Intellectual Property Office of Singapore
Registry of Patents
Circular No. 4/2020: DOCX (Microsoft Word) File Format as an Alternative Format to File Patent Specifications

DOCX (Microsoft Word) File Format as an Alternative Format to File Patent Specifications with effect from 29 June 2020
(Circular No. 4/2020, dated 02 June 2020)

With effect from 29 June 2020, you will have the flexibility to file documents of patent specifications in DOCX (Microsoft Word) or PDF (Portable Document Format) file format in IP^{2}SG. Currently, the file format is limited to PDF only. If the patent specification in the request for grant of patent (Patents Form 1) is filed in DOCX (Microsoft Word) format and the request meets the criteria defined in para 3, you will be able to receive an allocation of filing date within 12 hours.

2.   Why DOCX?

Data in PDF documents must be converted for it to be read and interpreted by computer systems (i.e., machine-readable). This conversion is susceptible to conversion errors. Whereas, data from DOCX documents is already in machine-readable format, which provides us with the opportunity to leverage on new technologies such as, Artificial Intelligence, to make the patent filing process and patent searching faster and simpler for you.

3.   Patent Specification in DOCX - Eligibility Criteria for Allocation of Filing Date for Request for Grant of Patent Within 12 Hours

Filing date for requests for grant of patent will be allocated within 12 hours from the receipt of the request if all the following eligibility criteria are met along with the Filing Date requirements:

a.   Request for grant of patent (Patent Form 1) is filed via IP^{2}SG and patent specifications are filed with the Patent Form 1 request[1].

b.   For a request that is not a divisional application, it should contain at least one priority claim and the description has to be accompanied by claim(s).

c.   The documents of patent specifications are in DOCX format. Sequence listing may be in either DOCX, TXT or PDF formats.

d.   The request is filed with professional assistance, i.e, by a registered patent agent or advocates or solicitors with a valid practising certificate in Singapore.

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[1] The maximum file size for document attachments in IP^{2}SG is 100MB. A request for grant of patent with specifications that exceed 100MB and thus submitted separately does not meet the eligibility criteria.
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If the request meets the eligibility criteria, you will be prompted to indicate if the patent specification is filed in English prior submission. This is for us to track the filing of English translation of the specification and the Verification of English Translation if the specification filed with the request is not in English.

4.   Data Integrity of Documents Submitted in DOCX format

A unique hash (algorithm) based on the content of DOCX document will be generated upon its submission. This algorithm prevents changes to the DOCX document post submission.

As per current practice, a copy of the DOCX documents as filed will be available in your IP2SG customer account for your reference and retention.

5.   Conversion from DOCX to PDF format

Post submission, IP^{2}SG will convert the DOCX document into PDF format. The PDF version will be made available in your IP^{2}SG account's "My Client's Filing History" or "My Filing History", for your reference along with the DOCX document within two weeks from receipt of the request.

The DOCX document in IP^{2}SG will be the official document. The PDF version is for your reference only.

The specification will be published in IP^{2}SG in both DOCX and PDF formats.

6.   Security and Privacy Matters

IP^{2}SG will reject DOCX files that contain macros, malware, embedded objects (Object Linking and Embedding) or any suspicious contents that may adversely affect the security of the system.

If metadata (hidden data and personal information like author of the document, last saved by, date document was created/last saved, etc) has not be removed from the DOCX file, IP^{2}SG will detect and scrub off the metadata before successfully uploading the document. This process does not affect the substantive information in the document itself. (You may refer to information available online on scrubbing of metadata from DOCX files.)

To enable the checks for macros, malware, suspicious contents and metadata, the DOCX file should not be password protected prior submission.

7.   Other Matters to Note

You may file documents of patent specification in either DOCX or PDF but not in both formats.

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For amendments and corrections filed from 29 June 2020, you are encouraged to file both marked-up and clean copies in DOCX to enjoy the new features we offer in the future for patent applications with DOCX documents.

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