

Initiatives for Examination Quality Management (FY 2015)

April 28, 2015
Japan Patent Office

Patent

I. Establishing Policies, Procedures and Structures Aimed at Achieving High-Quality Examination

- In order to improve examination quality, it is crucial to enhance the examination system. As such, the JPO will continue to make efforts to secure the necessary number of examiners in order to ensure that the JPO's examination system can be compared favorably with that of IP offices in major countries, taking into account the efficiency of examination.
- In order to improve examination quality, it is also crucial to enhance the quality management system. As such, the JPO will make efforts to ensure the necessary human resources, taking into account the efficiency of quality audits conducted by the Quality Management Division.
- In order to manage the quality of examination, it is crucial that each of the personnel who engage in examination has a good understanding of quality management. As such, the JPO will promote their understanding of quality management by providing training and seminars on quality management for examiners, etc.

II. Enhancing Initiatives for Maintaining and Improving Examination Quality

- In order to enhance examination quality, it is necessary to standardize judgment criteria among examiners. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance a consultation scheme that aims to promote the exchange of opinions and the sharing of information among examiners.
- In order to enhance the users' acceptance of the examination results, it is necessary to communicate examiners' judgements in an easy-to-understand manner for users. As such, the JPO will create notices of reasons for refusals, etc. according to a standardized and easy-to-understand format.
- In order to make accurate decisions on patentability, it is necessary to understand the latest technology and business trends. As such, the JPO will make efforts to promote examination that utilizes the results of technical trend surveys, "collective examination for IP portfolio supporting business activities", interview examinations, etc.
- In order to minimize deficiencies in notices drafted by examiners, it is crucial to enhance the managers' approval process as quality checks of these notices. As such, the JPO will formulate guidelines for approvals, and reflect the information that has been stored through managers' feedback to examiners in initiatives for quality management.
- Since the prior art search is one of the key pillars in examination, it is important to lay a foundation for searches, and to strive to maintain and improve prior art search capabilities. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance the usability of search tools by promoting the improvement of search indexes and access to non-patent literature. In addition, the JPO will facilitate the collection and sharing of know-how concerning searches, focusing on foreign patent document searches.

- For high-quality and efficient patent examination, it is crucial to enhance preliminary prior art searches of registered search agencies, and to utilize them in an effective manner. As such, the JPO will make proper evaluations on preliminary prior art searches performed by registered search agencies, and will utilize the results of these evaluations in the next-term process for selection of search agencies to be registered. In addition, the JPO will offer cooperation on education for prior art searchers in registered search agencies.

III. Enhancing Initiatives for Quality Verification

- In order to enhance initiatives for quality verification, it is important to listen carefully to the voices of users. As such, the JPO will make efforts to reflect users' voices in quality management initiatives by enhancing user satisfaction surveys and exchanges of opinions with users, and by actively adopting opinions on examination quality submitted via the suggestion box on the JPO website.
- In order to accurately understand examination quality, it is also important to enhance quality audits. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance its quality audit scheme by laying a foundation so that the Quality Management Division can conduct quality audits properly.

IV. Cooperation with Overseas IP Offices and Communication of Information

- In order to support the global business development of companies, it is necessary to build an environment where examination results produced by the JPO are highly regarded in the international community, allowing users to obtain patent rights smoothly in foreign countries. As such, the JPO will make efforts to communicate information through international meetings, etc., and to build cooperative relations with overseas IP offices in order to collect information on initiatives related to examination quality as well as to conduct joint analysis on discrepancy of judgements among IP offices.

V. Setting of Quality Targets

- While the setting of quality targets is naturally desirable in the performance of quality management, there is a risk of some targets creating bias that hinders the proper conduct of examination. As such, the JPO will start with launching a study on the quality targets of overseas IP offices.

Design

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- In order to improve examination quality, it is crucial to enhance the quality management system. As such, the JPO will continue to make efforts to ensure necessary human resources, taking into account the efficiency of quality audits conducted by the Quality Management Division.
- In order to manage the quality of examination, it is crucial that each of the personnel who engage in examination has a good understanding of quality management. As such, the JPO will promote their understanding of quality management by providing training and seminars on quality management for examiners, etc.

II. Enhancing Initiatives for Maintaining and Improving Examination Quality

- In order to enhance examination quality, it is necessary to standardize judgment criteria among examiners. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance a consultation scheme that aims to promote the exchange of opinions and the sharing of information among examiners.
- In order to accurately understand the designs in applications, it is necessary to understand the latest product lines as well as the latest technical and business trends. As such, the JPO will make efforts to promote examination that utilizes the results of industrial design trend surveys, “collective examination for IP portfolio supporting business activities”, interview examinations, etc.
- Since the prior design search is one of the key pillars in examination, it is important to lay a foundation for searches, and to strive to maintain and improve prior design search capabilities. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance the usability of search tools by promoting the improvement of search indexes.

III. Enhancing Initiatives for Quality Verification

- In order to enhance initiatives for quality verification, it is important to listen carefully to the voices of users. As such, the JPO will make efforts to reflect users' voices in quality management initiatives by enhancing user satisfaction surveys and exchanges of opinions with users, and by actively adopting opinions on examination quality submitted via the suggestion box on the JPO website.
- In order to accurately understand examination quality, it is also important to enhance quality audits. As such, the JPO will conduct quality audits on prior design searches. In addition, the JPO will consider quality audit initiatives for international applications filed under the Geneva Act of the Hague Agreement.

IV. Cooperation with Overseas IP Offices and Communication of Information

- In order to support the global business development of companies, it is necessary to build an environment where examination results produced by the JPO are highly regarded in the international community, allowing users to obtain patent rights smoothly in foreign countries. As such, the JPO will make efforts to communicate information through international meetings, etc., and to build cooperative relations with overseas IP offices in order to collect information on examination quality-related initiatives.

V. Setting of Quality Targets

- While the setting of quality targets is naturally desirable in the performance of quality management, there is a risk of some targets creating bias that hinders the proper conduct of examination. As such, the JPO will start with launching a study on the quality targets of overseas IP offices.

Trademark

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- In order to improve examination quality, the JPO will make efforts to implement initiatives for increasing the efficiency of examination, to secure the necessary number of examiners or to enhance the quality management system, taking into account the efficiency of quality audits conducted by the Quality Management Division.
- In order to manage the quality of examination, it is crucial that each of the personnel who engage in examination has a good understanding of quality management. As such, the JPO will promote their understanding of quality management by providing training and seminars on quality management for examiners, etc.

II. Enhancing Initiatives for Maintaining and Improving Examination Quality

- In order to make accurate judgements on distinctiveness and similarities of trademarks, it is necessary to understand the current status of the latest business deals and trends. As such, the JPO will make efforts to promote examination that utilizes information obtained through exchanges of opinions with users. In addition, the JPO will make efforts to enhance the managers' approval process as quality checks to confirm whether the current status of the latest business deals and trends have been properly searched in examination.

III. Enhancing Initiatives for Quality Verification

- In order to enhance initiatives for quality verification, it is important to listen carefully to the voices of users. As such, the JPO will make efforts to reflect users' voices in quality management initiatives by enhancing user satisfaction surveys and exchanges of opinions with users, and by actively adopting opinions on examination quality submitted via the suggestion box on the JPO website.
- In order to accurately understand examination quality, it is also important to enhance quality audits. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance its quality audit scheme by laying a foundation so that the Quality Management Division can conduct quality audits properly.
- In a case where judgements in examination are different from those in appeals, it is important to analyze the causes of discrepancy in judgment to enhance examination quality. As such, the JPO will make efforts to enhance factor analysis of discrepancies in judgment between examinations and appeals/oppositions.

IV. Cooperation with Overseas IP Offices and Communication of Information

- In order to improve understanding of the JPO's initiatives for quality management and to enhance the JPO's presence in the field of IP quality management, it is necessary to disseminate information appropriately not only inside Japan but also overseas. As such, the JPO will make efforts to communicate information through international meetings, etc., and to build cooperative relations with overseas IP offices to collect information on examination quality-related initiatives.

V. Setting of Quality Targets

- While the setting of quality targets is naturally desirable in the performance of quality management, there is a risk of some targets creating bias that hinders the proper conduct of examination. As such, the JPO will start with launching a study on the quality targets of overseas IP offices.