

## Patent Examiner

Patent examiners use their technical and legal knowledge to make decisions on applications from inventors for patents to protect their rights on new inventions, designs and discoveries. A patent provides an inventor with the right to stop anyone else from using, selling or making their invention.

### The Work

You could be:

- examining the technical and legal aspects of a patent application to check against those already on a patent database
- examining patent applications to check that inventions are described clearly enough to allow a skilled person to make them
- checking that the invention falls within the eligible categories, including its technical aspects
- sifting through large quantities of information, sometimes in other languages and using a range of specialised databases, in search of earlier specifications and publications, in order to check if the invention is genuinely original
- writing reports, giving search results and sending them to applicants or their agents so they can decide whether to take the application further
- interviewing applicants, or their patent agent and perhaps suggesting changes
- in disputes, acting for the UK Intellectual Property Office (UK-IPO) in court
- writing and indexing the short version of the specification for publication
- visiting laboratories, factories, exhibitions and seminars to keep up to date with developments in science and technology.

### Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary.

Patent examiner pay starts at £29,061 which includes a £3,030 recruitment and retentions allowance; in addition posts in telecommunications receive a further £4,040 bringing the starting salary package to £33,101 a year.

With promotion this can rise to around £36,600 a year. Senior patent examiners earn around £52,700, rising to around £56,200 plus a recruitment and retention allowance of £2,020 a year.

Salaries with the European Patent Office (EPO) are around €5,000 to €8,000 a month depending on experience.

### Conditions

- You work in an office and your hours are usually 37 hours a week over Monday to Friday.
- You may have to attend court.
- Occasional travel may be a requirement of the job.
- You may sometimes have to work late or at weekends.

## Getting In

- To work in the UK-IPO, you must be a British national, a Commonwealth citizen or a national of the European Economic Area.
- You normally need at least a 2:2 Honours degree in science, mathematics, engineering or technology or, have a few years' relevant industrial work experience.
- Some applicants will have a postgraduate qualification or even a PhD.
- The entry requirements for these degree courses vary depending on the subject and the university. However, the normal minimum requirements are 4-5 Highers plus some subjects at National 5. Maths and science subjects are recommended at Higher.
- You may need at least reading knowledge of French or German or both. These are the two other official languages used in the EPO. You will be able to improve your language skills on-the-job as part of your training.
- It helps if you are interested in law.
- There are relatively few vacancies and there is a lot of competition for jobs.

Most jobs are with the UK-IPO in Newport, South Wales, with a few posts in London. Jobs are advertised on the UK-IPO website ([www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)) or the Civil Service Recruitment website ([www.civilservice.gov.uk](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk)).

To work with the EPO you need to be a member of one of the states of the European Patent Organisation. You can check entry requirements and advertised vacancies in the jobs section of their website ([www.epo.org/](http://www.epo.org/)).

## What Does It Take

You need to be able to:

- grasp new or unfamiliar concepts
- write technical descriptions in precise legal terms
- make clear, concise summaries of long complex text
- make decisions, even when unpopular
- negotiate and present convincing arguments in favour of a case
- prioritise your workload.

You need to have:

- excellent written and spoken communication skills
- excellent analytical skills
- a scientific or technical mind
- a good memory
- an accurate, scientific and precise approach
- good IT skills.

## Training

- As a new entrant, you will begin with a month-long series of lectures and seminars on intellectual property law and basic examining skills.

- This is followed by a month of working on cases with other trainees.
- You will then work under the supervision of experienced patent examiners for 2 years.
- Tuition is on a one to one basis and you will change supervisor every 6 months.
- Patent examiners are also encouraged to continue training and developing their skills throughout their career. This may involve studying French and German (the working languages of the EPO) or study for a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters in Intellectual Property Law awarded by a university and taught in-house.
- The Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh both offer the postgraduate LLM degree in Intellectual Property Law on a full time and distance learning basis.
- The University of Glasgow offers the postgraduate LLM in Intellectual Property and the Digital Economy on a full and part time basis.

## Getting On

- If you have a very good knowledge of French or German or both you may be able to work with the European Patent Office in Munich, the Hague, Vienna or Berlin.
- The patent examiner career is structured, with opportunities for promotion after 2 to 4 years and again after 5 to 9 years to senior examiner.
- There are opportunities to broaden your experience across the various areas ranging from copyright to finance and administration.
- You may be able to train as a general manager and move to other government offices.

## More Information

- The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is the UK's main authority on intellectual property (IP) and grants patents, registers trade marks and designs, and develops the policies on all IP including copyright.
- Patents protect both products and processes.
- Trade marks protect logos that distinguish goods and services.
- Designs protect the look of three-dimensional shapes.
- Copyright protects material only when it is written down or recorded.

An inventor who gets a patent has a legal monopoly on making, selling or using the invention for up to 20 years. In return, the inventor pays an annual fee (after the fifth year) to the Patent Office and agrees to publish the details of the invention.

## Contacts

### European Patent Office (EPO)

Website: [www.epo.org](http://www.epo.org)

Twitter: @EPOjobs

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/epojobs](http://www.facebook.com/epojobs)

### Skills for Justice

Tel: 0117 922 1155

Website: [www.sfjuk.com](http://www.sfjuk.com)

Twitter: @Skills\_Justice

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/skillsforjustice](http://www.facebook.com/skillsforjustice)

**UK Intellectual Property Office (UK-IPO)**

Tel: 0300 300 2000

Email: [information@ipo.gov.uk](mailto:information@ipo.gov.uk)

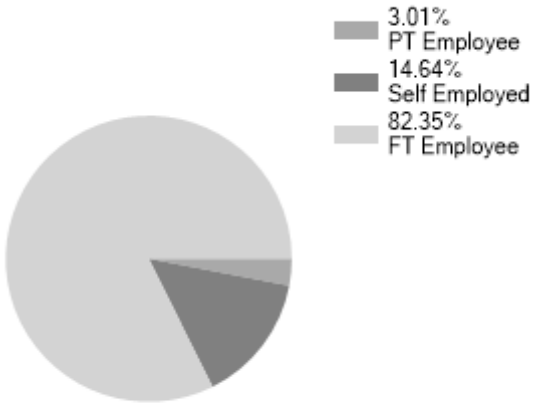
Website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office)

Twitter: @The\_IPO

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TheIPO.UK](http://www.facebook.com/TheIPO.UK)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

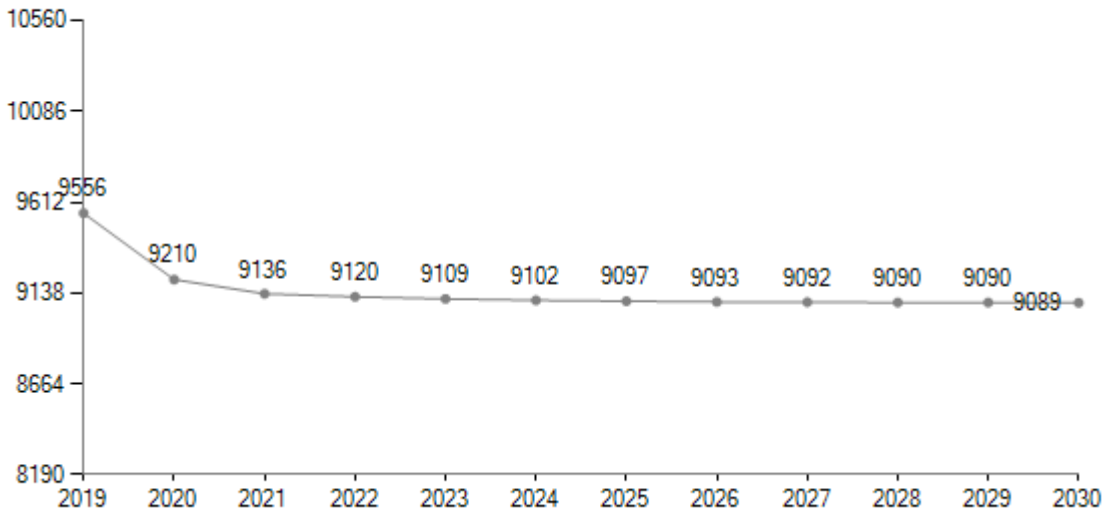


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)