

## Conditions for participation in the Candidate Support Programme 2025-26

### 1. Introduction

**1.1** The **European Patent Organisation** is a not-for-profit, public, intergovernmental organisation<sup>1</sup> legally underpinned by the European Patent Convention (EPC), presently comprising 39 member states.

EPC-related protocols form an integral part of the EPC, in particular the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of 5 October 1973 (PPI)<sup>2</sup>. On the basis of the EPC and the PPI (Article 3), the European Patent Organisation, including its executive body, the European Patent Office (EPO), has immunity from jurisdiction and execution within the scope of its official activities in its member states.

**1.2** The European qualifying examination (EQE) is designed to establish whether an individual is qualified to practise as a professional representative and to represent patent applicants before the EPO. The legal basis for the EQE is Articles 134(2)(c) and 134a(1)(b) EPC. The Regulation on the European qualifying examination (REE) and its Implementing provisions (IPREE) are published in the Supplementary publication 3 – Official Journal EPO 2024<sup>3</sup>.

**1.3** The EPO runs the Candidate Support Programme (CSP) as part of a co-operation plan with its member states. The CSP helps selected candidates prepare for the EQE. Help is provided in the form of a training plan and financial assistance. The overall aim of the programme is to develop and strengthen the European patent profession as well as to improve access to, and to promote, the patent attorney profession in specific member states. This, in turn, will improve patent applicants' access to appropriate patent protection.

**1.4** A further goal of the new programme is to reduce the gender gap in the patent profession (in many member states, most professional representatives are men).

**1.5** The ratio of men to women representatives as well as the ratio of representatives under EPC transitional "grandfather" provisions to EQE-qualified representatives will be reviewed every two years, starting on the basis of the data available in September 2024. Accordingly, some changes are to be expected in the future, as the number of member states benefiting from support should decrease over the years.

**1.6** **These conditions** describe the support offered to students under the CSP as well as the duties of those students and the EPO's expectations of them.

### 2. The programme

**2.1** The CSP aims to prepare students for all examination papers of the EQE, i.e. foundation paper F and main examination papers M1, M2, M3 and M4. The programme follows the EQE schedule and is therefore delivered in different stages over three consecutive years.

In the first year, students will prepare for the foundation paper. In the second year, they will prepare for papers M1 and M2 and in the third year for M3 and M4.

**2.2** Over the course of the CSP programme, students' progress will be carefully monitored, allowing coaches to give personalised advice and continuous support.

All aspects of participation in the CSP will be governed by the principles of good will and good faith. This will apply in particular when assessing and monitoring students' results over time and with respect to the potential situations described in point 5 below.

<sup>1</sup> The European Patent Organisation is not a non-governmental organisation.

<sup>2</sup> Both the EPC and the PPI are available at <https://www.epo.org/law-practice/legal-texts/epc.html>

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://link.epo.org/elearning/SupplPub2025>

**2.3** The programme starts with the publication of the present document together with the application form on the website of the respective national offices. Anyone can apply for the CSP, provided they have enrolled for the EQE and have the enrolment confirmation sent by the Examination Secretariat for either paper F 2026 or papers M1 and M2 2026.

For new students, the CSP year **2025/2026** will start with a kick-off meeting, held by videoconference in the first half of October **2025** before the various courses start. A CSP year ends on the day following the examination(s) for which students have enrolled, that is, for 2025/2026, on 10 March 2026 at the latest.

### **3. Support provided by the EPO**

Students will be assigned a contact person at the EPO for the duration of their participation in the CSP. That person will clarify any questions or problems students have about any administrative CSP-related matters.

**3.1** If students are sitting the foundation paper or any main examination paper for the first time since starting the CSP, they will receive the following support:

#### Learning support

- (a) Access to the online training courses organised by the EPO Patent Academy (presently available only for paper F), comprising knowledge exchange amongst students, virtual classroom training, assignments and homework with feedback.
- (b) Online training courses, cramming courses and mock examinations provided by qualified tutors from renowned international companies.
- (c) An EQE-qualified patent representative as personal coach to answer substantive questions, help with assignments, give advice and monitor students' progress. Students and their coaches will have one-on-one videoconference consultations on a weekly basis. In addition, several videoconferences in small groups will be organised.
- (d) A lump sum to cover expenses for learning material, preferably acquired in electronic form, as deemed necessary for preparation for the EQE.
- (e) A small bursary to cover some of the additional expenses.
- (f) Reimbursement of the enrolment fees for the paper(s) for which the candidate is receiving support.

## Financial support

All of the learning support listed above will be provided free of charge for students. All costs for the courses and coaches will be borne by the EPO.

The EPO will grant a bursary of EUR 100 per month to students to cover some of the additional expenses arising in connection with preparing for the EQE. The bursary is not a remuneration, salary or payment in return for any specific service. It is students' own responsibility to comply with any tax or social security regulation that may apply in their country.

For each of the three years in which support is provided, the EPO will grant a further EUR 300 towards learning material (preferably acquired in electronic form). Students should request this grant at the beginning of the training year and before the end of the calendar year at the latest.

For the **CSP year 2025/2026** the bursary will be paid for six months, from September 2025 to February 2026.

No support whatsoever will be provided to students who have not enrolled to sit any EQE paper(s) in the current CSP year.

If students fail paper F, they must resit paper F the year after and can choose to receive support for papers M1 and M2 that same year, or together with support for papers M3 and M4 in the third year. No support will be offered for the papers they resit.

If students fail paper M1 and/or paper M2, they must enrol and follow the training for M3 and M4 the following year and may resit the paper(s) they failed. No support will be offered for the papers they resit.

## **4. Students' duties**

**4.1** By applying to CSP under these Conditions, students commit to the following:

- (a) To behave according to – and to uphold the principles of – good will and good faith.
- (b) To prepare as best possible and do their utmost to pass the relevant EQE examination in accordance with the best practices.
- (c) To follow the training programme and carry out the related exercises, tasks or assignments diligently.
- (d) To manage their personal commitments and professional activities such as to keep up with the pace of the group training, participate in the planned CSP events set out in Annex 1, and complete the assignments by the deadlines set by the trainers and/or coaches.
- (e) To participate in remote study forums/groups and blogs via electronic means that are fit for purpose.
- (f) To regularly and actively report to their coach on the progress of their studies, training sessions or EQE preparation work.
- (g) To keep their contact data updated via the EQC web portal.
- (h) To give the EPO feedback on any aspect of the CSP when requested.
- (i) To enrol for the relevant EQE examination before the official deadline, if so requested by the EPO.
- (j) To inform the EPO contact person (point 3 above) as soon as possible if
  - i. they are unable for any reason to attend one of the scheduled CSP events
  - ii. they need, are obliged or intend to pause or cancel their participation in the CSP
  - iii. they intend not to sit EQE paper(s) for which they have enrolled
  - iv. they receive a bursary or other funding from any other body

- v. they carry out or participate in any other activity organised or promoted by the EPO, such as an internship, Young Professional programme, Academy course, etc.
- vi. they have a relative employed at the EPO
- vii. they have any disability under Rule 17 IPREE (to allow the EPO or third parties to adapt planned training where necessary)
- viii. any other problem, issue or change arises in their personal circumstances that may impact on their participation in the CSP.

**4.2** Once students have passed the EQE and have been entered on the list of professional representatives pursuant to Article 134 EPC, they are expected to help as much as possible with the development of the profession in the EPO member states, in particular in their country of residence.

The following activities could be considered as beneficial to the development of the profession:

- (a) Offering inventors/applicants advisory services in cooperation with the respective national IP institution
- (b) Appearing in a database for inventors/applicants with an indication of their language skills to enable potential applicants from their country of residence to contact them
- (c) Preparing and supervising other prospective candidates from their country of residence for the EQE
- (d) Becoming a member of one of the EQE Examination Committees, as defined in Article 7 REE
- (e) Committing to give back 20 hours in a twinning scheme, whereby they coach new entrants and help, in doing so, to build a community around the CSP brand.

Some of these activities may be financially compensated by the EPO. Students will be provided with the details in a separate written document once they are qualified.

## **5. Discontinuation**

**5.1** The EPO may decide to suspend or terminate a student's participation in the CSP, or to reduce the support provided to the student, if

- (a) there is a not-remedied incompleteness, inaccuracy or misrepresentation in the information provided by the student, in particular under point 4.1(j) above
- (b) despite the monitoring, exchange of views, explanations and feedback, it has become manifestly unreasonable for the EPO to assume that the student will acquire the knowledge required to pass the forthcoming EQE in the remaining time
- (c) it has been proven that the student acted in serious breach of these conditions or in breach of the REE or of any other EQE-related regulation
- (d) the student has acted in a manner that has brought the EPO into disrepute.

The EPO may resort to reclaiming payments made in the case of a serious breach of these conditions by the student.

**5.2** Any divergence in the interpretation or implementation of these conditions will be the subject, over a two-month period, of an exchange of views and mutual consultations fostering a climate conducive to a common understanding. If no common understanding is reached at the end of such period, the EPO or the student, as applicable, may record in writing such persistent divergence and discontinue its or their respective participation in the CSP.

## **6. Data protection and information sharing**

**6.1** Students' personal data will be processed and stored in accordance with the EPO data protection rules solely for the purpose of conducting and monitoring the CSP. The EPO unit in charge of managing the CSP and the personal data required about students is Department 5.4.2.1 Certifications. If necessary for carrying out tasks related to the CSP, relevant data may be passed on to other EPO departments.

**6.2** Students will give the EPO their bank account details and agree to the EPO storing said data confidentially for the sole purpose of making payments/reimbursements to students and solely for the duration of students' participation in the CSP.

**6.3** Students' names and email addresses may be shared with other students who are, or will be, taking part in the CSP. The EPO may ask for information about students' experience and consult their EQE results for statistical and publication purposes. Results will also be consulted by the EPO for assessment purposes and taken into consideration to adjust, if required, the training plan in Annex 1.

**6.4** Students may at any time request access to their personal data and have these corrected if necessary, or withdraw the consent they have given, by sending a corresponding notification to [candidatesupport@epo.org](mailto:candidatesupport@epo.org)

**6.5** Personal data collected in connection with students' participation in the CSP are dealt with in line with the [data protection statement relating to the EQE](#).

## **7. Confidentiality**

**7.1** Students undertake to observe and maintain strict confidentiality regarding all aspects of the CSP and the EPO that have been classified as confidential or are recognisable as such.

**7.2** Except with the prior written approval of the EPO, students will abstain from issuing any statement concerning the CSP to third parties, in particular to the press and other communication media, or otherwise divulging information obtained during their participation in the CSP.

**7.3** Likewise, the prior written approval of students will be necessary to authorise the EPO to use and publish written material or other material drawn up or provided by students while taking part in the CSP.

## **8. Final provisions**

**8.1** Students agree to register using the EPO's SAP tool, where each of their financial requests will be processed.

**8.2** Students are participating in a study programme run by the EPO. This participation does not confer EPO-related status on students. Students may not consider themselves, or be treated as, EPO employees or auxiliary staff members. Students will consequently take care to present themselves as being external to the EPO vis-à-vis any third parties. Students will likewise abstain from behaving or communicating in any way that may give the impression that they belong to, or are part of, the EPO. For example, students must not use expressions such as "on behalf of the EPO" or "in the name of the EPO". The present provision complements Point 7.2 above.

**8.3** If, for whatever reason, a part, term or provision of these conditions is experienced and jointly recognised as "to be corrected or amended", the effectiveness and implementation of the remaining parts, terms or provisions will be unaffected.

**8.4** In order to become effective and implementable, changes or additions to these conditions require the written form of an addendum to be issued by the EPO.

**8.5** In the case of a discrepancy between any of the provisions above and any provision in Annex 1, the provisions above will prevail.

## ANNEX 1

### to the Conditions for participation in the Candidate Support Programme 2025-26

#### TRAINING PLAN

##### Course and event schedule for the CSP year 2025/2026

- Between 1<sup>st</sup> and 10 October 2025 – kick-off meeting. Introductory session for all new CSP students and their coaches. This event will be organised as an on-line meeting (video conference); details on exact date, time, agenda and required software will be communicated in due time.

- **Paper F courses**

- Preparatory seminar  
13-17 October 2025
- Mock examination  
05-06 February 2025

- **Main examination courses M1 and M2**

- Preparatory seminar for **paper M1**  
27-29 October 2025
- Mock examination  
02 February 2026

- Preparatory seminar for **paper M2**  
12-14 January 2026
- Mock examination  
11 February 2026