

Introductory Patent Administrators' Certificate

Setting the examination pass mark

1. Introduction

The pass mark is not fixed but is established in an objective manner each year. The process followed is that one or more 'assumed pass marks' are identified based on historical pass marks and answer paper competencies demonstrated. Scripts just below and just above the assumed pass mark(s) are scrutinised by the two Principal Examiners in order to identify the minimum mark which demonstrates overall fitness to practise, within the scope of the examination, with reference to the minimal pass descriptor. Once both examiners have agreed on the minimum mark needed for scripts to meet this criterion, it is confirmed as the pass mark. Reference is made to previous years' pass marks and pass rates and selected answer scripts.

Again, with reference to previous years, the boundaries for Merit and Distinction are also set in the same way as the pass mark but reflect higher levels of performance. Candidates achieving either Merit or Distinction are expected to demonstrate appropriate levels of performance across the paper and competence across a range of subject matter, not just by a simple average of marks.

It is important to note that the number of papers above and below this pass mark are not considered in arriving at the pass mark. The pass mark is set as objectively as possible, based on the standard of the answer scripts. The examiners do not try and pass or fail a particular number of candidates each year or award a pre-set number of Merit and Distinction grades. If all candidates meet or exceed the minimum descriptor, then the pass rate would be 100%.

2. Criteria for establishing the qualification's standard

The following criteria are taken from the Patent Administration Syllabus. These are for reference by the Principal Examiners as they are grading the scripts.

Introduction

Candidates can:

- demonstrate understanding of the patent system, the patent administrator's role, the different stages and routes of a patent application and the concept of priority.

GB Patents

Candidates can:

- describe and apply requirements for filing all types of GB applications.
- identify official communications, prepare appropriate forms, and calculate relevant deadlines including renewals.

PCT (International) Patents

Candidates can:

- identify the timeline of a PCT application, including national and/or regional phase routes.
- prepare relevant forms and calculate due dates in order to complete all types of filing.

EP Patents

Candidates can:

- describe and apply requirements for filing all types of EP applications.
- identify official communications, prepare appropriate forms, and calculate relevant deadlines including renewals.

Designs

Candidates can:

- describe and apply requirements for filing UK and Community registered design applications.
- calculate relevant deadlines including renewals.

3. The descriptors for Pass, Merit and Distinction

Candidates who achieve the pass mark demonstrate fitness to practise as a newly qualified Patent Administrator and are able, with appropriate supervision, to work independently and reliably.

The following descriptors are first used to identify and anchor the pass mark, then to fix the boundaries for Merit and Distinction.

Fail – does not meet minimum standard

- Incomplete level of knowledge and understanding of the course subject matter as demonstrated by a number of significant errors and omissions in subject knowledge and the application of the procedures for patent applications.
- A significant number of inaccurate date calculations
- Structure of answers poor

Pass – meets the minimum standard

- Adequate level of knowledge and understanding across the range of course subject matter, with only minor errors or omissions in subject knowledge and the application of the procedures for patent applications.
- Accuracy in date calculations avoiding critical errors
- Structure of answers adequate

Merit – meets and exceeds

- A broad and accurate level of knowledge and understanding across the range of course subject matter, with only a few minor errors or omissions in subject knowledge and the application of the procedures for patent applications.
- Accuracy in date calculations, possibly with some minor errors only
- Structures of answers clear

Distinction – meets and excels

- Excellent level of knowledge and understanding across the range of course subject matter as demonstrated by an almost faultless subject knowledge and application of the procedures for patent applications.
- An exceptional level of accuracy in date calculations
- Exemplary structure and focus of all answers