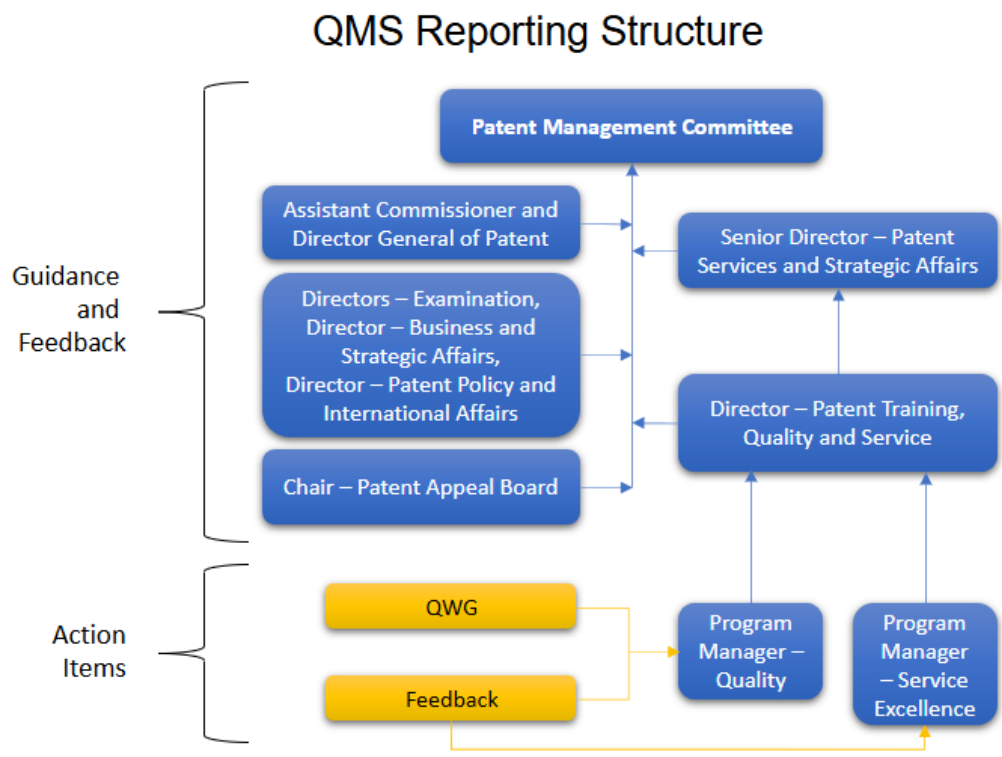
Responsible management of the QMS assures oversight, strategic direction and stewardship, fostering a culture of excellence, inclusiveness, employee engagement and development.

Our key quality objectives are

- Quality
- Timeliness
- Efficiency

CIPO's Patent Branch Quality Policy and key quality objectives can be found on the CIPO Patent quality page (https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr04378.html). Additionally, the Quality Policy and objectives can be found under Quality Management on the intranet (CIPOnet). The Quality Manual, also available on the intranet, contains the Quality Policy, the key quality objectives and more detailed/specific objectives that fall under the key quality objective categories.

CIPO's intranet (CIPOnet) provides a listing of all organizational units responsible for maintaining and continuously improving the QMS. Responsibilities in CIPO's QMS are illustrated in the following QMS organization chart.



The Patent Management Committee (PMC) directs the maintenance and continual improvement of the QMS. It sets priorities, allocates resources and tasks, and ensures that project timelines and objectives are met. In addition, it establishes and monitors quality targets. The PMC integrates risk-based thinking into planning and decision-making and promotes continual improvement through regular reviews and audits. The PMC is composed of senior management of the Branch, including the Assistant Commissioner and Director General of Patents (Chair), Examination Division Directors, Director - Business and Strategic Affairs, Director - Patent Policy and International Affairs, Senior Director - Patent Services and Strategic Affairs, Director – Patent Training, Quality and Services, and Chair - Patent Appeal Board (ad hoc).

Assistant Commissioner and Director General, Patents chairs the PMC, provides strategic direction for patent quality initiatives by maintaining a comprehensive QMS.

Senior Director – Patent Services and Strategic Affairs oversees all of Patent Branch operations, IT programs and the Business and Strategic Affairs group, as well as being the direct manager of the Director – Training, Quality and Service. This centralization allows for improved coordination between projects and resources.

Director – Training, Quality and Service is a role that was created in March of 2023 with the aim of better preparing Patent Branch for ongoing and upcoming modernization initiatives and in view of leading Patent Branch towards a more agile, client-centered organization that will better support Patent Branch's ability to deliver on its priorities: our people, our clients and innovation. The Director provides leadership and strategic direction for the continuous modernization, business transformation as well as process and service delivery improvements to enhance training, quality and service excellence initiatives for the Branch.

The Program Manager – Service Excellence, a role created in February 2025, leads initiatives related to client service, creating and implementing strategies within the Branch to elevate customer service, and responding to external stakeholder feedback. The Manager brings service-related items to the PMC as needed.

The Program Manager – Quality maintains and continually improves the QMS. The Manager reports on system functionality, recommends improvement projects to senior management, leads the Quality team, and chairs the Quality Working Group. The Manager brings quality-related items to the PMC as needed and delivers the Annual Patent Quality Report for review and discussion.

The Quality Working Group (QWG) defines and standardizes work procedures in Examination and Operations, establishes quality standards for search and examination in the Branch and contributes to quality-related projects and initiatives. It consists of Section Heads and Examiners from each Examination Division as well as representatives from Operations. It is chaired by the Program Manager – Quality.

The Operations Mapping Team creates and updates Operations-related work instructions. The work instructions are stored in an Information Management (IM) system (GCdocs) and are available to all employees on the Operations SharePoint page (national) and on CIPOnet (international). This team includes mapping officers who report to the Manager of Operations.

The **Examination Mapping Review Group** (EMRG), led by the Practice Team, creates and/or updates mappings (process flows) and work instructions for the national and international examination and classification processes. The EMRG consists of examiners and supervisors (Section Heads), one of which is the chair. Members are replaced with other examiners and supervisors periodically and/or as needed. Examination/Classification mappings are created in MS Visio and their associated work instructions are created in MS Word. The mappings and work instructions are then combined into pdf documents, stored in GCdocs and available on the Practice Group's SharePoint page.

21.05 Indicate (e.g. by means of a table) the extent of compatibility between the Authority's QMS and the requirements of Chapter 21 of these International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines. Alternatively, indicate where the Authority is not yet compliant with these requirements)

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
21.04		(a)	Quality policy available	✓		
		(b)	Identified roles and names for QMS responsibility	✓		
		(c)	Organizational chart available	✓		
21.05			Established compatibility of QMS with Chapter 21	✓		
21.06		(a)	Mechanisms to ensure effectiveness of the QMS	✓		
		(b)	Control of the continual improvement process	✓		
21.07		(a)	Communication of management about this standard to staff	✓		
		(b)	The PCT Guidelines are in line with the Authority's QMS	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
21.08		(a)	Management reviews take place	✓		
		(b)	Quality objectives are reviewed	✓		
		(c)	Communication of quality objectives to the relevant staff at the Authority	✓		
21.09		(a)	Performance of a yearly internal review of the QMS in/to	✓		
		(b)	determine the extent to which the QMS is aligned with Chapter 21	✓		
			determine the extent to which search and examination (S&E) complies with PCT Guidelines	✓		
		(c)	an objective and transparent way	✓		
		(d)	using input incl. information according to paragraph 21.29	✓		
		(e)	recording the results	✓		
21.10			Risk and opportunities are addressed that can affect the QMS and the conformity of search and examination	✓		
21.13			Arrangements for establishing risk-based practices to	✓		
	(i)	(a)	understand issues that affect its ability to achieve intended results of the QMS	✓		
		(b)	understand the needs and expectations of interested parties	✓		
	(ii)		identify risks and opportunities related to the performance of the QMS as a basis for planning	✓		
	(iii)		plan and implement actions to address risks and opportunities	✓		
	(iv)		check the effectiveness of the actions taken	✓		
	(v)		continuously update risks and opportunities.	✓		
21.15			Assurance to monitor and adapt to actual workload	✓		
	(i)		Infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of staff	✓		
		(a)	sufficient to deal with the inflow of work	✓		
		(b)	which maintains technical qualifications to search and examine in all technical fields	✓		
	(ii)		Infrastructure to provide a quantity of skilled administrative staff	✓		
		(a)	at a level to support the technically qualified staff	✓		
		(b)	for the documentation of records	✓		
	(iii)		Ensuring appropriate equipment to carry out S&E	✓		
	(iv)		Ensuring documentation according to Rule 34	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
	(v)	(a)	Instructions to help staff understand and act according to the quality criteria and standards	✓		
		(b)	Instructions to follow work procedures accurately and they are kept up-to-date.	✓		
	(vi)	(a)	Training and development program to ensure and maintain necessary skills in search and examination	✓		
		(b)	Training and development program to ensure awareness of staff to comply with the quality criteria and standards.	✓		
	(vii)	(a)	System in place for monitoring resources required to deal with demand	✓		
		(b)	System in place for monitoring resources required to comply with the quality standards in S&E	✓		
21.16	(i)		Control mechanisms to ensure timely issue of S&E reports	✓		
	(ii)		Control mechanisms regarding fluctuations in demand and backlog	✓		
21.17	(i)		Internal quality assurance system for self-assessment	✓		
		(a)	for compliance with S&E Guidelines	✓		
		(b)	for channeling feedback to staff	✓		
	(ii)		System for measurement of data and reporting for continuous improvement	✓		
	(iii)		System for verifying the effectiveness of actions taken to correct deficient S&E work, eliminate the causes and prevent issues from recurring	✓		
21.19		(a)	Contact person helping identify best practice between Authorities	✓		
		(b)	Contact person fostering continual improvement	✓		
		(c)	Contact person providing for effective communication with other Authorities for feedback and evaluation	✓		
21.20	(i)	(a)	Appropriate system for handling complaints	✓		
		(b)	Appropriate system for taking preventive/corrective actions	✓		
		(c)	Appropriate system for offering feedback to users	✓		
	(ii)	(a)	A procedure for monitoring user satisfaction & perception	✓		
		(b)	A procedure for ensuring their legitimate needs and expectations are met	✓		
	(iii)		Clear and concise guidance and information on the search and examination process for the user	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
			Indication where and how the Authority makes its quality objectives publicly available	✓		
21.21		(a)	Established communication with the International Bureau	✓		
		(b)	Established communication with designated and elected Offices	✓		
21.22			QMS of Authority clearly described and documented	✓		
21.23		(a)	Material making up the reference of quality procedures and processes for staff and management has been prepared and distributed	✓		
		(b)	Media available to support the reference material	✓		
		(c)	Document control measures are taken	✓		
21.24			Items which should be documented in the reference of quality procedures and processes	✓		
	(i)		Quality policy of the Authority and commitment to QMS	✓		
	(ii)		Scope of QMS	✓		
	(iii)		Organizational structure and responsibilities	✓		
	(iv)		Documented processes carried out in the Authority	✓		
	(v)		Resources available to carry out processes and implementing the procedures	✓		
	(vi)		Description of the interaction between the processes and the procedures of the QMS.	✓		
21.25	(i)		Records of which documents are kept and where they are kept	✓		
	(ii)		Records of results of management review	✓		
	(iii)		Records about training, skills and experience of staff	✓		
	(iv)		Records of evidence of conformity of processes, resulting products and services in terms of quality standards	✓		
	(v)		Records of results of reviews of requirements relating to products	✓		
	(vi)		Records of the S&E process carried out on each application	✓		
	(vii)		Records of data allowing individual work to be tracked	✓		
	(viii)		Records of QMS audits	✓		
	(ix)		Records on actions taken re. non-conforming products	✓		
	(x)		Records on actions taken re. corrective actions	✓		
	(xi)		Records on actions taken re. preventive actions	✓		

Chapter 21 requirement				Extent of compliance		
				full	part	no
	(xii)		Records referring to search process documentation	✓		
21.26	(i)		Recording of the databases consulted during search	✓		
	(ii)		Recording of keywords, combination of words and truncations during search	✓		
	(iii)		Recording of the languages used during search	✓		
	(iv)		Recording of classes and combinations thereof consulted during search	✓		
	(v)		Recording of a listing of all search statements used in databases consulted	✓		
	(vi)		Records about limitation of search and its justification	✓		
	(vii)		Records about lack of clarity of the claims	✓		
	(viii)		Records about lack of unity	✓		
21.27			Report on its own internal review processes	✓		
21.28-21.30			Additional information on further inputs to its internal reviews	✓		
21.31			Initial report called for by paragraph 21.31	✓		

21.06 Indicate with reference to the organizational chart those bodies and mechanisms management uses to ensure:

(a) the effectiveness of the QMS; and

(b) that the process of continual improvement progresses

(a) The effectiveness of the Quality Management System (QMS) is ensured by the Patent Management Committee (PMC), as illustrated in the organizational chart. This committee meets weekly, and provides oversight, strategic direction, and resource allocation for quality initiatives. The PMC sets priorities, monitors quality targets, and integrates risk-based thinking into planning and decision-making. The Director – Training, Quality and Service is a member of this committee and ensures integration of quality objectives into operational planning. Mechanisms supporting this include weekly PMC meetings, review of quality data, approval of improvement projects, and monitoring through dashboards and reports (e.g., Cognos, PatLive).

(b) The Program Manager – Quality plays a central role in maintaining and continually improving the QMS. This individual ensures that quality initiatives progress as planned and the process of continual improvement advances throughout the Patent Branch. The Program Manager coordinates mechanisms such as internal audits, QC programs, feedback systems, and governance reviews to ensure that the QMS remains effective, responsive to risks and opportunities, and aligned with ISO 9001:2015 requirements.

Quality-related items are brought to the PMC by the Program Manager as needed to review the progress of the quality program, define priorities, approve documents, and address quality issues. Acting in a strategic capacity, the Program Manager maintains and continually improves quality at PB, recommends priorities for improvement projects and chairs the Quality Working Group (QWG).

(c) The Quality Working Group (QWG) supports continual improvement by defining and standardizing work procedures, establishing quality standards, and contributing to quality-related projects. It also reviews QC results and recommends corrective actions.

21.07 Indicate how management of the Authority communicates to its staff the importance of meeting treaty and regulatory requirements including:

(a) those of this standard; and

(b) complying with the Authority's QM

(a) The management of CIPO emphasizes the importance of respecting treaty and regulatory requirements through various communications methods, including team meetings, intranet and SharePoint postings, bulletins, emails and training sessions. Supervisors review yearly production goals and priorities of examination with each examiner referencing our obligations under the PCT and highlighting that compliance and quality are top priorities. Management approved quality standards for ISA/IPEA examination are largely informed by the PCT and International Search and Preliminary Examination (ISPE) Guidelines, ensuring compliance with these requirements is embedded in daily work practice. Updates to PCT requirements or Guidelines are communicated promptly through official bulletins, SharePoint postings, and targeted email notices, reinforcing their significance.

(b) Each examiner reviews and commits to yearly production goals as well as the priorities of examination where maintaining an excellent level of quality is a requirement of these annual commitments. The Assistant Commissioner and Director General of Patents regularly raises our Quality Management System (QMS) objectives during meetings with employees, underlining their importance. Further, new Patent Branch employees complete mandatory QMS awareness training as part of the onboarding program. The training explains the Quality Policy, objectives and how each employee contributes to this CIPO's QMS. The QMS awareness training remains available to all PB employees who are invited to consult it periodically. To maintain visibility, the Quality Policy and objectives are published on CIPOnet and the CIPO Patent Quality webpage. The Quality Team's SharePoint page and signature block are other examples of communication tools promoting CIPO's Quality Policy and objectives. Communication is further supported through posters stating the quality objectives displayed throughout CIPO.

21.08 Indicate how and when top management of the Authority or delegated officers:

(a) conducts management reviews and ensures the availability of appropriate resources;

(b) reviews quality objectives; and

(c) ensures that the quality objectives are communicated and understood by the relevant staff at the respective Authority.

(a) CIPO's senior management meets annually to update the Canadian Intellectual Property Office's five-year strategic plan (https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/sites/default/files/attachments/2023/CIPOCS-1884_Business_Strategy-eng.pdf). During this meeting the specific objectives, service standards and goals of the Patent Branch are analyzed and adjusted to ensure that appropriate resources are available. These objectives are also reviewed quarterly as part of PB Planning updates and during Patent Management Committee (PMC) meetings, where risks and opportunities are considered to maintain alignment with ISO 9001:2015 and PCT requirements.

(b) CIPO reviews the quality objectives for the organization on a yearly basis. These objectives form a key part of each employee's yearly performance review and their goals for the subsequent year. Each employee is made aware of their specific quality objectives and priorities during their annual performance evaluation and midyear performance review, reinforcing the importance of meeting international obligations and maintaining high-quality standards.

(c) The quality objectives are published in the Quality Manual – available in the CIPO intranet and reinforced through CIPOnet postings, SharePoint pages and mandatory Quality Management System (QMS) awareness training. Emails from the Quality Team feature quality objectives in the signature block, and posters presenting these objectives are also displayed throughout CIPO.

21.09 Indicate whether top management or delegated officers of the Authority perform an internal review of the QMS in accordance with paragraphs 21.27-21.30:

(a) at least once per year (cf. paragraph 21.27);

(b) in accordance with the minimum scope of such reviews as set out in Section 9, namely:

to determine the extent to which the QMS is based on Chapter 21 (cf. paragraphs 21.27, 21.29(i));

to determine the extent to which Search and Examination work complies with PCT Guidelines (cf. paragraphs 21.27, 21.29(i));

(c) in an objective and transparent way (cf. paragraph 21.27);

(d) using input including information according to paragraphs 21.29 (ii)-(vi);

(e) recording the results (cf. paragraph 21.30).

Internal review at CIPO does not take place as one central activity but is distributed across many activities throughout the year. The Patent Management Committee (PMC), composed of Patent Branch's top management, meets weekly and provides continuous oversight of the Quality Management System (QMS). Quality-related items are brought to PMC on an as-needed basis for discussion and decision-making. Decisions are recorded in PMC Records of Decision and stored in an Information Management (IM) system (GCdocs) for reference.

A formal review of the entire QMS is conducted annually and documented in GCdocs. This review ensures the QMS remains effective and aligned with ISO 9001:2015 requirements and CIPO's strategic direction, as well as PB Planning priorities. Inputs to the review include corrective and preventative action requests, customer feedback and stakeholder input (including the Online Feedback Mechanism and Great Ideas Database), recommendations from internal and external audits, QC results, performance against service standards, risk assessments and opportunities for improvement. Outputs of management review include decisions and actions

related to opportunities for improvement, any need for changes to the QMS and resource needs. The PMC also approves all revisions to current quality-related documentation, such as quality standards, as well as any new quality-related documentation when required.

In this manner CIPO provides a continuous management review of the QMS, rather than as a single activity. This distributed approach ensures that quality management remains dynamic and responsive as the Patent Branch continually develops and improves its QMS, supporting the maintenance of its ISO 9001 certification. Frequent management input and review into the QMS are considered essential.

21.10 Indicate whether top management of the Authority promote practices to ensure that risks and opportunities that can affect its QMS and the conformity of international search and examination are addressed.

Top management at CIPO promotes practices to ensure that risks and opportunities that can affect its Quality Management System (QMS) and the conformity of international search and examination are systematically addressed. Risk-based thinking is embedded in strategic planning, operational decision-making, and continual improvement initiatives.

Mechanisms include weekly Patent Management Committee (PMC) meetings, annual management reviews, and risk-based internal process audits, which prioritize high-risk processes based on complexity, volume, financial and client impact. Inputs such as audit findings, QC results, client feedback (via the Online Feedback Mechanism), and employee suggestions (via the Great Ideas Database) are analyzed to identify risks and opportunities.

Actions taken in recent years include implementing mandatory examination interviews during national examination to improve client satisfaction, modernizing QC and Online Feedback tools for greater accuracy, and introducing IT modernization projects such as the Next Generation Patents (NGP) system and ePCT to mitigate operational risks. These measures ensure that the QMS remains effective, resilient, and aligned with ISO 9001:2015 requirements and PCT obligations.

ARTICLE IV. 2. RISK-BASED PRACTICES

21.11 Explanatory note: Each Authority should establish its own risk-based practices to enable the Authority to determine factors that could cause operational processes and its quality management system to deviate from requirements or planned results, to put in pace preventive controls to minimize negative effects, and to make use of opportunities as they arise.

21.12 Explanatory note: It is open to each Authority to set up its own arrangements to determine the effect of uncertainty on objectives. Paragraph 21.13 provides a guide to the basic components of risk-based practices as an element of QMS. There is no requirement for formal methods of risk management or a documented risk management process.

(Note: These points are informative. No response is required by the template to paragraphs 21.11 and 21.12).

21.13 Arrangements for establishing risk-based practices

Provide information on the arrangements that your Authority has made to:

(i) (a) understand issues that affect its ability to achieve intended results of the QMS, and

(b) understand the needs and expectations of interested parties;

(ii) identify risks and opportunities related to the performance of the QMS as a basis for planning;

(iii) plan and implement actions to address risks and opportunities;

(iv) check the effectiveness of the actions taken; and

(v) continuously update risks and opportunities.

21.14 Explanatory note: All processes of the QMS present differing levels of risk in terms of the Authority's ability to meet its objectives, and the effects of uncertainty are not the same for all Authorities. Each Authority is responsible for the actions it decides to take to address risks and opportunities.

(Note: This point is informative. No response is required by the template to paragraph 21.14).

Provide information on the arrangements that your Authority has made

(a) to understand issues that affect its ability to achieve the intended results of the Quality Management System (QMS):

The Patent Branch uses a variety of tools and methods to understand the organization and its context. Primary tools include CIPO's Business Plans and CIPO's Five-Year Business Strategy. The business plans outline the objectives and activities that will enable the organization to achieve the priorities set forth in the Business Strategy. The Business Strategy considers external and internal factors such as regulatory, legal, technological, market, international, and national influences. The Business Strategy is widely consulted throughout government and by clients and stakeholders. CIPO's Risk Management plan includes Patent Branch's risks and proposed mitigation strategies.

The Patent Branch conducts further analysis during strategic planning sessions. These sessions provide senior management with the opportunity to evaluate the branch, in light of the issues and trends raised and to identify risks and opportunities for action. Documentation of strategic planning retreats at the branch and corporate level is maintained.

The Patent Branch Quality group continually evaluates the ability of the QMS to achieve its intended results. This takes the form of weekly or biweekly meetings where progress is monitored, shortcomings are discussed, and solutions are

brainstormed. Risk-based thinking is embedded in these evaluations to ensure that actions address both threats and opportunities for improvement.

In alignment with the recent ISO 9001:2015/Amd.1:2024 to clause 4.1, the Patent Branch has long been proactive in addressing climate change by transitioning to a paperless office many years ago, significantly reducing our environmental footprint. Additionally, the majority of our employees now telework, further minimizing our impact. To further support our environmental goals, applicants are increasingly using online services, which reduces the need for paper filing. To ensure resilience, CIPO has a comprehensive business continuity plan in place to maintain operations in the event of office closures due to unexpected climate-related events or office closure.

(b) understand the needs and expectations of interested parties:

The Patent Branch determines the needs and expectations of interested parties through multiple channels. These include:

- Patent Practice (2PC) meetings with agents
- Online Feedback Mechanism (OFM)
- Internal Feedback Mechanism – Great Ideas Database (GID)
- CIPO's Public Service Employee Survey (PSES)
- CIPO Service Excellence Employee Survey
- CIPO Client Satisfaction Survey
- Industrial Training Visits (ITV)
- IT Modernization (ITM) Usability Testing and User Acceptance testing
- Patent quality metrics page and CIPO Quality Dashboards – questionnaire
- Next Generation Patents – Report technical problems

The Industry Training Visit (ITV) program, launched by the Patent Branch in 2018, offers technical training to examiners through on-site visits to Canadian companies. After initial visits to medical tech firms in Toronto (Oct 2018) and aerospace companies in Montreal (Feb 2019), the program was paused due to COVID-19. It resumed in 2023 on a smaller, cost-free, local scale, focusing on targeted examiner pools. Recent visits include ProSlide (Sports and Games Pools, 2023), Canadian Bank Note (Printing and Paper Pools, 2024), CanMET (Combustion, Fluid Engine, Steam, Space Heating, Heat Exchange Pools, 2024), Transportation Safety Board (Mechanical Division, 2025), and Measurement Canada (Mechanical and Electrical Divisions, 2025).

In 2022, the Great Ideas Database (GID) replaced the Patent Branch Suggestion Box as the new employee feedback mechanism. It simplifies capturing employees' innovative ideas and suggestions regarding patents. Accessible to all employees, the GID is easy to use. Employees submit their ideas via an online form on CIPOnet, which is automatically received by the Quality Team. Each idea is recorded in an Excel document and then shared with the relevant group for assessment and potential implementation.

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are also used to determine the expected quality and timeframe to process requests from providers, allowing the Patent Branch to establish clear service standards.

CIPO has service standards and performance targets which are communicated to our stakeholders and include performance targets for our internal management.

In accordance with the ISO 9001:2015/Amd.1:2024 to clause 4.2, applicants are encouraged to submit requests for expedited processing if their patent applications pertain to green technology. This includes innovations designed to resolve or mitigate environmental impacts or to conserve natural resources and the environment. The application must clearly indicate that the technology, upon commercialization, would contribute to resolving or mitigating environmental challenges or conserving natural resources. Notably, patent applications for green technology will be processed faster at no additional cost, reflecting the commitment to integrating climate action considerations into quality management systems.

(ii) to identify risks and opportunities related to the performance of the QMS as a basis for planning:

CIPO identifies risks and opportunities through project activities, through submissions to the Great ideas Database, through annual Internal and External Audit Program activities or via interactions with interested parties. Risks may come to light as issues with processes, training, human resources, policy, IT, office practice or quality. These topics are raised at various PB management committee meetings.

The Patent Branch documents risks and opportunities on a continuous basis using a variety of mechanisms. Risks and opportunities identified through internal audit activities are recorded in individual audit reports and the Internal Audit Summary Report. IT projects generally document risks in project risk registers, project charters and in project close out reports. Finally, risks may also be recorded in Patent Management Committee (PMC), Patent Practice Committee (2PC), and Patent Policy Practice Committee (3PC) meeting minutes. Corporate and branch risk profiles and registers are maintained. Risk-based thinking is embedded in these processes to ensure proactive planning and continual improvement.

Recent improvements demonstrate this approach in action, such as the introduction of mandatory examination interviews to reduce pendency and improve client satisfaction, modernization of QC tools to enhance defect tracking, and IT modernization projects “Next Generation Patents” (NGP) to mitigate operational risks.

(iii) to plan and implement actions to address risks and opportunities:

Risks are continuously reviewed and actioned by PB management governance committees. For example, risks identified through quality projects are reviewed and actioned regularly by the quality team. The PMC reviews and assigns action items for risks identified during annual internal audit activities. Any non-compliances, non-conformities and/or opportunities for improvement identified in the internal audit are documented in a master sheet along with actions taken. Risks are prioritized in the audit report based on identified impact and probability. IT project risks are reviewed and actioned monthly at project meetings and project governance committee meetings. Risks related to patent practice are addressed at the Patent, Policy and Practice Committee.

Risks identified in the corporate risk profile are reviewed annually at PMC and quarterly at the corporate level Senior Executive Committee. Mitigations are implemented based on the probability, impact, and proximity of the risk and are incorporated into the mitigation strategy. In addition, projects are prioritized in consideration of the risks identified.

This continuous approach of identifying, reviewing and updating its risks and opportunities enables the Patent Branch to immediately apply the lessons learned from its previous actions to address risk and opportunities.

Risk identification and mitigation can lead to process improvements ranging from minor changes, requiring only notification or training, to major changes requiring new processes, to extensive continuous improvement projects.

Opportunities are addressed by gathering information, benchmarking against other IP offices, conducting pilot projects to explore possible benefits and/or launching continuous improvement projects to enhance value stream performance. A PB Performance Improvement Plan is maintained.

The QMS documents risks and opportunities as strategic considerations in project closeout reports. These reports highlight successes, necessary changes, and lessons learned, serving as a reference for future projects.

The QMS plans actions to address risks and opportunities. The plan includes escalation to the relevant authority such as the Program Manager - Quality, Director - Training, Quality and Service or Senior Director. The relevant authority collects information on the threat or opportunity including who raised the risk, when it was raised, its category, description, impact, possible response and action.

Actions on the risks and opportunities are integrated and implemented in the QMS processes. For instance, risk or opportunity is diverted to a management group, ensuring that the information related to the threats and opportunities is communicated both within the project and externally to stakeholders.

(iv) check the effectiveness of the actions taken:

Risks identified in the corporate risk profile are reviewed annually at PMC and quarterly at the corporate level Senior Executive Committee. The mitigation strategy is reviewed in order to assess whether risks have been properly addressed and/or mitigated.

Risks identified through internal and external audits are reviewed regularly. Actions taken to address the risks are assessed for effectiveness in the next internal and external audit. If the action taken did not fully address the risk, the remaining risk will be identified and reprioritized in the audit report.

After implementation of a project, a review is conducted to capture lessons learned, including successes, failures, seized opportunities, and missed opportunities, to inform and improve future project planning.

Effectiveness is also monitored through performance dashboards and audit master sheets, ensuring continual improvement and compliance with ISO 9001:2015 and PCT requirements.

(v) to continuously update risks and opportunities:

Top management continually determines and addresses the risks and opportunities that can affect the conformity of products and services and the ability to enhance customer satisfaction.

Risks and opportunities are updated as well through regular audit activities.

A Patent Branch Risk Profile is maintained, ensuring risk-based thinking and continual improvement remain embedded in all QMS processes.

ARTICLE V. 3. RESOURCES

21.15 Explanatory note: The granting of ISA/IPEA status means that the Authority has demonstrated it has the infrastructure and resources to support the search and examination process. Chapter 21 calls for assurance that the Authority can continually support this process while accommodating changes in workload and meeting QMS requirements. The responses below, should provide this assurance.

Human resources:

(i) Provide information about the infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of staff:

sufficient to deal with the inflow of work; and

which maintains the technical qualifications to search and examine in the required technical fields;

is maintained and adapted to changes in workload.

(ii) Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that a quantity of appropriately trained/skilled administrative staff is maintained and adapted to changes in workload:

at a level to support the technically qualified staff and facilitate the search and examination process, and

for the documentation of records

In 2025, the Patent Branch increased its workforce to strengthen capacity and support the timely delivery of high-quality patent examination. Approximately 30 additional examiners were recruited across all divisions, and new positions were created in key areas such as Quality, Service Excellence, PCT, and PPH. These resources ensure that the Branch can maintain technical expertise in all required fields while meeting increased demand and supporting ongoing improvements to processes and client service.

Presently, the Patent Branch has about ~~440~~ 480 examiners trained to examine national and international applications. The examiners are divided over 4 examination divisions (Mechanical, Chemistry, Electrical, Biotechnology).

CIPO's examination workforce is distributed as follows:

Division	Supervisors (Section Heads)	Examiners	Number of examiners (in full-time equivalent)	Average experience as examiners (years)
Mechanical	9	138	131.90	12.99
Chemistry: • General • Organic	 4 5	 60 75	135.78	14.29
Electrical	9	132	132.36	13.79
Biotechnology	6	74	76.77	13.32
Total	33	479	476.81	13.63

Patent examiners are highly qualified and highly trained employees.

There are minimum qualifications that candidates must meet when recruited. These minimum qualifications vary by discipline and are as follows:

- Mechanical: Bachelor's degree from a recognized university in mechanical engineering or some other acceptable degree in a related discipline with a strong foundation in mechanical engineering principles. For example, degrees in civil, aerospace, biomedical and mining engineering;
- Electrical/Electronic: Bachelor's degree from a recognized university in Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering or Software Engineering (Computer Science degrees will not be accepted);
- Chemistry:
  - For Organic Chemistry: Honours degree from a recognized university in Chemistry or other acceptable degree in a discipline related to the position;
  - For General Chemistry: Honours degree from a recognized university in Chemical Engineering or in Chemistry or some other acceptable degree in a discipline related to the position; and
- Biotechnology: Master's degree or Ph.D. from a recognized university in biochemistry or molecular biology or other related discipline.

When the degree is from an institution outside of Canada, CIPO uses the services of two entities that certify degree equivalencies. These are the University of Toronto's Comparative Education Service (CES) Academic Credential Assessment Service and World Education Services (WES) Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) Service.

Training for new examiners is comprehensive and structured to ensure a strong foundation in patent examination. Each new examiner begins with an intensive three-month classroom program followed by on-the-job training under the supervision of a Section Head and mentorship from a senior patent examiner. At the end of their first year, they return to the classroom for a one-month advanced training session and receive an initial 4.5 days of training on the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination processes and requirements. During the second year, examiners continue to refine their skills through practical experience and targeted development activities. This structured approach ensures examiners acquire the technical expertise and procedural knowledge required to meet CIPO's quality objectives and national and international standards.

In addition, there is ongoing targeted training and development available for all patent examiners and administration personnel throughout the year. CIPO's patent examiner continuous training program was outlined in an article entitled "The Canadian Patent Examiner Continuous Training Program" published in World Patent Information (Volume 39, December 2014, Pages 73-74). In 2016, CIPO put in place a strategy for continuous training entitled "Continuing Education Strategy for Patent Examiners". With the launch of Next Generation Patents (NGP), the PB Training Team offered multiple training sessions to employees, including live sessions with trainers and video tutorials. Other targeted training such as refresher ISA/IPEA training for Examiners and Section Heads are also delivered as needed. The refresher training consisted of a series of six pre-recorded videos. Recent initiatives include migrating training materials to SharePoint for easier access and introducing microlearning videos to support flexible, on-demand learning.

Examination employees' technical qualifications are maintained and monitored regularly by management. In addition, a Learning and Development Plan (LDP) is created by each employee and reviewed by supervisors twice yearly. There are mandatory training courses that an employee is required to take every year. Additionally, employees can take extra courses for personal and professional development. Also, regular attendance at conferences and tradeshows related to an examiner's technical field is supported and encouraged by management. There is also the Patent Examination Technical Seminars (PETS) initiative, where CIPO invites technical speakers to come and present their research for the benefit of many

examiners. Another initiative to enhance examiners' expertise is the introduction of Industrial Training Visits (ITV) allowing examiners to gain practical insights by visiting industrial sites relevant to their technical fields.

While CIPO accepts both French and English patent applications, French applications represent only 3-4% of our PCT applications. Approximately 10-15% of examiners are bilingual, ensuring adequate capacity to process French-language national and international applications.

Additionally, patent examination is supported by the Patent Policy and International Affairs division. This division is summarized below:

Division	**Work units**
Patent Policy and International Affairs	Manager – Patent Policy • 4 Policy Officers Program Manager - International (PCT) • 1 Project Coordinator~~s~~ • 1 Acting Project Coordinator Program Manager - International (PPH) • 1 Project Coordinator~~s~~ • 1 Acting Project Coordinator Program Manager - International (IPC, CPC, VG) Program Manager - International (PLT, Group B+) • 1 Acting Project Coordinator Program Manager - Examination Practice • 2 Project Coordinators • 1 Acting Project Coordinator

The Patent Examination division is also supported by Patent Services and Strategic Affairs (PSSA) Division. This division has approximately 150 employees distributed in several work units. The Service Excellence Team, created in 2025, provides additional support to examination and operations employees, ensuring consistent client service and process efficiency.

The following table identifies the main work units (some are outside of PSSA):

Incoming Correspondence Unit (ICU)	Outgoing Correspondence Unit (OCU)
Formalities and Assignments	Maintenance Fees and Agent Renewal Registry
PCT (international)	PCT (national)
Examination Support	Desktop Publishing
Patent Business Intelligence and Information Management Services (PBIIMS) & Patent IT Systems (PITS)	Quality
Training	Service Excellence

The PCT International Unit has highly skilled administrative personnel comprising one Team Leader and ~~6~~8 Analysts responsible for PCT work in the receiving Office and in the International Searching and Examining Authorities. This group has also been trained to support the examination staff and facilitate the international search and examination process.

CIPO has established procedures and work instructions to be used by the examiners and the PCT Analysts. Detailed checklists have also been established. Some examples of the procedures created are: Checking the Request, Checking PCT Mail, Check Application, Refund, Generate Notice, Process Fee, QC scan, Receive Search Copy, Scan PCT Mail, Search and Establish Opinion and Sequence Listing. Analysts also have access to a late fee calculation tool, PowerPoint presentations on various topics such as explanations of PCT Rules, how to calculate the due date of an International Search Report and International Preliminary Report on Patentability, a checklist for processing a Chapter II application, etc. The PCT Analysts were also fortunate to attend a one day, in person, training session with representatives from WIPO in November 2025.

Material resources:

(iii) Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that appropriate equipment and facilities such as IT hardware and software to support the search and examination process are provided and maintained;

(iv) Describe the infrastructure in place to ensure that at least the minimum documentation referred to in Rule 34 is available, accessible, properly arranged and maintained for search and examination purposes. State whether it is on paper, in microform or stored on electronic media, and where.

(v) Describe how instructions:

to help staff understand and adhere to the quality criteria and standards; and;

to follow work procedures accurately and consistently

are documented, provided to staff, kept up-to-date and adapted where necessary.

(iii) InterApp, the legacy system, was developed by CIPO in conjunction with the former Enterprise Solutions Branch (ESB), to manage the electronic processing of international applications. Two of the main modules are a workflow management system, and a document management system. The document management system permits CIPO to electronically stamp the application with various modifications/corrections and stores them in a db2 database.

All applications are scanned upon receipt in TIFF T6G4 black and white 300 dpi format. Notices are currently prepared in MS Word using mail merge templates and are converted to TIFF and stored in the system once printed (no scanning of notices).

The multi-user system allows many people to view the same application concurrently. Examiners can view/print applications, prepare notices and save their notices in the system. Quality Control steps are part of the workflow, so once an International Search report and Written Opinion (ISR/WO) are prepared, a task is created to enable the Section Head to review these documents (currently selected for QC at a rate of 25%). Once the QC is complete, the PCT International Unit receives a task to process the documents. The PCT Analyst performs a further QC before the documents are converted to TIFF using a special printer driver. Clients have the option to retrieve the documents in electronic format via Canada ePost Connect™. ePost Connect is a digital delivery platform that facilitates sending and receiving confidential messages and documents with one or multiple

recipients. It enables seamless, secure collaboration with clients through one common platform. If the client does not choose to sign up for this service, the PCT analyst will send the documents to them by postal mail. The documents are also exported nightly to WIPO.

The preparation of all correspondence is aided by the use of standardized paragraphs which are pre-programmed into Word and developed in-house. The "Standardized Clauses" developed by the MIA were incorporated into the aforementioned paragraphs. This enhances the consistency of our international products and assists employees in efficiently preparing their work.

In September 2025, CIPO launched an initiative to work towards replacing InterApp and related components with WIPO's electronic Patent Cooperation Treaty (ePCT) solution. The initiative includes implementing WIPO's ePCT for international patent applications management, deploying an in-house solution for functionalities not covered by ePCT (such CIPO's internal workflow management for the receiving office and examination tasks, QC processes and payment reconciliation); and decommissioning legacy systems including InterApp, PCT e-filing, International QC Tool, e-Post Connect and supporting components. The timeline for completion of this initiative is not yet determined.

(iv) In addition to the Canadian collection being available electronically in machine-readable format (ST.96), as well as other IPOs' collections also being available online, patent examiners have access to one commercial patent database to support search and examination work. This database is Questel Orbit. CIPO entered a contract with Questel in 2014, which was renewed in 2020. Questel Orbit (available to all examiners) meets the Minimum Documentation requirements set out by the PCT for patents and supports compliance with international search requirements.

CIPO's primary non-patent literature (NPL) database, Scopus, covers approximately 80% of the NPL resources listed in the PCT Minimum Documentation list (including American Chemical Society, Knovel, IEEE, GENESEQ) with additional specialized sources accessed through complementary sources and databases. Specifically developed for CIPO is a library Discovery Tool which can be used to search many non-patent literature e-resources at once. The CIPO Resource Centre (CRC) offers global access to strategic technical and business information including access to multiple periodicals via the CRC electronic resources and other Canadian libraries. CIPO's NPL collections are continually augmented, and include comprehensive coverage from reputed journals, publications and databases. Combined, our NPL collections also meet the PCT Minimum Documentation requirements. CIPO also maintains many branch-specific tools to supplement searching such as GenomeQuest and STN.

Moreover, the Canadian internal patent database was completely remodeled in 2008 to include an enhanced GUI interface with added functionalities. In 2019, the database was migrated to an enterprise search platform which enhanced search capabilities.

(v) Documents are stored in an Information Management (IM) system (GCdocs), the Canadian government's content management solution, which has replaced the use of shared drives to significantly improve the way the government manages electronic records. GCdocs ensures the identification and description of documented information by the use of metadata that is self-generated by the GCdocs system, i.e., date, author, format and a unique identification number. GCdocs also facilitates version control. These document control measures, including versioning and metadata management in GCdocs, ensure compliance with ISO 9001:2015 requirements for documented information. An Information Management (IM) Analyst provides GCdocs support and guidance for Patent Branch.

Work instructions and process mappings are stored in GCdocs in both English and French, ensuring employees have access to current, controlled documentation. The Examination's process mappings and work instructions can also be accessed by all employees from the Practice Group's SharePoint page while the Operations' process mappings and work instructions are accessible by all employees on the Operations' SharePoint page (national) or CIPOnet (international). These publications are all assigned to an owner and follow CIPO's document control procedures to maintain accuracy and compliance.

Patent Examination Quality Standards, including Quality Standards for National and International Patent Classification and International Search and Preliminary Examination, are published on the CIPO Patent Quality page as well as on CIPO's intranet. The Quality Standards are updated and reviewed as required by the Patent Management Committee (PMC).

Training resources:

(vi) Describe the training and development infrastructure and program which ensures that all staff involved in the search and examination process:

acquire and maintain the necessary experience and skills; and

are fully aware of the importance of complying with the quality criteria and standards.

Upon initial recruitment, new patent examiners begin with a comprehensive three-month classroom training program designed to establish a strong foundation in examination practices. Following classroom training, examiners receive two years of on-the-job development under the supervision of a Section Head and mentorship from a senior examiner. All work during this period is reviewed and monitored by the senior examiner to ensure adherence to quality standards. Approximately 9 months after joining the Office, examiners complete specialized training on International Search and Preliminary Examination, before beginning work on international applications within their technical fields, under the supervision of the senior examiner and Section Head. After one year in the office, employees take additional courses directed towards jurisprudence and advanced examination.

A Continuous Training Program is available to all employees, providing structured opportunities for ongoing development throughout the year. The Program provides mandatory and optional courses, ensuring that examiners remain current with evolving practices. Recent modernization initiatives include migrating training materials to SharePoint for improved accessibility and introducing microlearning videos to enable flexible, on-demand learning. All examination-related training matters are handled by the Program Manager - Training. In 2016, CIPO put in place a strategy for continuous training entitled "Continuing Education Strategy for Patent Examiners".

Examiners are encouraged to stay abreast of their technology areas through the training programs and initiatives. Attendance at conferences and tradeshows related to an examiner's technical field is supported and encouraged by management. Additional development opportunities include Patent Examination Technical Seminars (PETS), featuring expert presentations, and the Industrial Training Visits (ITV) program, reintroduced and expanded in 2023 to provide practical insights through on-site visits to industry partners.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, training programs have been adapted for virtual delivery using platforms such as MS Teams. While in-person activities like tradeshows and ITV were paused, they have now resumed alongside virtual options, ensuring flexibility and continuity.

Within the continuous training program, examiners receive mandatory refresher ISA/IPEA training (available on SharePoint Training page) and all employees have access to the ISA/IPEA training and reference manual on the intranet. This manual is regularly revised to keep current with CIPO's practice. Annotated ISA/IPEA forms and annotated CIPO Examination

Notes (which include search details, documentation, and strategy) are available on the intranet to guide examiners in completing the various ISA/IPEA forms and Examination Notes accurately. These forms are also regularly revised (at least once per year).

The ISA/IPEA training materials also provide instruction on what CIPO's quality criteria and standards are and how they are evaluated on international search and examination work. Examiners' awareness that their work is subject to these criteria and the importance of compliance is reinforced in the yearly goals and objectives assigned to each examiner. These training initiatives ensure examiners maintain technical expertise, adapt to evolving practices, and uphold CIPO's commitment to quality and timeliness.

Oversight over resources:

(vii) Describe the system in place for continuously monitoring and identifying the resources required:

to deal with demand; and

comply with the quality standards for search and examination.

CIPO uses a combination of an automated system and supervisory controls to manage resources effectively and ensure timely processing of international applications. The computerized processing system InterApp has served as the primary tool for managing the entire workflow. Within this system, control mechanisms are implemented to help users monitor deadlines and allocate resources appropriately.

Each stage of tasks is colour-coded allowing users to quickly identify when a time limit is approaching. For certain tasks, when the predetermined time limit has been exceeded, another task is automatically generated if further action must be taken.

Within patent examination, Section Heads (the supervisors of all the examination units) also play a critical role in oversight. They regularly inspect and monitor examiners work queues with the help of a tool called "Patent Management Tool", which lists all outstanding PCT International examination tasks and their corresponding due dates, to ensure that applications are processed in accordance with established practices and in a timely manner. When workload fluctuations occur, Section Heads can reassign work within examination "pools", groups of examiners working on applications classified in related IPC symbols that represent an area of common subject matter. This allows Section Heads to manage both temporary fluctuations in work load and employee availability and maintain balance and efficiency.

In 2023, CIPO introduced an initiative to consult WIPO's ePCT system to identify applications with International Search Reports (ISR) or Written Opinion (WO-ISA) due within the next one or two weeks. These applications are then verified in InterApp and either the Section Head of the examiner responsible for the application is contacted or, if an internal error is detected, corrective action is taken to accelerate search and examination. This proactive approach has significantly improved timeliness and reduced the risk of missing deadlines.

In September 2025, CIPO launched a modernization initiative to work towards replacing the legacy InterApp system and related components with WIPO's ePCT solution. This transition includes implementing ePCT for international patent applications management and deploying an in-house solution for functionalities not covered by ePCT such as an internal workflow management for the receiving office and examination tasks. The timeline for completion of this initiative is not yet determined.

In order to ensure that the expected turnaround times are maintained in the Operations division, each new employee receives one-on-one training from experienced PCT analysts, as well as guidelines to follow. As experience is gained with each specific task (e.g., Receiving Office for new applications), the analyst is given further training to ensure that there is always someone available to handle fluctuations in workload in Operations. WIPO-provided training is also requested when the need presents itself. Such training took place in November 2025. PCT Analysts also attend monthly meetings with the PCT International Practice group (led by the Program Manager – International (PCT)), where they discuss new guidelines, complex cases, and ask questions. These meetings sometimes include informal refresher training on various topics.

These measures, combined with telework and paperless processes, support environmental objectives and demonstrate compliance with ISO 9001:2015 and ISO Amd.1:2024 requirements for resource adequacy, timeliness, and sustainability. Together, these initiatives ensure that CIPO can adapt to changing workloads, maintain operational resilience, and deliver high-quality patent examination services.

ARTICLE VI. 4. MANAGEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD

21.16 Indicate how the following practices and procedures for handling search and examination requests and performing related functions such as data-entry and classification are implemented:

(i) Effective control mechanisms regarding timely issue of search and examination reports to a quality standard as set by the respective Authority; and

(ii) Appropriate control mechanisms regarding fluctuations in demand and backlog management.

CIPO uses a combination of automated systems and supervisory controls to ensure timely issuance of search and examination reports:

- The legacy InterApp system currently manages international application workflows and related functions, applying the same workflow principles to administrative, examination and classification tasks. All tasks are placed in work queues, which display pending tasks and deadlines and are assigned to examiners, classifiers or Operations employees.
- Embedded in InterApp is a colour coding mechanism which allows users to quickly identify when a time limit is approaching. Additionally, for certain tasks, when the predetermined time limit is exceeded, another task is automatically generated if further action must be taken.
- For examination, Sections Heads regularly inspect and monitor examiners work queues with the help of a tool called “Patent Management Tool”, which lists all outstanding PCT International examination tasks and their corresponding due dates, to ensure that applications are processed in accordance with established practices and in a timely manner.
- Since 2023, CIPO introduced an initiative to consult WIPO’s ePCT system to identify applications with ISRs and WOs due within the next one or two weeks. These applications are then verified in InterApp and either the Section Head of the examiner responsible for the application is contacted or, if an internal error is detected, corrective action is taken to accelerate search and examination. This proactive approach has significantly improved timeliness and reduced the risk of missing deadlines.

Supervisors are able to review work and reassign tasks to balance workloads as needed. For examination, when workload fluctuations occur, Section Heads can reassign work within examination “pools”, groups of examiners working on applications classified in related IPC symbols that represent an area of common subject matter. This allows Section Heads to manage both temporary fluctuations in work load and employee availability and maintain balance and efficiency. To maintain expected turnaround times in the Operations division, analysts receive cross-training on additional tasks beyond their primary responsibilities. This approach ensures flexibility and guarantees that qualified staff are available to handle workload fluctuations and maintain service continuity.

ARTICLE VII. 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

21.17 In accordance with the Guidelines, the following are required quality assurance measures for timely issue of search and examination reports of a high quality. Indicate how the following are implemented, including the use of any checklists to verify reports before their issue or for monitoring the quality as part of a post-issue review process:

(i) An internal quality assurance system for self-assessment, involving verification, validation and monitoring of searches and examination work:

for compliance with these Search and Examination Guidelines;

for channeling feedback to staff.

(ii) A system of measurement and collection of data and reporting. Show how the Authority uses the system to ensure the continuous improvement of the established processes.

(iii) A system for verifying the effectiveness of actions taken to correct deficient S&E work, eliminate the causes, and to prevent issues from recurring.

The International Search and Examination Standards form the foundation for CIPO’s international examination work. These Standards reflect internal and external clients’ needs and incorporate the requirements of the PCT International Search and Preliminary Examination Guidelines. These standards define the criteria used to evaluate examination work, including International Search Reports (ISR), Written Opinions (WO), and International Preliminary Reports on Patentability (IPRP).

CIPO maintains a comprehensive Quality Assurance (QA) system embedded throughout the search and examination process via a continuous Quality Control (QC) program. The system encompasses internal mechanisms for self-assessment and verification of search and examination work to ensure compliance with established guidelines and provide feedback to employees; a structured process for measuring, collecting, analyzing and reporting quality data to drive continual improvement; and procedures for monitoring corrective actions to address deficiencies, eliminate causes, and prevent recurrence.

To support self-assessment and reduce errors before completing their work, examiners use a checklist integrated in InterApp for Chapter I applications. This checklist serves as a reminder to verify key elements in the Examination Notes, ISR, and WO-ISA, focusing on the most common errors identified in previous Quality Assurance exercises. Analysis of QC data indicates that the checklist has been effective in lowering non-conformance rates in several categories, making it an important component of CIPO’s internal QA system.

Quality Control (QC) is performed by supervisors, who carry out reviews to verify search and examination work ensuring adherence to established quality standards of search and examination. Reviews are conducted on a randomly selected sample of applications, with a minimum sampling rate of 25%. For Chapter I and Chapter II applications, the supervisors use

the International QC tool to answer a standardized set of questions, derived from CIPO's Quality Standards for International Search and Examination. These questions are grouped into six categories covering search strategy and examination notes (for Chapter I); search restrictions; formalities; novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability; observations; informal communications (for Chapter II), and timelines. Each question represents a quality indicator and all non-conformities identified during QC must be documented with specific comments. The QC questions are reviewed and updated to reflect evolving standards and priorities. The data is collected for analysis and identification of areas of improvement. In April 2026, an alternative, more flexible solution to the existing International QC tool will be launched.

Following QC, examiners receive direct feedback when required and are responsible for correcting any issues identified. Supervisors ensure that any systemic or major issues are reported to the appropriate authority. Both examiners and supervisors have access to a history of all previous QC actions through the QC tool, supporting transparency and accountability.

The International QC tool enables measurement and collection of quality data. Each QC question corresponds to a quality indicator and thresholds have been set for the acceptable error rates under each indicator. Collected QC data is analyzed annually and reports and recommendations are presented to the Patent Management Committee (PMC) and communicated to the examiner community through Examiner Bulletins. Actions taken to meet and reduce error rates include targeted training and enhancements to the QC tool to improve completeness of results and provide examiners with better access to QC outcomes. These improvements ensure that the system continues to evolve based on data analysis and feedback, supporting continual improvement of processes.

Effectiveness is verified through ongoing QC reviews and annual analysis of QC data. International QC reports for Chapter I and Chapter II of the PCT include a comparative analysis of non-conformities against the previous year's data and document the implementation of recommendations from prior years' reports, providing clear evidence of the effectiveness of actions taken and the continuous improvement of processes. Recommendations and findings are presented to the Program Management Committee (PMC), ensuring that corrective actions are monitored and evaluated for impact. Analysis confirms that these measures have successfully lowered non-conformity rates in several categories.

CIPO has also established processes to verify the effectiveness of actions taken to correct deficiencies in search and examination work, resolve identified issues, address causes, and implement measures to avoid future occurrences. One of the key elements supporting this process is the Control of Nonconformity Procedure, which helps ensure that identified non-conformities are documented, and addressed through long-term corrective measures. Any process that doesn't work as expected is identified, particularly transaction errors between Classification, Examination, PCT International Unit and Scanning (i.e., cross-unit non-conformities). These cross-unit non-conformities typically result from international phase procedures not being followed and would not be captured in other reporting mechanisms, such as standard QC forms. The Control of Nonconformity Procedure may also be applied to address issues arising from customer complaints, employee feedback, QC data analysis and internal audit.

Non-conformities are reported via email to the Program Manager – International (PCT) through the PCT Practice mailbox and records are retained for future reference in Outlook. Once reported, the PCT Practice group assists in rectifying the error and ensures that systemic issues are escalated appropriately.

ARTICLE VIII. 6. COMMUNICATION

Inter-Authority communication:

21.18 Explanatory note: Each Authority should provide for effective communication with other Authorities.

(Note: This point is informative. No response is required by the template to paragraph 21.18)

21.19 Provide the name, job title and contact details of the Authorities designated quality contact person who will take responsibility for:

(a) helping identify and disseminate best practice among Authorities;

(b) fostering continual improvement; and

(c) providing for effective communication with other Authorities to allow for prompt feedback from them so that potential systemic issues can be evaluated and addressed.

(a) and (b)

Maryse Duquette, Program Manager - Quality

Patent Services and Strategic Affairs Division
Canadian Intellectual Property Office
Innovation, Science and Economic Development
50 Victoria Street, Gatineau, QC K1A OC9

maryse.duquette@ised-isde.gc.ca
Telephone 819 639-3119
Government of Canada

and (c)

Megan McTavish, Program Manager - International (PCT)

Patent Policy and International Affairs Division
Canadian Intellectual Property Office
Innovation, Science and Economic Development
50 Victoria Street, Gatineau, QC K1A OC9

megan.mctavish@ised-isde.gc.ca
Telephone: 819 664-1377
Government of Canada

Communication and guidance to users:

21.20 Describe the system in place for monitoring and using customer feedback including at least the following elements:

(i) An appropriate system for

handling complaints and making corrections;

taking corrective and/or preventative action where appropriate; and

offering feedback to users.

(ii) A procedure for:

monitoring user satisfaction and perception; and

for ensuring their legitimate needs and expectations are met.

(iii) Clear, concise and comprehensive guidance and information to users (particularly unrepresented applicants) on the search and examination process, giving details of where it is to be found e.g. link to Authority's web site, guidance literature.

Indicate where and how the Authority makes its quality objectives publicly available for the users.

(i) Client complaints are handled directly via the CIPO Client Service Centre (CSC) using the CIPO general enquiry telephone line where client service specialists can respond to general enquires or redirect calls to the appropriate party. Also, CIPO's Online Feedback Mechanism (OFM) (https://www.ic.gc.ca/cipo/internet.nsf/comp-eng?readform) provides an online form for users to submit comments, complaints or compliments to CIPO employees who take corrective and/or preventative actions were appropriate. Responses are returned to clients within 5 business days, ensuring timely resolution and transparency. This feedback provides a valuable source of client information that can be of great value when identifying service improvements that meet customer needs. Recurring client concerns are identified, and standardized responses are created and regularly updated to ensure consistency.

In April 2025, CIPO launched a modernized Client Feedback Tool to replace the legacy Online Feedback Mechanism platform with a streamlined, user-friendly web-based application, enhancing direct communication with CIPO. In 2024, CIPO implemented automated client dashboards (Client Enquiry Management Dashboard including an OFM Dashboard) using PowerBI which facilitates monitoring, follow-up and continuous improvement. Insights from these dashboards are reviewed during Patent Management Committee (PMC) meetings to identify trends and prioritize improvements.

A corrective/preventative action mechanism is available to internal clients to track IT issues, including data corrections, ensuring timely resolution and systemic improvements. This mechanism uses SharePoint and permits non-conformities to be identified and tracked systematically as well as routed to the appropriate resource for action.

(ii) A joint consultation committee between CIPO management and Intellectual Property Institute of Canada (IPIC) patent agents, the Patent Practice Committee CIPO-IPIC (2PC), provides an opportunity for the exchange of information between the profession and CIPO to effectively address client concerns. Regular monitoring of the overview of patent feedback received via the Online Feedback Mechanism is summarized and shared with the 2PC, ensuring transparency and collaborative problem-solving.

On December 1, 2015, the Patent Branch launched an ongoing CIPO Patent Product Evaluation Survey to our clients. This survey collects data on the client's perception of quality and timeliness of service, invites comparisons of CIPO's work to other IP offices,

and gathers information on clients' awareness of CIPO's OFM and on responsiveness to phone enquiries. Clients are invited to participate whenever receiving national examination actions such as examination reports. Survey results are analyzed regularly, and findings are used to implement service improvements. Insights are reviewed during PMC meetings to ensure alignment with quality objectives and national and international best practices.

In 2018, CIPO conducted Employee and Client Satisfaction surveys. The final report from the CIPO 2018 Client Satisfaction Survey was publicly released on September 26, 2018. CIPO developed an action plan to address concerns and opportunities for improvement identified in the survey. Although these surveys were intended occur every 3 years, the next survey was delayed due to the pandemic and conducted in 2022. The final report from the CIPO 2022 Client Satisfaction Survey was publicly released on November 16, 2022, https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/innovation_science_economic_development_canada/2022/098-21-e/Report-POR098-21.pdf. The next survey is scheduled for 2026 with enhancements planned to include expanded metrics on digital service experience and client engagement.

In December 2024, CIPO published a new Service Strategy. This evidence-driven and client-centric plan includes CIPO's Service Improvement Roadmap and is grounded in insights derived from the 2022 Client Satisfaction Survey. This strategy outlines a service improvement agenda that places clients at the heart of our strategic priorities and operations. It reflects our dedication to continuous improvement and our dedication to meeting clients' needs and expectations in an evolving IP landscape. To support this strategy, CIPO established a Service Excellence Team within the Patent Branch. This team leads initiatives focused on improving client experience, monitoring service standards, and implementing enhancements identified through client feedback and survey results. The team collaborates with governance bodies such as the PMC to ensure service excellence objectives are integrated into branch planning and quality management processes.

(iii) Guidance on the entire PCT application process can be found on the CIPO website https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/patents/patent-application-and-examination/file-international-patent-application-through-patent-cooperation-treaty-pct-patent-cooperation). This page contains a detailed kit for first-time users to gain a quick and thorough introduction to the PCT system and understand how and when to file a PCT application in Canada. The kit is reproduced from the WIPO publication PCT Applicant's Guide and includes links to more detailed PCT information on the WIPO website. It also describes CIPO's role as an International Searching Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) under the PCT.

Furthermore, the International Affairs section of the CIPO website (https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/canadian-intellectual-property-office/en/international-affairs) provides a detailed breakdown of all the various ways in which CIPO participates in the global IP system.

CIPO publishes its quality objectives externally on its Patent Quality page https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr04378.html. The objectives are also available internally for employees on the intranet, SharePoint and in our Quality Manual. Additionally, CIPO publishes its Quality Standards for International Search and Preliminary Examination on the Patent Quality Page. These standards are broken into six sections: Subject matter, Search, Application Formalities, Examination, Communication and Timeliness. The overall goal of these standards is to ensure that all aspects of our products are of such a high quality level and are useful to our clients. In December of 2020, CIPO launched its Patent Quality metrics page https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-

internetopic.nsf/eng/wr04824.html which provides transparency on performance indicators for national products.

21.21 Communication with WIPO and designated and elected Offices:

Describe how the Authority provides for effective communication with the International Bureau and designated and elected offices. In particular describe how the Authority ensures that feedback is promptly evaluated and addressed.

The Patent Branch Program Manager - International (PCT) and the Team Leader of the PCT International Unit are jointly responsible for communications with WIPO and designated and elected offices. Communications from WIPO regarding systematic issues and high-level changes are directed to the Program Manager who ensures that all employees are aware of the issues and that any changes to procedures are carried out. The Program Manager - International (PCT) also regularly communicates directly with WIPO officials from various departments, such as PCT Legal, the receiving Office of the International Bureau (RO/IB), PCT eServices, etc. when questions arise regarding PCT issues. Lower-level issues, or those dealing with a specific application, are usually sent from the RO/IB directly to the Team Leader of PCT International by email, who follows up promptly.

The Program Manager – International (PCT) and the Program Manager – Quality are also available to officials from the other Authorities and the Designated/Elected Offices for feedback and quality-related questions either directly or via CIPO's Client Service Centre. They also attend the annual Meeting of International Authorities (MIA) and its Quality Subgroup (QSG) and participate in online discussions on the QSG Wiki.

Finally, the Program Manager – International (PCT) attends PCT Working Group meetings on behalf of CIPO.

ARTICLE IX. 7. DOCUMENTATION

21.22 Explanatory note: The QMS of the Authority needs to be clearly described and implemented so that all processes in the Authority and the resulting products and services can be monitored, controlled, and checked for conformity. This is done by documenting the procedures and processes affecting the quality of work as a reference for staff and management at the Authority (see paragraph 21.23).

(Note: This point is informative. No response is required by the template to paragraph 21.22)

21.23 The material that makes up the reference for staff and management at the Authority serves to document the procedures and processes affecting the quality of work, such as classification, search, examination and related administrative work. In particular, the reference indicates where to find instructions on the procedures to be followed.

For the purposes of this report indicate:

(a) the documents making up the reference that have been prepared and distributed;

(b) the media on which they are supported (e.g. Internal Publication, Internet, Intranet); and

(c) document control measures taken e.g. version numbering, access to latest version.

(a) A Quality Manual which incorporates Chapter 21 of the PCT Guidelines and ISO 9001:2015 requirements has been prepared and distributed to patent employees. The Manual provides an overview of the quality policy, quality objectives, quality initiatives, organizational roles, responsibilities, and authorities. It is a working document that is updated when changes to the Quality Management System (QMS) are planned and implemented. In addition to the Quality Manual, the reference for employees and management includes process mappings and work instructions for national and international examination, operations, and classification. Other key documents include the Quality Standards for International

Search and Preliminary Examination, the Audit Program Manual based on ISO 19011, training manuals including the ISA & IPEA Training Manual, onboarding materials, Examiners' Bulletins and Operations' Bulletins (PSSA Must Know!), patent notices and MOPOP updates for national examination and operations.

(b) The Quality Manual is published in CIPO's intranet and can be accessed by all employees. In addition to the Quality Manual, CIPO's intranet contains a dedicated Quality Section which is updated with the majority of the documents which are presented in the Quality Manual. The Manual and additional QMS documentation are available on the Quality SharePoint page, which includes Quality Control (QC) reports, internal audit reports, search record reports, and information on QMS awareness. All official versions of these documents are stored in the Information Management (IM) system GCdocs.

(c) All documents are subject to rigorous document control measures. Version control is applied through version numbering, revision schedules, and effective dates, with GCdocs and SharePoint maintaining audit trails and version history. Access to sensitive information is restricted through GCdocs permissions managed by the IM Analyst. Retention and disposition of documents follow the CIPO Retention and Disposition Policy, which is reviewed every three years.

21.24 Indicate whether the material making up the reference of quality procedures and processes include the following:

(i) the quality policy of the Authority including a clear statement of commitment to the QMS from top management;

(ii) the scope of the QMS, including details of and justification for any exclusions;

(iii) the organizational structure of the Authority and the responsibilities of each of its departments;

(iv) the documented processes carried out in the Authority such as receipt of incoming applications, classification, distribution, search, examination, publication and support processes, and procedures established for the QMS, or references to them;

(v) the resources available for carrying out the processes and implementing the procedures; and

(vi) a description of the interaction between the processes and the procedures of the QMS.

The Quality Manual includes the following elements:

(i) A clearly articulated Quality Policy and the Quality Objectives of the Patent Branch. These confirm the Branch's commitment to maintaining and continually improving its Quality Management System (QMS) in compliance with ISO 9001:2015 and PCT Chapter 21 requirements;

(ii) The scope of the Quality Management System (QMS), which applies to the administration, search, and examination of national and international patent applications and to maintenance of granted applications;

(iii) The organizational structure and responsibilities (sections 3.3 and 6), including descriptions of the Patent Branch management team and the roles of groups associated with the QMS, such as the Patent Management Committee (PMC), Quality Working Group (QWG), and ISO Coordinator;

(iv) References to the documented processes and procedures carried out by this Authority (PCT International Operations and Examination units) including receipt of applications,

classification, search, examination, and support processes. These are documented in mappings and work instructions, which are maintained under version control in an Information Management system (GCdocs) and accessible via CIPOnet (intranet) or SharePoint. Updates occur as needed, and training is provided whenever new processes or significant changes are introduced;

(v) A summary of the resources available for carrying out the processes and implementing the procedures. This includes human resources (qualified examiners and administrative employees), IT systems (e.g., InterApp, GCdocs, Questel Orbit), and training programs (initial and continuous training for examiners and operations employees. Detailed instruction on accessing and using pertinent resources are embedded in the mappings and work instructions for all International QMS processes and procedures.

(vi) A description of the interaction between processes and procedures within the QMS. The Quality Manual explains that the mappings and work instructions define the tasks, sequence of steps, inputs and outputs for each process/subprocesses. These documents illustrate how processes and their subprocesses interconnect, for example, how examination interacts with classification and quality control and how feedback loops (e.g., QC results, audits) drive continual improvement. Workflow interactions are supported by systems such as the internal Patent Management System of Next Generation Patents (national applications) and InterApp (international applications).

21.25 Indicate which types of records the Authority maintains, such as:

(i) a definition of which documents are kept and where they are kept;

(ii) results of management review;

(iii) training, skills and experience of personnel;

(iv) evidence of conformity of processes, resulting products and services in terms of quality standards;

(v) results of reviews of requirements relating to products;

(vi) the search and examination processes carried out on each application;

(vii) data allowing individual work to be tracked and traced;

(viii) records of QMS audits;

(ix) actions taken re. non-conforming products, e.g. examples of corrections;

(x) actions taken re. corrective action;

(xi) actions taken re. preventative action; and

(xii) search process documentation as set out in Section 8.

(i) All documented information supporting the QMS is stored in the Government of Canada Information Management system (GCdocs), which provides version control, audit trails, and secure access. Official documents intended for internal sharing are also available on CIPO's intranet and SharePoint. This includes audit reports, QC results, templates, and management review records.

(ii) Management reviews are conducted annually as part of the QMS review process and during Patent Management Committee (PMC) meetings. These reviews assess QMS performance, resource adequacy, risks and opportunities, and identify improvement actions. Outputs of management reviews (e.g., decisions on opportunities for improvement,

changes to the QMS, and resource needs) are documented in PMC Records of Decision and stored in GCdocs.

(iii) All Patent Branch employees maintain a Learning and Development Plan (LDP) which is stored electronically and includes a list of all mandatory and optional training as well as professional development activities. These plans create a learning history for each employee and support competence assurance in line with ISO 9001:2015 requirements. Training documentation and related resources are maintained in GCdocs and on the CIPO PB Training SharePoint page.

(iv) Conformity of processes to standards is verified through internal audits and documented in the Patent Branch's Internal Audit Reports. Audits follow a risk-based approach and are scheduled annually, with findings and recommendations reviewed by PMC. Audit documentation, including tools, templates, and reports, is available on SharePoint and GCdocs.

(v) Quality Control (QC) results for national and international examination products are captured and analyzed to monitor conformity and identify improvement opportunities. For national products, QC results are currently captured using standardized MS Forms, while international QC results are obtained using a Lotus-based QC tool. An alternative, more flexible solution using MS Forms has been prepared for international work products and will be launched in April 2026. Quality Control results are included in the National QC Report and the Chapter I and Chapter II International QC Reports, which are available in GCdocs and on SharePoint.

(vi) All International examination applications are stored in InterApp and include the ISRs/WOs for Chapter I applications accompanied with Examination Notes documents (search records) and IPRPs for Chapter II applications. The Examination Notes contain a record of all the classifications, keywords, and databases searched as well as search strings and search histories. In 2013, CIPO began publishing the Examination Notes with our ISR/WOs on PATENTSCOPE ensuring transparency and traceability.

(vii) Production tracking systems (the internal Patent Management System of Next Generation Patents for national applications and InterApp for international applications) store all tasks performed on a file including timestamps and responsible employees. This enables full traceability of actions and supports monitoring of timeliness and quality.

(viii) All audit results, including internal process audits and system audits, are stored in GCdocs. All audit documentation, including tools, templates and reports, are available internally to employees in GCdocs and on the internal SharePoint page.

(ix) - (xi) Non-conformities, corrective actions, and preventative actions are logged and tracked through an audit master sheet documenting non-compliances, non-conformities, and opportunities for improvement as well as corrective actions. These are also documented in audit reports available internally to employees in GCdocs and on the internal SharePoint page. Corrective actions are monitored for effectiveness and reviewed during management reviews. A corrective action/preventative action mechanism is available to employees to track internal IT issues, including data correction. This mechanism uses SharePoint and permits non-conformities to be identified and tracked systematically as well as routed to the appropriate resource for action.

(xii) Records supporting search process documentation as required by Section 8 of the QMS are maintained in InterApp for international applications. These records include the ISRs/WOs for Chapter I applications with accompanying CIPO Examination Notes (search records) and IPRPs for Chapter II applications. Examination Notes document the search process, including databases consulted (patent and non-patent literature), search strategy,

keywords, combinations of words and truncations used, language(s) of the search, IPC classification symbol, all search statements and search histories. They also record any dates restrictions, and whether prior art noted by applicant and or applicants prior disclosures were considered. The ISRs/WOs for Chapter I applications and IPRPs for Chapter II applications further include statements on limitation of search and justification, lack of clarity of the claims, and lack of unity. These records are included with the ISRs. WOs, IPRPs and CIPO Examination Notes on PATENTSCOPE.

ARTICLE X. 8. SEARCH PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

21.26 For internal purposes the Authority should document its search process.

The Authority should indicate

(a) which of the following are included in this record:

(i) the databases consulted (patent and non patent literature);

(ii) the keywords, combinations of words and truncations used;

(iii) the language(s) in which the search was carried out;

(iv) the classes and class combinations searched, at least according to the IPC or equivalent;

(v) a listing of all search statements used in the databases consulted.

(b) which other information relevant to the search itself is included in this record e.g. a statement of the subject of search; details of special relevance to internet searching; a record of documents viewed; on-line thesaurus, synonym or concept databases, etc.

(Explanatory note: The IA is requested to list other information it may collect to monitor and improve the search process)

(c) which special cases are documented and whether records are kept denoting any:

(vi) limitation of search and its justification

(vii) lack of clarity of the claims; and

(viii) lack of unity.

Throughout the examination of an international application, the examiner is required to document the search process using the “CIPO Examination Notes” form. This form records details of the search, including databases consulted, keywords and truncations used, languages of the search and IPC classifications, and all search statements and histories. It also documents any date restrictions, whether prior art noted by the applicant or applicant’s prior disclosures were considered and lists the relevant documents found. The form is saved and stored with the international application.

Information on limitations of search and justification, lack of clarity of claims, and lack of unity is recorded in the ISRs/WOs and IPRPs accompanying the application. These records, together with the Examination Notes, are stored in InterApp and published with ISRs, WOs, IPRPs, and Examination Notes on WIPO’s PATENTSCOPE to ensure transparency and traceability.

ARTICLE XI. 9. INTERNAL REVIEW

21.27 Explanatory note: The Authority should report on its own internal review arrangements. These reviews determine the extent to which it has established a QMS based on the model of Chapter 21 and the extent to which it is complying with the QMS requirements and the Search and Examination Guidelines. The reviews should be objective and transparent to demonstrate whether or not those requirements and guidelines are being applied consistently and effectively and should be undertaken at least once a year. With reference to point 21.08 of this template, the Authority may provide additional information on its internal review arrangements under this section if it so wishes.

21.28-21.30 These arrangements are reported according to this template in Section 1, above, at points 21.04 - 21.09. The Authority may provide additional information on further inputs to its internal reviews under this section, if it so wishes.

CIPO's Patent Branch conducts internal reviews to ensure its Quality Management System (QMS) remains effective and compliant with the PCT Search and Examination Guidelines and ISO 9001:2015. These reviews are objective, transparent, and performed at least annually to confirm that QMS requirements are consistently and effectively applied.

All QMS-related documents, including the Quality Manual, search and examination standards, QC/QA tools, training manuals and support documentation are reviewed and updated as needed. Corrective and preventative actions are implemented throughout the year based on review findings and identified issues. Audit results and review data are presented to the Patent Management Committee (PMC) and any deficiencies or recommendations are addressed.

The CIPO Patent Branch had maintained ISO 9001:2015 certification since 2017, with successful recertifications in 2020 and 2023. The most recent surveillance audit, completed in 2025, reported no non-conformities. The next recertification audit is scheduled for March 2026

Management remains committed to continually improving the QMS and has taken appropriate measures to ensure its effectiveness, and the maintenance of its ISO 9001 certification.

Internal Audit Program

The Internal Audit Program is led by the Program Manager - Quality and is delivered by a team of professionally trained internal auditors representing all departments within the CIPO's Patent Branch. Auditors receive ISO audit training, and several are certified lead auditors qualified to conduct system audits and lead process audits.

The Program includes both system and process audits, providing a comprehensive annual assessment of the QMS and its processes. Process audits follow an established schedule covering all the Patent Branch processes and allow for impromptu audits at management's request. The schedule applies a risk-based approach, prioritizing higher-risk processes for more frequent audits. All processes within the QMS, including ISA/IPEA processes, are audited on a four- or five-year cycle. These audits focus on assessing the adequacy, staff awareness, and the robustness of documentation and controls. They include a review of all relevant statistics, QC data, documentation, and process steps, as well as a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis.

Annual system audits ensure conformance to ISO 9001:2015 and Chapter 21 PCT requirements, verifying the effective implementation and maintenance of the QMS. Risks and opportunities for improvement are also identified and appropriate follow-up actions are conducted.

In 2025, the Internal Audit Program is undergoing a fundamental restructuring. With the previous five-year cycle complete and the implementation of a new national patent management system Next Generation Patents (NGP) along with the upcoming adoption of WIPO's ePCT solution for managing international patent applications, significant changes and uncertainties

have emerged. To address these, the organization is adopting a fresh, risk-based approach to auditing. This year is designated as the “Discovery Year”, a transitional phase to reassess audit priorities and methodologies in light of evolving processes, automation, and shifting responsibilities. Rather than continuing with legacy practices, audits will be redefined from the ground up to better reflect current risks and operational realities.

ARTICLE XII. 10. ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUTHORITIES TO REPORT TO THE MIA

21.31 There are two stages in the reporting arrangements outlined in Chapter 21: The initial report called for by paragraph 21.31(a), and annual reports in accordance with paragraph 21.31(b). Authorities should submit each report in the form of a full report, making the differences from the previous year’s report clear, for example using “track changes” or other form of highlighting.

[End of document]