



Harrison Goddard Foote
Patent and Trade Mark
Attorneys

Intellectual Property:
Release its potential

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A Career as a Patent Attorney

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What is a Patent Attorney?

A lawyer with a scientific background who specialises in the field of patents (and other intellectual property)

- entry requirement - at least a 2.1 BSc in a technical or scientific discipline
- most attorneys have no previous legal experience
- private practice or in-house

We advise clients on:

- how to protect their innovations using patents
- how other people's patents affect their business



What is a patent?

- A patent is a monopoly over an invention which is granted by the state for a limited term
- The invention and the extent of the monopoly is described in a published document
- Patents can be granted for a wide range of technologies:
 - I mostly work on: drug molecules, pharmaceutical formulations, synthetic processes, new materials
 - but I have also worked on: camping equipment, children's toys, bike locks



What is a patent?

- To be granted/enforced a patent must be:
 - novel, i.e. never previously disclosed to the public
 - inventive, i.e. Not obvious in light of what has been previously disclosed to the public



Typical work – Advising a client

- A patent attorney will advise on patentability, filing strategy, prosecution strategy, on freedom to operate/infringement issues, due diligence, litigation, licensing...
- You must understand:
 - the science/technology
 - the law
 - the commercial situationand then...
- Find the best solution for the client

Skills and Abilities

- Common sense – empathy – problem solving – communication – ability to influence



Typical work and skills - Drafting

- Talk to the inventors to understand how their new ideas work
- Define and describe the invention as clearly as possible
- Advise on filing strategy

Skills and Abilities

- Quickly gain understanding of the science behind the invention
- Excellent written communication skills
- Legal understanding



Typical work – Getting it granted

- Review previous published documents
- Present arguments to patent office examiners – in writing, by telephone and in hearings

Skills and Abilities

- Analytical skills/attention to detail
- Oral and written communication skills
- Problem solving
- Negotiation



Pros of the job

- The opportunity to gain new skills, such as legal skills, whilst retaining contact with science
- Every day is different - there is a large variety of work
- Working at the cutting edge of technology
- Financially rewarding
- Intellectually stimulating
- Client facing



Cons of the job

- Lots of exams!
 - 8 final exams to qualify in the UK and Europe
 - plus foundation exams, university courses, pre-qualification
 - it takes at least 3-4 years to qualify
- Deadlines, responsibility for valuable patents
- Entry is competitive – a small profession – around 100-140 entrants each year in the UK
- Client facing



Resources

Inside Careers – Chartered Patent Attorneys

www.insidecareers.co.uk

Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys

www.cipa.org.uk/pages/home

UK Intellectual Property Office

www.ipo.gov.uk/home.htm

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Any Questions?

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