

career choice



PATENTS



What is a patent?

To understand what a patent attorney does it is first necessary to look at what a patent is. A patent is a grant by the state of the right to control the utilisation of an invention. This means that the holder of the patent can stop others from using the invention.

Patents are territorial which means they only apply to the country concerned. However, recent law changes mean that it may soon be possible to apply for a patent that covers a range of countries within the European Union.



What do patent attorneys do?

A patent attorney is someone who writes up a detailed description and definition of the invention to submit to the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) who will then grant the patent. They work on behalf of patent holders to secure and enforce their patent. A patent attorney also advises others on patents.

Patent attorneys can work across any or all of the main four types of intellectual property. These are patents, design and trade marks and copyright. They are expected to advise on a wide range of technical and commercial problems throughout their chosen field/s.



What do patent attorneys earn?

Those entering the patent profession as trainees can expect to earn between £25-£28,000. This figure can vary depending on where the firm is based and on the level of competition for the role.

Once newly qualified, patent attorneys are expected to earn over £60,000 with this figure increasing with experience gained.



Routes into the patent profession

A degree is required by the regulations for registration as a patent attorney. This means you will need to graduate from university before training to become a patent attorney in the UK and in Europe.

Most patent firms require you to have at least a 2:1 degree in a science, engineering, technology or mathematics based subject. A PhD or masters is not essential but can be preferred by some firms.

Once you have joined a firm as a trainee you will be guided through the process to qualification with study support and mentoring schemes in place at most firms to help with this.

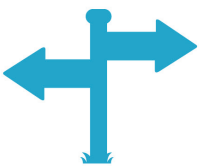
One important skills requirement for trainee patent attorneys is the ability to write clear and concise English.



Patent employers

While a patent attorney may be based in one country, they can still act to secure patents in other countries for their clients. This work is done through the European Patent Office (EPO) which is based in Munich. Essentially a patent attorney can work almost anywhere in Europe as long as they have passed the European exams.

Patent firms can vary in size and can be located around the country. Many of the larger firms have offices in London and across the rest of the UK, some have offices abroad.



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