

Comments on e:EQE Discussion Paper IP Ability



IP INCLUSIVE

Working for diversity and inclusion in IP

1 Introduction

IP Inclusive is a collection of UK-based individuals and organisations in the intellectual property (IP) sector, who have come together to make our community more inclusive, diverse, open and fair. IP Ability is the IP Inclusive community for disabled people, carers and their allies working within the IP professions in the UK. We aim to provide a supportive and informative network focusing on issues relating to disability, neurodiversity and health conditions of all kinds, be they mental or physical, visible or invisible, permanent or temporary, sudden onset or progressive.

In view of the above, our below comments relate to the concern for ensuring fair access and opportunity for candidates sitting the e:EQE examinations under the proposed new format.

2 General comments

IP Ability recognise that the sit-anywhere nature of the proposed e:EQE may be of benefit to candidates, for example, in such cases where a disability causes difficulty travelling. However, we are concerned that the perceived benefits in looking to hold the examinations online will obscure the difficulties faced by other disabled candidates whose disabilities do not necessarily impair their ability to travel, but whose disability, or condition, may still adversely impair access and performance when sitting the e:EQE examinations in this proposed format.

As examples, it is noted that candidates who have visual impairments are likely to be at a disadvantage, should no interface adaptability be provided. Additionally, candidates may have temporary or permanent conditions (such as pregnancy or breastfeeding) which require breaks to be taken, bring difficulties with extended amounts of time spent in front of a screen and/or make it necessary to handwrite answers. It is noted that such examples are by no means limited, and that each candidate may have individual needs in order to have fair and equal access to the examinations.

On surveying recent candidates to sit the EQE examinations, IP Ability noted that requesting reasonable adjustments under the current system has often placed an undue amount of stress onto candidates in looking to obtain equal access to the examinations. Such challenges and burdens remained with the move to the online system in 2021.

3 Proposals

At this early stage of consultation and proposal, it is requested that consideration is given as to how to ensure equal and fair access to the proposed examination format, and that the needs of all candidates to achieve this can be accommodated. To help ensure this is achieved, we encourage the epi to arrange for an equality impact assessment to be carried out before committing to any proposals.