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Dear EQE Secretariat

In addition to CIPA and IP Inclusive's response to the consultation on the proposal for a new EQE, with which we entirely agree, we wish to raise additional awareness to the concerns regarding the suitability of the new EQE for all candidates. We also note the response from the EPO regarding 'Assessment methodologies' in their most recent report dated 24 November 2022.

Although the EQE secretariat can implement adjustments for EQE candidates to reduce disadvantages resulting from certain health conditions, we want to ensure that this applies as widely as reasonably possible. In particular, the new EQE proposal provides no information on whether reasonable, appropriate adjustments will be considered in the new format. We consider that this is very important for providing an equal, diverse and inclusive forum for candidates to take their exams. The EQE must be accessible to all qualified candidates, and so must take account of the specific learning needs, health issues, disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, temporary or permanent injuries or other specific needs of those sitting the exams.

An example of an organisation which considers all the above factors is the Patent Examination Board (PEB) in the UK. Examples of adjustments or arrangements that may be granted by the PEB include:

- a) supervised rest breaks for candidates with physical injuries or other conditions and for nursing mothers
- b) additional time for candidates with dyslexia or other specific learning needs or physical impairment
- c) use of readers or scribes
- d) modified question papers, for example brailled, printed on coloured paper and/or in an enlarged size (A3), for candidates with visual impairment
- e) provision of specialist equipment, for example laptop, specialist software
- f) permission to use items, such as tinted reading overlay or magnifying equipment, for candidates with specific needs

The PEB is just one example of a national patent examination board considering reasonable adjustments. We welcome feedback from other national countries on how they adapt their own examination system to ensure the exams are accessible to all.

We further look forward to seeing how the EQE secretariat will implement reasonable adjustments in the new EQE format.

Signed by:

CIPA Diversity & Inclusivity committee

IP Inclusive (including its IP Ability community)

Patent Examination Board (UK)

Intellectual Property Office of the UK

