

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

RFP 52PAPT301008

Question 1: What are the USPTO estimates for sitting time or time allowed for the exam.

Answer 1: Each 50 question session of the examination should be three hours, for a total examination time of six hours.

Question 2: In C.4.1.v. of the RFP it states: “The CTA shall have the ability to select only certain questions in an examination to create individualized tests from a bank of question.” Please explain what this means. Is the USPTO wanting a creation of individualized test forms for a select number of test candidates, or does it desire a custom, individualized test for each candidate?

Answer 2: The USPTO would like to maximize the randomness at which items within the question bank are presented to candidates. It is recognized that presenting individualized tests for each candidate may raise issues with regard to legal defensibility of an individual examination. Accordingly, it is expected that, at least in the initial stages of computer-based administration of the examination, individualized test forms will be created for a select number of candidates. In this arrangement, one of a plurality of available test forms would be randomly selected for a candidate, and the particular order of questions and the presentation of correct answers and distracters within the test form would be randomized.

Question 3: The USPTO will be dependent on the CTA to assist it through consultative services to develop, sound, legally defensible computer-based examinations and test forms. Will the CTA be reimbursed for any eventual travel costs, as they occur, to consult directly with the USPTO, or does the CTA have to estimate travel costs and fold them into the CTA’s examination fees?

*Answer 3: This is a no cost to the government contract. As set forth in section B.2 of the RFP: “The firm fixed price for each item shall include **all** direct labor costs, other direct costs, indirect costs, overhead, general and administrative (G&A) expenses, and profit.” Thus, the CTA should not expect reimbursement from the Federal government for travel costs.*

Question 4: In L.15, Submission of Proposals. What is your expectation for these 50 page limit for the technical proposal, i.e., does this number include table of contents, introductory page, and any appropriate attachments, or does the 50 page limit only pertain to the technical discussion pages within the overall body of the proposal?

Answer 4: The 50 page limit for Volume I applies to any table of contents, executive summary, discussion pages, attachments, exhibit, etc. However, in accordance with Section L.16(d)(1), the completed Section 508 checklist is excluded from the page limitation.

Question 5: In the item bank, how many multiple-choice questions are current and available for use?

Answer 5: The current 100 question multiple choice examination format has been in use since 1998. Many questions on previous examinations remain current and others would require only minor revisions to reflect recent changes in the law. Review of approximately 500 previous examination questions is currently ongoing at the USPTO. Additionally, new questions are currently being drafted by a number of individuals at the USPTO. Individuals interested in reviewing questions and answers from the past three registration examination may refer to <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/oed/index.html>.

Question 6: How is the cut score established?

Answer 6: The cut score for the patent registration examination was set at 70% many years ago. That remains the cut score to date.

Question 7: How many test forms must be created for operational use at any point in time?

Answer 7: The number of test forms available for operational use at any point in time has not been determined at this time. It is expected that the minimum number of available test forms will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 8: What is the item exposure rule? (The number of times items are used before they are retired or revised)

Answer 8: The number of times items are used before they are retired or revised has not been determined at this time. It is expected that the item exposure rule will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 9: How many "validation" questions are permitted on each form?

Answer 9: The number of validation questions permitted on each form has not been determined at this time. It is expected that the permissible number of validation questions will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 10: Have the reference materials for the questions (books, journals, laws, etc.) been established?

Answer 10: Anticipated reference materials are the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure (MPEP), Title 35 of the United States Code, and Title 37 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Policy statements published by the USPTO regarding Office procedure, rule changes or law changes may also be included as reference materials.

Question 11: How many candidates are allowed to sit for a form of the examination before the examination is rotated out of an operational status?

Answer 11: The number of candidates allowed to sit for a form of the examination before the examination is rotated out of an operational status has not been determined at this time. It is expected that the number of candidates allowed to sit for a form of the examination before it is rotated out of operational status will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 12: What is the range of acceptable "p" values for items?

Answer 12: The range of acceptable "p" values for items has not been determined at this time. It is expected that the acceptable range of "p" values will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 13: What is the range of acceptable point biserial correlation coefficients for items?

Answer 13: The range of acceptable point biserial correlation coefficients for items has not been determined at this point. It is expected that the range of acceptable point biserial correlation coefficients will be determined on the basis of input from testing experts associated with the successful bidder.

Question 14: Are statistics available for the current operational and validation items?

Answer 14: No

Question 15: Will the CTA be able to maintain the item bank to facilitate editing, revisions, and publishing the examinations?

Answer 15: Whether the CTA will be able to maintain the item bank to facilitate editing, revisions, and publishing the examinations has not been determined at this time. It is noted that section C.4.3 of the RFP requires the CTA to maintain the accuracy of the question banks on a continuing basis.

Question 16: Will the work with the USPTO subject matter experts occur in the Arlington, VA area?

Answer 16: The USPTO subject matter experts are currently located in the Arlington, VA area and are expected to move to Alexandria, VA over the next few years. Particularly in view of currently available communication technology, no determination has been made as to any physical location of "the work with the USPTO subject matter experts."

Question 17: Section C.1.2 - Can the USPTO provide a list of the thirty-seven cities around the United States where the examinations are currently administered? Also, can the USPTO provide a list of the cities in the remainder of the states where it would be desirable to administer the examinations?

Answer 17: The thirty-seven cities in which the examination is currently administered are listed in the General Requirements Bulletin. See <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/dcom/olia/oed/grb0403.pdf>. Over recent years, the following venues (presented in alphabetic order) have had the top-ten highest examination traffic: Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Houston, TX; Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco, CA; San Jose, CA; and Washington, DC. The USPTO has not created a list of cities where it would be desirable to administer the examinations.

Question 18: Section C.1.3, Paragraph 3 - Is the \$200.00 Exam fee, per candidate, paid by the CTA to the USPTO for the development and maintenance of the initial 100 Items in the Question Bank?

Answer 18: The \$200.00 USPTO portion of the examination fee is paid by the applicant and is collected by the CTA along with the remaining portions of the examination fee. The CTA then submits the collected USPTO portion of the examination fee to the USPTO. The CTA does not pay a \$200.00 Exam fee, per candidate, to the USPTO. As noted in the RFP, the USPTO portion of the examination fee is intended to cover USPTO costs in providing subject matter expertise and developing and maintaining a question bank. Considerably more than 100 items are anticipated for the question bank in its initial implementation.

Question 19: Section C.1.3, Paragraph 4 - Is the total number of initial Items in the Question Bank limited to 100 Items during the Base period of the contract?

Answer 19: No. Considerably more than 100 items are anticipated for the question bank in its initial implementation. It is expected that additional items will be added throughout the base period of the contract.

Question 20: Section C.4.3c - Is there a requirement for a zoom feature to present a more clear definition of the on-screen graphics? Is there a requirement for an On-screen Calculator?

Answer 20: It is expected that on-screen graphics will be presented with clear definition. Section C.4.3.c does not require an on-screen calculator. Of course, bidders are free to note features of their products and services that they believe are advantageous, regardless of whether such features expressly appear as requirements in the RFP.

Question 21: Section C.4.2a - Please define: "Approved" computer based program?

Answer 21: An "approved" computer based program is one that has been presented to the USPTO and complies with contractual requirements associated with this RFP.

Question 22: What are the USPTO estimates for anticipated candidate volume in total for the life of the contract or per year.

Answer 22: The USPTO has not estimated candidate volume for the life of the contract or per year. However, to assist vendors is assessing applicant trends and potential future volume, the following represent approximate application numbers for the last six examinations (including April 2003, for which the application deadline has passed): April 2003 total applications = 2,687 (2,477 approved to take exam); October 2002 total applications = 2,999 (2,767 approved to take exam); April 2002 total applications = 2,579 (2,472 approved to take exam); October 2001 total applications = 2,711 (2,478 approved to take exam); April 2001 total applications = 2,463 (2,335 approved to take exam); October 2000 total applications = 2,539 (2,421 approved to take exam).