C. PCT 1620                                        April 6, 2021

Madam,
Sir,

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


**BACKGROUND**

2.      At its twelfth session, the PCT Working Group discussed a document (see document PCT/WG/12/6) which presented the responses submitted by Offices in reply to a Circular (C. PCT 1559) that had been sent to Offices regarding training of substantive patent examiners, and approved a proposal of the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO):

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

                                                                                    /...

3.      The International Bureau of WIPO issued Circular C. PCT 1588, dated February 27, 2020, to request information regarding the use of e-learning resources for the training of substantive patent examiners.  This Circular received 19 responses, but only a few of these were from IP Offices in developing and least developed countries.  The limited number of responses may have been a result of other priorities arising from the emerging COVID-19 pandemic.

4.      In light of their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, Offices may have been reviewing their policies with regard to e-learning.  Moreover, in recent months, IP Offices and other institutions have made more e-learning resources available that were not part of their response to the questionnaire sent with the Circular C. PCT 1588.

5.      In view of the above developments, the International Bureau proposed to repeat the survey in a revised version and to report to the fourteenth session of the Working Group in 2021 (see document PCT/WG/13/11).  This will allow Offices to provide information on any changes to how they use e-learning resources for training substantive patent examiners from their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.  A revised survey will also provide the opportunity for more Offices to respond to the survey.  The International Bureau has therefore prepared the current survey.

**COMPILATION OF E-LEARNING RESOURCES**

6.      A Compilation of e-learning Resources for Patent Examiners prepared by the International Bureau was presented at the tenth session of the PCT Working Group (see document PCT/WG/10/PRESENTATION/E-LEARNING).  This Compilation was further updated based on the responses of Offices to Circulars C. PCT 1529 and C. PCT 1559, and information obtained by the International Bureau itself.  The International Bureau presented updates on this Compilation at the subsequent sessions of the Working Group.

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

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

8.      All Offices are invited to fill in the Questionnaire attached to this Circular.  The Questionnaire is largely identical to the Questionnaire of the previous Circular C. PCT 1588.  If you responded to the previous Circular, you should send an update of your previous response.  The International Bureau can provide you with a copy of your earlier response if needed.

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

**RESPONSES TO CIRCULAR**

10.     Replies to this Circular (preferably by returning an electronic copy of the filled-in Annex attached to this Circular, which is also available from the WIPO web site at: http://www.wipo.int/pct/en/circulars) should be returned by April 19, 2021, preferably by e-mail, to Ms. Christine Bonvallet, Director, PCT International Cooperation Division, at: pcticd@wipo.int.  For clarifications, please contact Mr. Lutz Mailänder, Head, International Cooperation on Examination and Training Section, at: lutz.mailander@wipo.int.

11.     Responses received prior to the above deadline will be taken into account in the preparation by the International Bureau of a working document on the use of e-learning resources for the training for substantive patent examiners for discussion at the fourteenth session of the Working Group, scheduled to take place from June 14 to 17, 2021.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Jorgenson
Deputy Director General


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

ANNEX TO CIRCULAR C. PCT 1620


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


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

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

When answering the questions, please note:

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

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

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

**Responding Office:**

Name of contact person:

Position:

Email address:

# Questions

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

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

☐    Yes

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

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

☐    Yes, use of <u>certain</u> e-learning resources is an obligatory part of the initial training of newly recruited examiners[1]

☐    Yes, use of <u>certain</u> e-learning resources is an obligatory part of the further vocational training of examiners after the initial training[1]

☐    No

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

☐    Yes, our Office recommends use of particular e-learning resources endorsed by our Office (please go to Question 4)

☐    Yes, our Office recommends the voluntary use of e-learning resources in general without endorsing particular e-learning resources (please skip Question 4 and go to Question 5)

☐    No (please skip Question 4 and go to Question 5)

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

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

Click here to enter text.

5.    Please indicate below your views regarding the utility of e-learning resources for the training of the patent examiners of your Office and your plans for developing policies on the use of e-learning resources[2]:

Click here to enter text.

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

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

☐  Yes, our Office developed all of the e-learning resources used for the training of patent examiners at our Office

☐  Yes, our Office developed some but not all of the e-learning resources used for the training of patent examiners at our Office

☐  No

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

☐    Yes, the e-learning resources are accessible for <u>anybody</u> without prior registration

☐    Yes, the e-learning resources are accessible for <u>anybody</u> after prior registration (only for identification of the user)

☐    Yes, access to the e-learning resources is however controlled (not accessible for anybody;  access is only possible after individual selection/nomination of learners and/or after payment of a fee)

☐    No

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

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

Click here to enter text.

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

Click here to enter text.

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

Click here to enter text.

Incentives for using e-learning resources

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

☐     Yes

☐     No

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

☐     Yes

☐     No

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

Click here to enter text.

<u>Other</u>

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

Click here to enter text.

[End of Annex and of Circular]