Europäisches Patentamt
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# European qualifying examination

Guide for preparation I 15th edition

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in co-operation with

epi

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# Introduction

This guide supports candidates preparing for the European qualifying examination (EQE). It explains the structure of the modular EQE and gives practical guidance on registration, enrolment and preparation for the online examination.

The guide is not a legal source and does not replace the Regulation on the European qualifying examination for professional representatives before the European Patent Office (REE) and its implementing provisions (IPREE), or notices and instructions published by the competent EQE bodies. Candidates remain responsible for checking the current requirements, deadlines and examination information on the EPO website.



# Chapter I
# The European qualifying examination

## Institutional framework

The EQE is organised and conducted by a Supervisory Board, an Examination Board, Examination Committees, and an Examination Secretariat, as set out in the REE adopted by the Administrative Council of the European Patent Organisation.

The composition of the EQE bodies reflects the joint involvement of the EPO and the Institute of Professional Representatives before the European Patent Office (epi).

### The Supervisory Board

Members: four in total, two from the EPO and two from the epi. The members are appointed by the President of the EPO. The chair alternates between an EPO and an epi member every two years.

Roles:
- determines the nature, structure and number of papers and the time allowed for each
- monitors and evaluates the conduct and results of the examination
- amends the Implementing provisions to the Regulation on the European qualifying examination (IPREE) where necessary.

### The Examination Board

Members: eight in total, four from the EPO and four from the epi. When the chair of the Supervisory Board is from the EPO, the chair of the Examination Board is a member from epi (and vice versa).

Roles:
- advises the Supervisory Board on the conduct and results of the examination
- decides on the content of examination papers and marking sheets
- determines the grade threshold for passing each examination
- instructs the Examination Committees on the preparation and marking of examination papers
- takes a final decision on pass or fail based on the marks proposed by the Examination Committees.

### Examination Committees

Members: from both the EPO and the epi, at least 50% being from the epi.

Roles:
- prepare and draw up the papers and marking sheets
- mark the papers
- propose the grades to be awarded.

Each paper is marked by two committee members separately and/or by autoscoring as defined in the IPREE.

### The Examination Secretariat

Members: EPO employees

Roles:
- prepares and organises the examination
- decides on and handles registration and enrolment
- publishes the Compendium of past papers and information on the examination and how it is conducted
- supports the Supervisory Board, the Examination Board and Examination Committees in their duties

From the first and important step of registering for the EQE, candidates are in contact with the Examination Secretariat throughout their EQE journey.

## Registration and enrolment

Registration and enrolment are separate steps.

Candidates must register for the EQE before enrolling to sit an examination paper. Registration is free of charge and is easy to complete online. Candidates can – and are strongly advised to – register after starting professional activity within the meaning of Article 11(2) REE, i.e.

- training under the supervision of a professional representative before the EPO, or
- working as an employee fully responsible for patent matters in an industrial company established in one of the EPC contracting states (evidence must be provided that you act as a representative before the EPO in a wide range of capacities)

Candidates who are unsure whether their professional activity meets the applicable requirements should consult the FAQ or contact the Examination Secretariat via the contact form.

Candidates intending to enrol to sit an examination for the first time must have registered for the EQE by 31 May of the year in which they intend to enrol.

The dates, fees and other details related to the EQE examinations are published every year in the Official Journal of the EPO and on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination.

Candidates requiring reasonable adjustments on account of a temporary or permanent physical or medical condition must contact the Secretariat as early as possible (at the latest upon enrolment) with supporting evidence (Rule 17 IPREE).

The enrolment deadline is quite some time ahead of the examination, typically before a date in September of the year before the examination.

Candidates who enrol for the examinations receive access to the Compendium area (past papers) in WISEflow (the exam-like environment) and are strongly encouraged to practise in that environment as soon as they get access. This is an important part of their preparation and will help them to feel confident with the examination software by the day of the examination.

## About the examination

From 2027 the EQE is a modular examination, consisting of a foundation paper, paper F, and four main papers, papers M1, M2, M3 and M4.

The examinations are held once a year, usually at the beginning of March, over two consecutive weeks. The exact dates are announced in the Official Journal, while the start and end dates are published on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination.

Subject to the applicable registration and enrolment requirements, candidates may sit:
- Paper F after at least 12 months of full-time professional activity

— Papers M1 and M2 after at least 24 months of full-time professional activity, provided Paper F has been passed
— Papers M3 and M4 after at least 36 months of full-time professional activity, provided paper F has been passed.

Candidates may enrol only for papers not already passed and from which they are not exempt.

Candidates are eligible to sit any of the main examination papers after passing the foundation paper, paper F, provided they have the required professional activity; this is the progressive path. By way of exception under Rule 10(3) IPREE (intensive path), candidates with at least three years of professional activity may enrol for all four main examination papers, papers M1 to M4, in the same examination session and are exempt from paper F. See the notice from the Examination Board dated 21 November 2025 explaining in detail the consequences of doing this. However, in the event of failing one of the papers, depending on the paper in question, sitting paper F may become a requirement for resitting some of the main papers (see section h. “Choice of papers” below).

The idea behind the modular and progressive paths is to test the candidates at different stages of their professional training. Paper F focuses on declarative knowledge; candidates are expected to find and apply the right legal basis for a standard situation and interpret patent claims. The next progressive step is with papers M1 and M2, which test at interpretation level: candidates must be able to find relevant legal bases and apply them in a non-standard case. Finally, papers M3 and M4 assess advanced drafting, argumentation and strategic advice. Together, the papers assess whether candidates are qualified to practise as professional representatives before the EPO.

Candidates who passed an examination under the REE 2009 may qualify for exemptions under Article 25 REE 2025:
— a pass in the pre-examination gives you an exemption from papers F and M1
— a pass in paper A gives you an exemption from paper M3, part 1
— a pass in paper B gives you an exemption from paper M3, part 2
— a pass in paper C gives you an exemption from paper M3, part 3
— a pass in paper D gives you an exemption from papers M2 and M4.

Please refer to the notice of the Examination Board dated 6 July 2026 explaining the application of the exemption before applying for an exemption.

Candidates who passed examinations in the past should therefore check their individual exemption status before planning which papers they still need to sit.

## Paper F

The foundation paper, paper F, tests declarative knowledge, assessing your understanding of the legal concepts and provisions of the EPC and PCT, as well as your ability to interpret claims and evaluate their compliance. It focuses on applying legal texts in straightforward, day-to-day situations faced by a European patent attorney, rather than on strategic or exceptional cases.

The paper is automatically scored and uses modern examination formats with various question types, such as multiple-choice questions, true/false statements, questions requiring fill-in or drag-and-drop answers. It consists of **two parts of 2 hours** each:
— Part 1 tests your understanding of procedural requirements and steps in EPC and PCT proceedings.
— Part 2 evaluates whether you can interpret claims and analyse their compliance with EPC provisions of claims and proposed amendments.

Candidates are expected to be familiar with these documents as defined in Rule 22(5) IPREE:
— the EPC
— the Implementing Regulations to the EPC
— the Rules relating to Fees
— the PCT
— the Regulations under the PCT
— the PCT Applicant’s Guide
— the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property
— the Guidelines for Examination in the EPO
— the Guidelines for Search and Examination at the EPO as PCT Authority

Paper F was first held in March 2025. All past papers are included in the Compendium.

## Main examination

The main examination papers aim to assess candidates' ability to represent clients in all grant and post-grant proceedings established under the EPC and the PCT. These papers will test your ability to read and interpret information (disclosure, client's requests, etc.), draft claims, draft legal arguments for and against a patent document and provide strategic and procedural legal advice.

### PAPER M1 – Assessment of information and client instructions

Paper M1 assesses the ability to analyse and evaluate information, and to interpret and act on client instructions. This paper also assesses whether you can understand an invention (as described in a patent publication or client disclosures), evaluate it in the light of prior art, and analyse whether the invention and the related application or patent comply with EPC provisions.

The time allotted for this paper is **3 hours** and it has **two parts, each allotted 1.5 hours.** Each part may include one or more tasks.

The questions can be multiple-choice, multi-select and tabular, ones requiring fill-in answers, ones requiring the choice of an answer from a drop-down menu, rating choice / rank order, multi-point scale matrix, ones requiring drag-and-drop answers, open-ended ones requiring a free-text answer.

In addition to the documents listed above for paper F and in line with the progressive-path EQE, you are expected to be familiar with the following documents (Rule 23(4) IPREE):

- the list of EPC contracting states, extension states and validation states; list of contracting states to the PCT; and list of states which have ratified the Agreement on a Unified Patent Court
- Code of Conduct of the Institute of Professional Representatives before the European Patent Office
- Regulation on discipline for professional representatives

Paper M1 was first held in 2026. A mock paper has been made available to serve as training material. All past papers are included in the Compendium.

### PAPER M2 – Mastering procedural patent law

Paper M2 tests the ability to apply EPC and PCT patent law in typical and exceptional scenarios before the EPO. It checks knowledge of all procedures under the EPC, PCT and procedural law in the countries referred to in Rule 2(2) IPREE. Candidates must identify and use all available procedural options and provide clients with recommendations and legal grounds.

The time allotted for paper M2 is between **2.5 and 3 hours**, and this time is split into two parts. Part 1 (up to 1.5 hours) consists of structured question types (see above the types of questions listed for paper M1, excluding open-ended questions requiring free-text answers) and part 2 (up to 1.5 hours) consists of open-ended questions requiring free-text answers. The schedule for the EQE 2027 was published on 22 July 2026 on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination; for the EQE 2027, the time allotted for paper M2 is 3 hours, and the paper will be divided into two parts of 1.5 hours each.

In addition to the documents listed for paper M1, you are expected to be familiar with:

- the Protocol on Centralisation
- the Protocol on Recognition
- the notice of the President of the European Patent Office concerning the arrangements for deposit accounts
- the EPO publications National law relating to the EPC and National measures relating to the Unitary Patent
- the regulations relating to the Unified Patent Court
- the Case Law Book

### PAPER M3 – Drafting patent documentation and reasoning points of law and technique

Paper M3 assesses the ability to analyse, draft and develop patent documentation and submissions based on documents and client instructions. This may arise at various stages, including filing, examination, opposition or appeal proceedings, or in response to official communications (e.g. notices of opposition, grounds of appeal or invitations to oral proceedings), among other scenarios.

The paper consists of **three parts** and the time allotted is **7.5 hours**, all parts requiring free-text answers based on relevant documentation.

The schedule for the EQE 2027 was published on 22 July 2026 on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination; for the EQE 2027, **paper M3 will be spread over two days** with Part 1 on 8 March and Parts 2 and 3 on 9 March.

- **Part 1:** Draft claims (independent and dependent) to achieve the broadest protection for your client while complying with EPC requirements and draft the introductory part of a patent application (thereby at least defining the subject-matter, the technical problem and the solution (Rule 25(2) IPREE)).
- **Part 2:** Argue for compliance of the invention and the application or patent with EPC or PCT requirements, proposing amendments of claims where necessary to achieve compliance. Present suitable arguments and, where appropriate, propose amendments to ensure the broadest possible protection under the EPC or PCT, considering the stage of proceedings (Rule 25(3) IPREE).
- **Part 3:** Argue against compliance, challenging a European patent or European/international patent application under the EPC or PCT.

Familiarity with the documents listed in Rule 21(1) IPREE is required.

Paper M3 will be held for the first time in 2027. A mock paper has been made available to serve as training material.

## PAPER M4 – Advising the client

Paper M4 assesses your ability to provide a legal opinion in response to a client enquiry, demonstrating sound reasoning on advanced procedural and substantive patent law.

Paper M4 tests your ability to apply the EPC, PCT, Paris Convention, Unitary Patent legislation, and procedural laws of EPC contracting, extension and validation states as well as those of IP offices referred to in Rule 2(2) IPREE, in complex scenarios while handling a patent portfolio, analysing the situation and providing strategic advice to the client.

You must use the drafted opinion to explain the legal consequences of the situation and demonstrate your ability to handle complex industrial property cases involving patentability, inventors' rights, ownership of inventions and third-party rights (Rule 26 IPREE).

The time allotted for this paper is between **2 and 2.5 hours** and consists of one or more tasks. As with papers M2 and M3, familiarity with the documents listed in Rule 21(1) IPREE is required. The schedule for the EQE 2027 was published on 22 July 2026 on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination; for the EQE 2027, the time allotted for paper M4 will be 2.5 hours.

Paper M4 will be held for the first time in 2027. A mock paper has been made available to serve as training material.

### Language

All examination papers are available in the EPO's three official languages (English, French and German). Candidates may choose the language in which they read and answer the questions, and will normally use the same language throughout unless otherwise indicated. For paper M1, the notice from the Examination Board dated 10 November 2025 sets out special provisions for part 1.

When enrolling, you may also request to give your answer (in full or in part) in an official language of an EPC contracting state. However, using an EPO official language is recommended, as it is required for proceedings before the EPO.

Preparation should include developing legal language skills, for example through specialised courses and by reading the Official Journal of the EPO and Board of Appeal decisions and discussing what you have read with colleagues. Supervisors of EQE candidates are expected to ensure adequate language preparation. Special courses on legal language are also available (such as the legal English courses run by the British Council). To offset any potential advantage gained by doing the examinations in one's mother tongue:

- No marks are deducted for grammar or style
- Paper dictionaries are allowed during the examination.

## Fees

The current basic fee is EUR 200.

The total examination fee consists of two components:
— an enrolment fee, payable for each examination year; and
— an examination fee per paper.

The enrolment fee for each examination year is equal to the basic fee and is payable irrespective of the number of papers sat.
The examination fee for each EQE paper is calculated as a multiple of the basic fee and depends on the number of attempts: 100% of the basic fee for the first sitting and the first resit, 150% for the second resit, 200% for the third resit, and 400% for the fourth and any subsequent resits.
Withdrawals are allowed before the first paper's start time (subject to the special conditions applicable to the intensive path under Rule 10(3) IPREE). Examination fees are reimbursed only if withdrawal takes place by the published refund deadline. The enrolment fee is not refunded. This document sets out all the details: enrolment process and fees for the EQE 2027.

## Choice of papers

As set out in section (c), the foundation paper, paper F, and main examinations, papers M1–M4, are structured for gradual learning and progressive assessment of knowledge and skills, aligning with expected professional development for aspiring European patent attorneys. Taking paper F after 12 months, and on passing, taking papers M1 and M2 after 24 months and M3 and M4 after 36 months of professional activity is recommended but not compulsory. You can adapt your EQE journey to your individual pace. Once you pass paper F, you may defer papers or sit them in any order assuming you also meet the professional activity requirements. You may only enrol for papers that you have not yet passed.

If you choose to follow the intensive path under Rule 10(3) IPREE, you may have to sit paper F if you are not successful in passing all papers. Failing papers M1 and M2 or papers M2 and M3 means you must sit paper F together with any of these failed papers. Any resat main papers will be marked only if you pass paper F. This route may delay qualification, and preparation can be demanding. Attempting all main examination papers at once can make preparation challenging, so consider the workload before choosing your EQE journey.

EQE pass rates are published annually on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination. Familiarising yourself with the figures will give you an idea of the different levels of difficulty of EQE papers. Further insights are summarised in the EQE survey summary, based on the feedback of candidates in previous years.

## Grades

Every year the Examination Board sets the grade threshold for passing each paper based on the marks proposed by the Examination Committee and taking into account that the EQE is designed to establish that candidates are qualified to practise as professional representatives as outlined in Article 1(1) REE.

To pass, you must achieve a pass in every part of the paper during the same sitting; for example, passing all three parts of paper M3 at once. With respect to total achievable marks, the grade thresholds for each paper will be within the following ranges:
— Between 50 and 75% for papers F and M1
— Between 30 and 60% for papers M2, M3 and M4.

## Conduct of the examination

All examinations are carried out online using WISEflow and a lockdown browser, with human invigilation using logs, video and audio, supported by AI. Ahead of the examinations, enrolled candidates receive access to the Compendium within WISEflow. Candidates are recommended to start practising early and to do so extensively before the examinations and in the setup used for the examinations.

Furthermore, several practical test sessions are offered in the weeks leading up to the examinations. Invigilators are also present during these practical test sessions, and this is an important opportunity to check all technical functionalities and peripheral devices.

For EQE 2027, **no part of an examination paper will be made available in advance as a printable document.**

During the examination, the examination paper and all accompanying documents will be accessible through the WISEflow system. **Candidates may not take an unscheduled break during examination time**, except where expressly provided otherwise in the Instructions to candidates. Scheduled breaks between parts are shown in the published schedule for the EQE 2027.

Please read the Instructions to candidates carefully with your supervisor. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in measures being taken, including disqualification from the examination and, in serious cases, consequences for future sittings. See the recent Communication from the Examination Board concerning the conduct of the examination. Candidates should note that any breach which enables or could enable an unfair advantage may justify measures, including disqualification, irrespective of proven intent.

Check epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination regularly for updates regarding the examination conduct, schedule, online platform, etc.

## Transitional provisions

The new examination papers have been / are being introduced in stages: paper F in 2025, papers M1 and M2 in 2026, and papers M3 and M4 in 2027. In parallel, the former EQE papers have now been phased out, with the last pre-examination in 2024 and the final A, B, C, D papers in 2026.

The transitional provisions recognise only a pass (at least 50 marks) obtained under the previous system and enable eligible candidates to complete the EQE under the modular structure. Exemptions apply as follows for having passed:

- Pre-exam: exempt from paper F and paper M1
- Paper A: exempt from paper M3, part 1
- Paper B: exempt from paper M3, part 2
- Paper C: exempt from paper M3, part 3
- Paper D: exempt from papers M2 and M4

If you passed papers A to C without sitting the pre-examination in 2025 (or 2020), you are also exempt from papers F and M1. If you passed paper D without sitting the pre-examination in 2025 (or 2020), you are also exempt from paper F.

The notice from the Examination Secretariat for the European qualifying examination dated 6 July 2026 explains the practical application of the exemptions and the timeline which is limited. It may be used for a maximum period of five years from the first time a candidate avails themselves of an exemption. The period continues to run even if the candidate does not participate in one or more subsequent EQE sessions.



# Chapter II
# Overview of work organisation during the preparation period

## Year 1

Your first year focuses on grasping the basics of the EPC and PCT patent systems – especially novelty, inventive step, priority, procedural steps and patent rights. If you are training under the supervision of a European patent attorney, you should be receiving direct instructions and training based on specific cases. You are generally encouraged to seek out your peers and to form study groups.

After one year, you may take the foundation paper, paper F, which tests declarative knowledge of legal matters.

— Efficient preparation involves reading and organising study materials and regularly updating them when changes are published in the Official Journal. Understanding the structure of legal texts is vital for quick reference during the examination. It is essential to practise giving answers to legal questions once you have acquired some legal knowledge.

— The foundation paper also covers claim interpretation and compliance with EPC provisions (e.g. clarity, unity, novelty, inventive step, added matter). Although these topics will be familiar to you from your work, you should discuss them with supervisors or peers.

— Familiarity with patent specifications is important, as they combine technical and legal language.

— Paper F uses various question formats but none requires a free-text answer. Practise completing questions within the allotted time.

— Begin developing skills for the main examination papers, such as identifying key verbal or written client information and constructing arguments regarding novelty and inventive step, as well as preparing EPC- and client instruction-compliant amendments.

— If you have few opportunities in your everyday activities to draft new applications, use the European Patent Register and EPO online file inspection to find study cases.

As you approach your second year, expand your knowledge to cover more complex procedural matters, moving beyond declarative learning.

## Year 2

The Year 2 EQE preparation is cumulative, building on the basics from Year 1.

- For better results, focus on deepening your procedural knowledge, analysing information and familiarising yourself with the main examination papers M1 and M2 early. The skills tested are the ones that a patent attorney needs to be fit to practise.
- Learn to draft patent specifications under supervision and discuss drafts.
- Start learning about oppositions and ways of challenging the patentability of the patents and patent applications of others.

M2 covers more legal texts than Paper F.

- Read and study additional legal sources:
  - case law supplements and the Case Law Book
  - special case law supplements to the Official Journal
  - the protocols forming part of the EPC
  - the Arrangements for Deposit Accounts
- Get to know the types of arguments used at the EPO (gain insights by studying Board of Appeal decisions).
- Learn about the Unitary Patent and Unified Patent Court system, IP5 countries and national law relating to the EPC.
- Review the epi's Code of Conduct and Regulation on discipline for professional representatives.
- Read the Official Journal of the EPO regularly as it aids in understanding legal language and helps you quickly find relevant information in decisions.
- Continue practising essential skills: drafting applications, defending, and attacking applications or patents. These are central to papers M1 and M3 and are gradually introduced in papers F and M1.
- In the second half of Year 2, do past papers and mock papers.
- Seek review and feedback on your answers from a qualified European patent attorney.
- Leave some past papers until closer to the examination date, as they are limited in number.
- Join study groups for motivation and support, either in person or online. Supervisors, tutors and preparation courses can help with this. Become an epi student.
- Book EQE-specific training courses early, as they fill up quickly.
- Consider drafting a Year 2 study plan to manage your workload and study commitments, with guidance from your supervisor.

## Year 3

The third year focuses on targeted preparation for the main examination papers M3 and M4.

- Take courses in effective claim drafting and argumentation development to hone the skills necessary for paper M3.
- Practise past papers, including mock examinations under timed conditions. Get someone else to look at your answers. It this is not possible, wait a few days before looking at them again. A, B, C and D correlate to some extent to papers M3 and M4, but they are not one-to-one equivalents of the new EQE papers. The epi offers the opportunity to sit mock papers.
- Practise typing proficiency and master specialist terminology in at least one of the EPO's official languages. If you are not a native speaker of one of these languages, it may be worth selecting your mother tongue.
- Personal study and practice on your own are vital for success, attending courses alone is not enough.
- Avoid taking a casual approach and instead concentrate on achieving the best possible results, ideally with support from your supervisors and having a reduced workload during the lead-up to examinations.
- Draft a Year 3 study plan to manage your workload and study commitments, with guidance from your supervisor.

For paper M4, thorough preparation and up-to-date legal knowledge are crucial, as it may be challenging to retake this paper.

## Recommended reading, courses and online preparation

- Initial materials give you a basic introduction to how the patent system works in the member states of the European Patent Organisation:
  - Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office,

  - the PCT Applicant's Guide (international phase) and
  - Guidelines for Search and Examination at the EPO as PCT.
- Basic training course in European patent law and IP law in general (such as the course organised jointly by the epi and CEIPI)
- Start referring to EPC and PCT articles and rules in your daily work because familiarity with the structure of these legal texts is important. Annotated versions of the EPC, which may be used for the examinations, are structured according to EPC articles and rules. So being familiar with the EPC structure will help you to quickly extract information from these annotated texts.
- You should have access to all up to-date and appropriate materials. Your supervisor should ensure that this is the case.
- Enrol as an epi student. Student members are provided with various exclusive benefits, including a forum moderated by experienced tutors.
- Get familiar with the online environment in which the examinations are conducted. To avoid any technical problems, follow the Instructions to candidates and participate in sessions to test your technical setup.
- Use the same technical environment, computer, room, etc., that you will be using during the examination.



# Chapter III
# Preparation checklists

## General preparation

As a candidate, you are advised to:

- register shortly after starting professional activity
- read through the information on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination and FAQ
- monitor the content published on epo.org under EQE – European qualifying examination and the Official Journal of the EPO
- enrol by the deadlines
- read all emails regarding the examinations
- familiarise yourself and comply with the Instructions to candidates concerning the conduct of the EQE ("Instructions to the candidates") and Code of Conduct for the EQE ("Code of conduct") to avoid risk of disqualification
- organise your examination technical setup in good time wherever it is you will sit your exam, including stable internet connection and compliant technical equipment
- practise under examination conditions in the Compendium and within the examination software environment (WISEflow lockdown browser)
- complete at least three past EQE papers, assess them against the examiners' reports and discuss them with a European patent attorney
- attend at least one session to test your technical setup before the exam(s)
- prepare a strategic study plan based on the REE/IPREE syllabus

## Fully digital EQE

The entire EQE is held online, allowing candidates to sit the examination from any suitable place of choice. It is an open-book format, allowing you to use your paper-based notes or books during the examination.

For a smooth examination experience, you must ensure to:

- have the required technical equipment and stable internet connection
- have access to the examination software
- test that all equipment will function properly throughout the examination
- use a quiet, well-lit examination room
- comply with the Instructions to candidates and the Code of conduct at all times

Even with technical support available, technical or room issues may cause significant time loss, so careful preparation and system testing are essential.

## Substantial preparation

### Foundation paper

When preparing for the foundation paper, you should divide your preparation for the two parts as follows:

**Procedural part**

- Start practising legal questions early on
- Answer questions several times to develop a faster working method
- Make a timetable per question/point
- Create your own personal strategy for tackling legal questions
- Study the EPC, the Implementing Regulations to the EPC, the Rules relating to Fees and the Guidelines for Examination in the EPO
- Study the PCT, the Regulations under the PCT, the PCT Applicant's Guide and the Guidelines for Search and Examination at the EPO as PCT authority
- Study the Paris Convention
- Choose the books and other reference material to be used during the examination, make a fast indexing system with added references and practise using it with past papers
- Make a summary sheet of the legal bases for commonly recurring EPC and PCT concepts such as time limits, remedies, EPO acting as a PCT authority, etc.
- Check for updates to PCT rules (bearing in mind that the PCT is an essential part of the EQE and real-life client cases)
- File patent applications or study complete file histories to learn about administrative procedures
- Report to clients on (costs and) deadlines associated with the filing of EP and PCT applications
- Spend time with your IP paralegal team – they know what is needed to comply with procedural requirements

**Claim analysis part**

- Study basic aspects of claim analysis, such as novelty, inventive step (problem-solution approach), added subject-matter and clarity
- Prepare a personal overview of these basic aspects
- Carry out novelty searches and report on the patentability of inventions
- Answer the claim analysis part of past pre-examinations and review the answers provided in the Compendium
- Take a look at the file history of selected European patent applications and focus on the European search report and the objections that it raises

## Main papers

### Paper M1

Paper M1 assesses whether you can execute tasks relating to analysis and assessment of information and evaluate and act on instructions from a client. It also assesses whether you can understand an invention and/or data provided by the client, assess it in view of prior art and analyse the compliance of the invention and the application or patent with the provisions of the EPC.

You should:

- Look for technical disclosures, implicit features, publication dates in single, and combinations of, prior art documents or references to them
- Carefully follow the client's instructions to decide which claims in combination with embodiments best suit their needs
- Prepare by answering past pre-examinations and main examination papers A, B, C
- Practise by reviewing client instructions and subsequent actions during prosecution of specific cases

### Paper M2

Paper M2 assesses whether you can apply the procedural patent law of the EPC and the PCT in both day-to-day and exceptional situations in the practice of professional representatives.

You should:

- Learn how to file patent applications and study complete file histories to learn about administrative procedures
- Participate in carrying out all procedural steps in managing files at various stages of the procedure
- Become accustomed to including the response, the exact legal basis and a short argument in support of your conclusion in each answer
- Do a past paper D (part 1) and compare your answers with those in the Compendium

- Create a structure for commonly recurring items, for example, if an application is to be filed, the name of the applicant, the subject-matter per claim, the priority application/date per claim, etc.
- Study EQE-related parts of IP5 (CNIPA, EPO, JPO, KIPO, USPTO) patent law basics, such as the grace period and inventorship, and EPC-related national law
- Focus on the legal part of the foundation paper (or past pre-examinations) and main examination paper D, part 1
- Spend time with your IP paralegals – they know what is needed to comply with procedural requirements
- Practise answering the legal questions from past papers with experienced colleagues to practise giving advice to clients

You should choose at least one EPC commentary (see below for a list) and become familiar with it to quickly answer more complex legal questions.

## Paper M3, part 1 – "drafting"

When preparing for paper M3, part 1 you should:

- include a description when drafting applications
- if required, take an additional course on claim drafting
- re-read the Guidelines, Parts F and G, paying particular attention to clarity, novelty and inventive step
- practise drafting claims which could be granted as they stand
- do a past paper A and compare your answers with those in the Compendium
- practise making claim charts and comparing features of the claims with features of the prior art in order to identify the differences

## Paper M3, part 2 – "responding"

When preparing for paper M3, part 2 you should:

- learn to make the case for the patentability of claims (with a focus on the problem-solution approach) and unity of invention
- interpret arguments raised against a set of claims and find solutions to circumvent them
- study the general concepts of inventive step and selected decisions (Guidelines and Case Law Book)
- prepare a checklist listing the steps involved in an inventive step argument
- study the general concepts of amendments, Art. 123(2) EPC, related topics and selected decisions (Guidelines and Case Law Book)
- respond to EP and/or PCT search reports, amending claims and description
- report to clients on the content of substantive examination communications
- if required, take an additional course on drafting responses to Office actions
- re-read the Guidelines, Parts C, F, G and H, paying particular attention to clarity, novelty, inventive step, unity and Art. 123 EPC
- do a past paper B and compare your answers with those in the Compendium.

## Paper M3, part 3 – "attacking"

When preparing for paper M3, part 3 you should:

- check file inspections in real-life opposition cases
- familiarise yourself in particular with the following aspects: prior art, patentability, priority, amendments, first invention, ranges, representation, claim and document interpretation
- understand claim dependencies
- practise the problem-solution approach in order to assess inventive step
- familiarise yourself with the unity tests for patent applications (not as an opposition)
- look for procedural errors and incorrect assumptions of disclosures
- try different methods of tackling a complex situation for attacking a patent or a patent application – read G decisions (Official Journal, Guidelines and Case Law Book)
- analyse documents and compare with claim features
- re-read the Guidelines, at least Parts A, C, D, F, G and H
- get involved in opposition cases and, if possible, attend oral proceedings when your firm is involved
- prepare in advance a skeleton outline for the first part of the notice of opposition, saying what documents are referred to, in which languages, and what the effective dates of the claims are, the legal basis for standard arguments, etc.
- do a past paper C and compare your answers with those in the Compendium.

## Paper M4

In addition to the points noted above for the claim analysis part of the paper F and for paper M2, when preparing for paper M4 you should:

- create your own personal strategies for tackling legal questions and the legal advice part by making a checklist of issues that have come up in recent D (part 2) papers and M4 papers
- gain practical experience in advising clients
- accompany your supervisor to business meetings
- check past papers for questions on priority, first invention, disclosure, corrective actions, further processing, restitution, stays of proceedings, etc.
- study EQE-related parts of IP5 patent-law basics, such as grace period and inventorship, and EPC-related national law
- study the basics of patent protection, infringement and licensing (e.g. what exactly needs to be licensed?)
- do a past paper D, part 2 and compare your answers with those in the Compendium

For the legal advice part, practise organising the large amount of information by creating timelines or charts based on the client's letter. You are advised to bring prepared templates to the exam, but any essential information must be included in the submitted answer, as external materials cannot be submitted.



# Chapter IV
# During the examination

The EQE is conducted online.

- Ensure that your room and desk are organised and that all materials are within easy reach
- Ensure that no-one enters the room during the exam
- Keep your ID or passport ready for identification at the start
- To prepare effectively, go to epo.org, EQE – European examining qualification, EQE online and read the guidance there, in particular the Instructions to candidates concerning the conduct of the European qualifying examination. You should also watch the video Mastering the online examination.



# Chapter V
# After the examination

Thousands of candidates sit the EQE examinations every year. Since paper F is auto-scored, results are made available earlier than those of the main examination papers. The main examination papers include free-text answers, which are marked by Examination Committee members and involve marking harmonisation in the interest of fairness and equal treatment. For this reason, the marking of the main papers usually takes several months.

After the examinations, your answers will be accessible in WISEflow. You are informed automatically once the results are available in the EQE candidate portal. An alphabetical list of candidates who passed all the examinations in line with Article 14(1) REE is published in the Official Journal of the EPO and in a searchable database on the EPO website.

## If you pass

Candidates who pass the EQE and meet the EPC requirements under Article 134(1) and (2) EPC (nationality and place of business/employment) may request entry on the EPO list of professional representatives. Exceptions in respect of nationality are possible under Article 134(7) (a) EPC.

Registered representatives may use the title "European patent attorney" or "professional representative before the European Patent Office", and act before the EPO under the EPC and PCT but not in proceedings before national authorities or before the EUIPO. Professional representatives are entitled to set up a place of business and practise in any of the EPC contracting states. Names are normally entered within a matter of days and are published around two months later in the Official Journal of the EPO. Send any amendments or requests for deletion to the Legal Division at the EPO.

All registered representatives automatically become members of the epi and must pay an annual fee (in 2026: EUR 250).

The epi supports the profession through co-operation with the EPO, disciplinary matters, EQE activities and continuing professional training (free of charge or available at low cost).

In some EPC contracting states, passing the EQE may also provide advantages for national patent-attorney qualification procedures.

- BE: Those who have passed the entire European qualifying examination may apply for an exemption from the drafting paper of the Belgian qualifying examination.
- DE: Facilitated admission to the German patent attorneys' qualifying examination is allowed under section 172 of the Rules and Regulations for the German Bar (§172 Patentanwaltsordnung, PatAnwO).
- UK: a pass in paper M3 is recognised as equivalent to PEB papers FD2 and FD3. Existing recognition of passes in former papers A and B and of the full former EQE continues. Candidates should consult the current UK rules and guidance.

Have you passed all the examinations? Pass on your knowledge to new candidates and contribute, for example, as an EQE tutor or coach in the various organisations, or on programmes or EQE bodies (EQE Examination Committees (look for calls for interest), epi, European Patent Academy of the EPO, Candidate Support Programme (CSP), Modular IP Education Framework (MIPEF) or commercial providers).

## If you fail

The EQE has a low pass rate, and many first-time candidates fail at least one paper. There is no limit to the number of times you can resit a paper you have failed.

In preparation for a resit, you will need to do more (or more effective) preparation and refine your exam technique.

You can download your marked papers from WISEflow. It is recommended to review them with a tutor or supervisor to understand why marks were missed. The epi also offers this review service for a fee.

Identify the main issues that affected your preparation or performance, for example:

- examination stress
- being a perfectionist
- lack of knowledge, skills or experience
- balance of professional activities and workload
- particular circumstances (e.g. family matters)
- lack of discipline or motivation
- insufficient language skills
- poor exam technique, e.g. spending too much time on questions with few marks
- lack of support from your employer or supervisor
- lack of structure in preparing for and during the exam
- insufficient acquaintance with the examination software
- insufficient time for preparation
- insufficient prioritisation and focus, e.g. too many distractions in your daily life.



# Chapter VI
# Reference material, literature, courses and training

## Introductory publications

### EPC-related

- How to apply for a European patent – A step-by-step guide to the grant procedure, EPO https://www.epo.org/en/new-to-patents/how-to-apply-for-a-patent

### PCT-related

- E-learning module https://e-courses.epo.org/course/view.php?id=178

## Reference material

### EQE-related (official)

- Regulation on the European qualifying examination for professional representatives before the European Patent Office (REE) and Implementing provisions to the Regulation on the European qualifying examination (IPREE) https://link.epo.org/elearning/SupplPub2025
- Code of conduct for candidates for the e-EQE https://link.epo.org/elearning/Code%20of%20Conduct_EN.pdf
- Important information and notices from the Supervisory Board, Examination Board and Examination Secretariat https://www.epo.org/en/learning/eqe-epac/europeanqualifying-examination-eqe
- EQE Compendium https://www.epo.org/en/learning/eqe-epac/european-qualifying-examination-eqe/compendium

### EPC-related

- European Patent Convention, including all annexes and protocols https://www.epo.org/en/legal/epc
- Official Journal of the EPO (OJ EPO), monthly periodical (online), including supplements and special editions https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal
- Guidelines for Examination in the European Patent Office (including Alphabetical keyword index) https://www.epo.org/en/legal/guidelines-epc

- Fee payment and refunds – practical information
  https://www.epo.org/en/applying/fees
- Forms used by parties and by the EPO
  https://www.epo.org/en/applying/forms
- Case law of the EPO boards of appeal
  https://www.epo.org/en/case-law-appeals
- List of G decisions
  https://www.epo.org/en/case-law-appeals/organisation/eba/decisions-sorted-number
- List of member states of the European Patent Organisation / contracting states to the EPC
  https://www.epo.org/en/about-us/foundation/member-states
- National law relating to the EPC
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/national-law
- Agreement on the application of Article 65 EPC (London Agreement)
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/london-agreement
- Information about the extension and validation system
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/extension-validation-system

## PCT-related

- Guidelines for Search and Examination at the EPO as PCT authority
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/guidelines-pct
- PCT Treaty and Regulations
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/texts
- PCT Applicant's Guide and other reference materials
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/appguide/index.jsp
- Special EQE version of the PCT Applicant's Guide ("frozen" on 31 October 2025)
  https://pctlegal.wipo.int/eGuide/eqe/documents.xhtml
- PCT resources
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/
- PCT Newsletter
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/newslett/
- List of contracting states to the PCT
  https://www.wipo.int/pct/en/pct_contracting_states.html

## Unitary Patent / UPC-related

- Regulation (EU) No 1257/2012 implementing enhanced cooperation in the area of the creation of unitary patent protection
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal/2013/02/p111.html
- UPR – Rules relating to Unitary Patent Protection
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal/2022/04/a41.html
- RFees UPP – Rules relating to Fees for Unitary Patent Protection
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal/2022/04/a42.html
- Council Regulation (EU) No 1260/2012 regarding translation arrangements
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal/2013/02/p132.html
- UPCA – Agreement on a Unified Patent Court
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/official-journal/2013/05/p287.html
- Rules of Procedure of the Unified Patent Court
  https://www.unifiedpatentcourt.org/en/court/legal-documents
- List of states participating in the UP/UPC
  https://www.epo.org/en/applying/european/unitary/unitary-patent
- National measures relating to the Unitary Patent
  https://www.epo.org/en/legal/national-measures-up

## Further resources

- Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property
  https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/paris/
- Code of Conduct of the Institute of Professional Representatives before the European Patent Office
  https://patentepi.org/assets/uploads/documents/rules-regulations/4.2.1-250510.pdf
- Regulation on discipline for professional representatives
  https://patentepi.org/assets/uploads/documents/rules-regulations/4.3.2-250510.pdf

## Literature

### EPC-related

- Visser's Annotated European Patent Convention
  https://www.kluweriplaw.com/
- Topic-Related Index to the EPC and PCT
  https://webshop.deltapatents.com/references_epc_pct
- Europäisches Patentübereinkommen – Kommentar
  https://www.kluweriplaw.com/
- References to the EPC
  https://webshop.deltapatents.com/references_epc
- Kommentar zum EPÜ 2000
  https://www.mfh-verlag.de/content/products.html
- CBE – PCT
  https://www.gregorybaque.com/cbe-pct
- epi Information
  https://www.patentepi.org/en/epi-information/epi-information.html
- EPC.App
  https://www.ipappify.de
- Indexed EPO Guidelines
  https://www.fireballpatents.com/study-materials/
- The Integrated EPC Guide
  https://www.integratedepc.com

### PCT-related

- The Cross-Referenced Patent Cooperation Treaty
  https://webshop.deltapatents.com/references_pct_books
- PCT.App
  https://www.ipappify.de
- PCT: Strategy and Practice
  https://www.kluweriplaw.com/

## Training

- EQE and EPAC training resources provided by the European Patent Academy
  https://www.epo.org/en/learning/learning-resources-profile/eqe-candidates
- Mastering the online examination
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qrg03DxaWWA
- EQE podcast:
  https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/news/new-podcast-series-reformed-eqe
- epi tutorials, mock EQE and epi student training plan
  https://www.patentepi.org/en/epi-students/
- Association Française des Spécialistes en Propriété Industrielle de l'Industrie
  https://www.aspi-asso.fr/
- CEIPI – International Section
  https://www.ceipi.edu/en/training/non-degree-courses/preparation-for-the-eqe
- Centre de Patents de la Universitat de Barcelona
  https://www.ub.edu/centredepatents/es/
- DeltaPatents – EQE Training
  https://www.deltapatents.com/eqe/
- EQE Training Ltd
  https://www.eqetraining.com
- JDD Consultants I.P. Courses
  https://www.jddcourses.co.uk/
- EQElibrium
  https://www.eqelibrium.org
- Michalski Hüttermann EQE Course
  https://mhpatent.de/

## Blogs (unofficial)

- European patent case law
  https://europeanpatentcaselaw.blogspot.com/
- Blogs for all EQE papers (DeltaPatents)
  https://eqe-deltapatents.blogspot.nl
- Salted Patent EQE blog
  https://saltedpatent.blogspot.com/
- IP.appify blog
  https://blog.ipappify.de/category/eqe/
- Fillun EQE blog
  https://www.fillun.com/eqe-blog
- IPKat
  https://ipkitten.blogspot.com/

**European Patent Office**
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This guide is available on the CEIPI, epi and EPO websites
www.epo.org/learning-events/materials/study-guide.html

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