

IPReg

**The Intellectual Property Regulation Board -  
Annual Report 2019**

**May 2020**

## 1. Introduction

The Intellectual Property Regulation Board (IPReg) regulates individual patent attorneys and trade mark attorneys and many of the firms that they work in. Our work covers a broad range of activities including:

- education and training requirements for qualification as an attorney;
- requirements for admission to the register for attorneys and firms;
- keeping the registers of attorneys and firms;
- setting the requirements for continuous professional development so that the knowledge, skills and expertise of attorneys is maintained at an appropriate level;
- setting and enforcing rules and regulations which set out the standards required of those we regulate; and
- handling complaints of misconduct made against an attorney or firm regulated by IPReg.

IPReg's strategic direction is set by its Board which comprises a lay (non-lawyer) Chair, four other lay members, three patent attorneys and two trade mark attorneys, following the retirement of Jonathan Clegg, from the Board at the end of the year. (The Board agreed at its Strategy Day in March that it should reduce its overall size as Board members' appointments come to an end.)

The IPReg executive team which takes forward IPReg's day-to-day operational work is a small team led by the Chief Executive Officer, Fran Gillon and Head of Registration, Shelley Edwards. These roles are in turn supported by a Chief Finance Officer, an Assurance Officer, an Authorisations Officer, a Director of Policy, and an Administrative Officer.

This report sets out some key information about IPReg's activities during 2019.

## 2. Chair's Report, Lord Chris Smith

What a strange and disorientating year it has been. A general election leading to a dramatic change in Parliament, followed by the implementation of Brexit at breakneck speed, and then the lethal impact of the new coronavirus, Covid-19. There have been immediate practical implications for all of us, of course. Meetings are held remotely, online; Zoom has become the go-to business tool; all our staff are working at home; liaison with stakeholders is more necessary than ever, but cannot now be done physically face to face. But there are far broader issues that we're only beginning to understand. Will our ways of working and operating change permanently in some ways? Will the pause in much business activity lead to a spurt or a hesitation in the development of innovative ideas, and what will the impact of that be on patent and trade mark activity? I certainly hope that the human genius for creativity in the face of challenge, leading to new ideas and solutions and products, will assert itself in the months to come. Intellectual Property will, I suspect, become more rather than less important as we emerge back into something resembling normality.

Last year, I set out three particular priorities for IPReg over the twelve month period. Two of those priorities have already been accomplished, and thank goodness. The first was the implementation of a new CRM system for all our records and dealings with regulated attorneys. This has been installed, tested and re-tested, and seems – with one or two minor teething problems – to be working really well. I very much hope that attorneys have begun to see an improvement in efficiency as a result. And the second was a change of office. We've moved away from being

immediately opposite the Law Courts and are now based in Little Britain, a stone's throw or two away from St Paul's. We have slimmed down our space, but now have access to proper meeting rooms for the first time. (When we are able to hold meetings once again, of course.)

We are now embarked on the third priority area: the comprehensive review of our regulatory codes, guidance, and procedures. We are inviting proposals and evidence, and will be seeking a wide range of contributions, before we set out a series of changes for formal consultation. This will all take some time, so please bear with us. We want to get it right, and this will be our chance to do so.

A further area of concern has developed significantly during the year. I hinted at it last year, but our anxiety has grown since; and that is the quality and performance of one of the education providers who run the courses that provide entry into the profession. Because the number of providers is small, it's hugely important that both the content of the courses and their administration are fully up to scratch. We continue to have some serious concerns, and we are making sure that we can carry out regular monitoring, take up issues as they arise, and also encourage one or two other providers to think about joining the field.

This year has shown all too forcefully how outside events can suddenly change everyone's best-laid plans. But through it all, we mustn't lose sight of our fundamental purpose: to help to ensure an expert and skilled profession, and to protect the consumers who use its services. Despite all the challenges, I think we've taken a few small steps through the course of this year to doing both of those things a little bit better.

### **3. Chief Executive's Report, Fran Gillon**

Work in 2019 was dominated by the need to implement a new CRM and move office due to the expiry of our lease at Outer Temple.

Following a tender for the new CRM we appointed MillerTech in November 2018 to work with us (and our external consultant from Purple [now Equantiis]) to develop and implement it in time for the 2020 fee collection process which normally starts in November. It was an incredibly ambitious timescale! Nevertheless, despite significant issues along the way, the new CRM went operational on 26 September 2019. It has already seen efficiency gains outside the annual renewal process. For example on-line applications for entry to the register, one location for all information and correspondence with a registrant, management reports and the ability to target communications to different types of registrant. Development and implementation of the new CRM involved hard work by the whole IPReg team, but none of it would have happened without the incredible dedication of Shelley Edwards, Head of Registration.

I am also incredibly proud that we were the first regulatory body to meet all the performance outcomes in the LSB's regulatory performance framework. We will continue to build on what we have done so far and look for opportunities to improve our performance even more.

The Board held a very successful Strategy Day in March and decided that it would be more externally focused to ensure that its regulatory framework encourages and supports innovation:

- In the provision of services that providers are able to offer consumers and the ways in which those services are provided, including the use of law tech. We will do this by ensuring that our review of regulatory arrangements focuses on setting reasonable standards but does not 'gold plate' them;

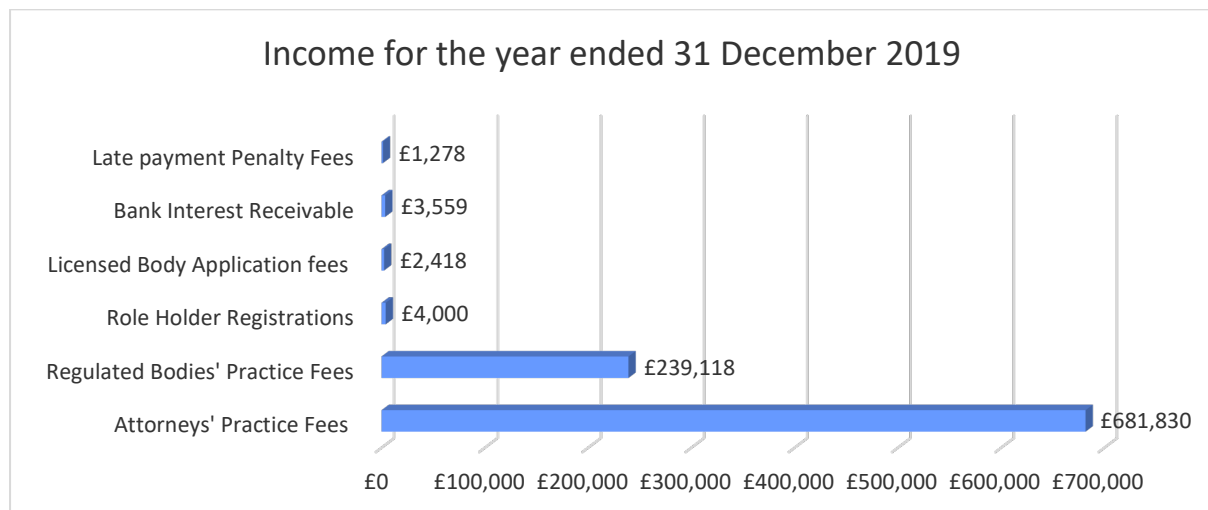
- By encouraging the entry of new providers of education courses (at both the foundation and advanced levels). We want people who want to become trade mark attorneys and patent attorneys to have a variety of routes into the profession (including apprenticeships). We want these to be provided using different delivery methods and to introduce new subjects (e.g. law tech). We consider that, over time, this will help to increase diversity, improve quality and lower costs. We also want to review on a more regular basis the quality and performance of existing accredited education providers; and
- By ensuring that its requirements for continuing competence, in addition to protecting consumers, are relevant to the changing way in which legal services are provided and the commercial requirements of regulated individuals and entities.

#### 4. 2019 – Key Facts and Figures

##### 4.1 Financial - Income:

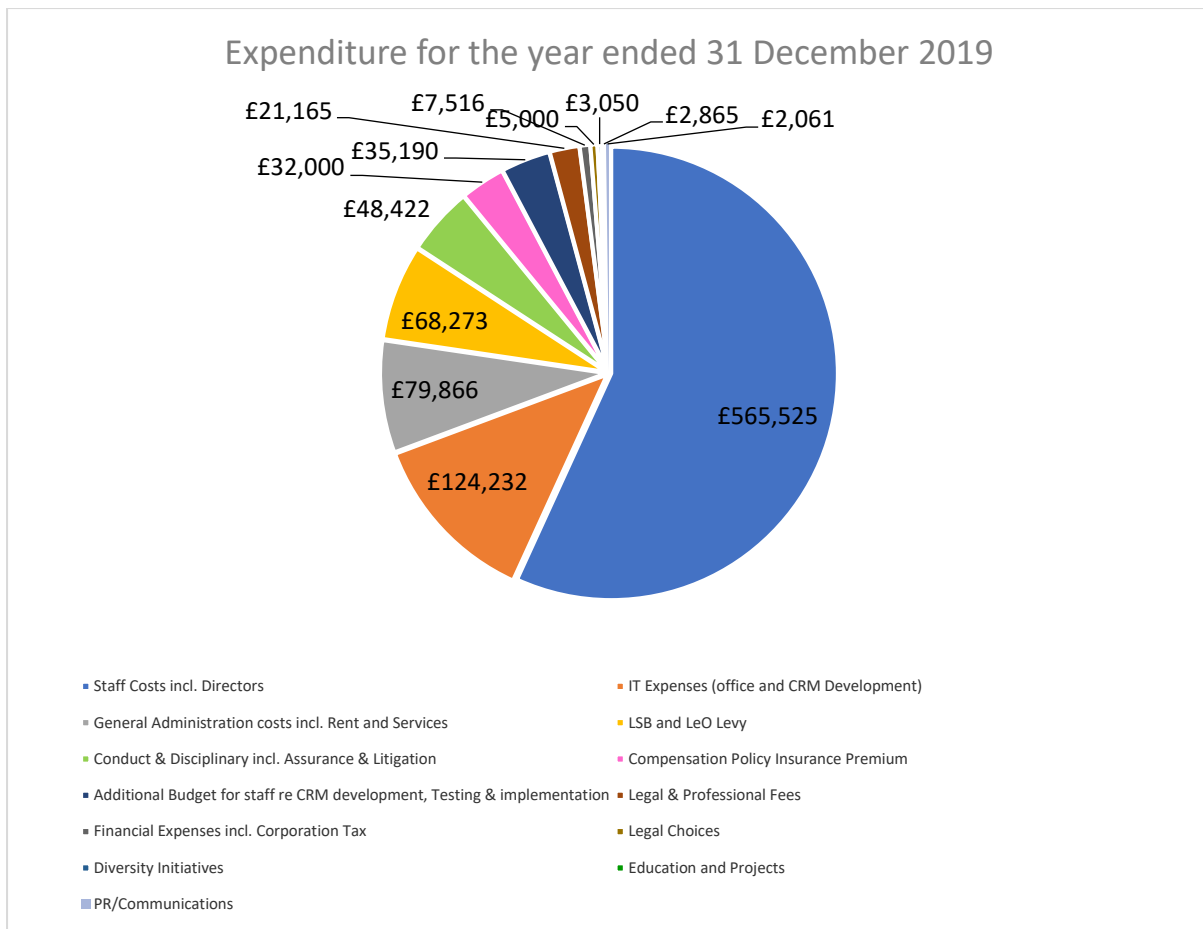
IPReg’s income derives mainly from practice fees paid by registered attorneys and firms. Some limited additional income is derived from (for example) application fees from firms applying to be licensed or registered with IPReg. IPReg is financially independent. Since January 2010, IPReg has received no financial assistance from either CIPA or CITMA, nor does IPReg remit any practising fees to either CIPA or CITMA. A breakdown of Income for the year ended 31 December 2019:

*Figure 1 – Breakdown of Income for 2019*



## 4.2 Financial - Expenditure

Figure 2 – Breakdown of Expenditure for 2019



### Staff Costs

Staff costs include salaries, director’s remuneration, employer’s National Insurance, staff benefits and pension costs.

### IT Expenses (office and CRM System Development)

This is largely made up of costs relating to the development of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which was supported by a reserve of £122,864. Additionally, costs shown include those to support and maintain the office IT platform, software licences and costs to maintain the existing website and IPReg Pro database, until the implementation of the new CRM system.

### General Administration Costs incl. Rent and Services

This includes general office costs, rent, rates and service charges.

### Legal Services Board and Legal Ombudsman Levy

In common with other legal regulators, IPReg pays a “levy” to cover the costs of the [Legal Services Board \(LSB\)](#) the body with statutory oversight of the legal regulators. The levy is based on IPReg’s proportion of the total number of regulated lawyers.

Additionally, the running costs of the [Legal Ombudsman](#) are met by regulated lawyers using a three-year reference period ending 31 March to calculate the average number of complaints made to the Ombudsman. Each regulator contributes a minimum of £5,000 unless there were 10 complaints or more in the rolling three-year period in which case the cost increases. IPReg's contribution is the £5000 minimum.

#### Conduct & Disciplinary incl. Assurance and Litigation

This relates to external legal costs and internal costs associated with assurance and disciplinary matters and includes Board member fees and expenses for committee hearings and associated costs such as photocopying and room hire.

#### Compensation Policy Insurance Premium

IPReg maintains an insurance policy under which grants may be made to compensate consumers for losses or hardship suffered due to a registered attorney or an employee/manager of a registered firm, either as a result of fraud or other dishonesty, or a fraudulent or dishonest failure to account for money. This policy is maintained as these type of losses are typically not covered by the professional indemnity insurance which the registered attorney and registered firms are required to have in place.

#### Additional Budget for staff re CRM Development, testing and implementation

This is an additional budget line for the staff costs involved in the development and testing of the new CRM system both prior to implementation and upon its going live.

#### Legal and Professional Fees

This relates to costs for legal advice on areas such as audit and accountancy services and contracts, as well as costs such as insurance, General Data Protection Regulation, Practical Law and Westlaw subscriptions. Practising fees for the professionally qualified members of staff are also included here.

#### Financial Expenses including Corporation Tax

This includes bank charges, card provider service charges and corporation tax on bank interest.

#### Legal Choices

This is a funding instalment for the [Legal Choices website](#) (a joint project undertaken by all the legal regulators to provide consumers with information on legal services to help them make an informed decision).

#### Diversity Initiatives

IPReg has a statutory objective to promote a diverse legal profession and accordingly supports initiatives aimed at promoting this objective. Item 5.7 provides information on diversity initiatives funded by IPReg.

#### Education Projects

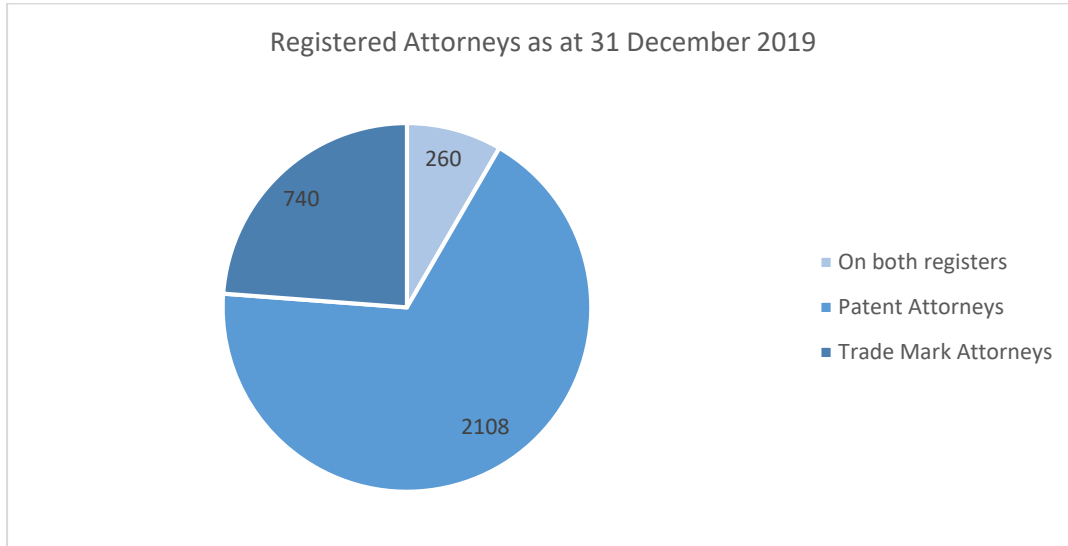
Costs for this are largely Board Education Group member costs and resource costs relating to the booking of facilities to meet with Queen Mary University London representatives (see item 5.8).

#### PR/Communications

Costs associated with Board members' activities with the profession and students.

**4.3 Who we regulate:** as at 31 December 2019 there were 3108 registered attorneys of which:260 were registered as both a patent and a trade mark attorney, 2,108 registered as patent attorneys and 740 registered as trade mark attorneys.

*Figure 3 – Breakdown of attorneys by type*



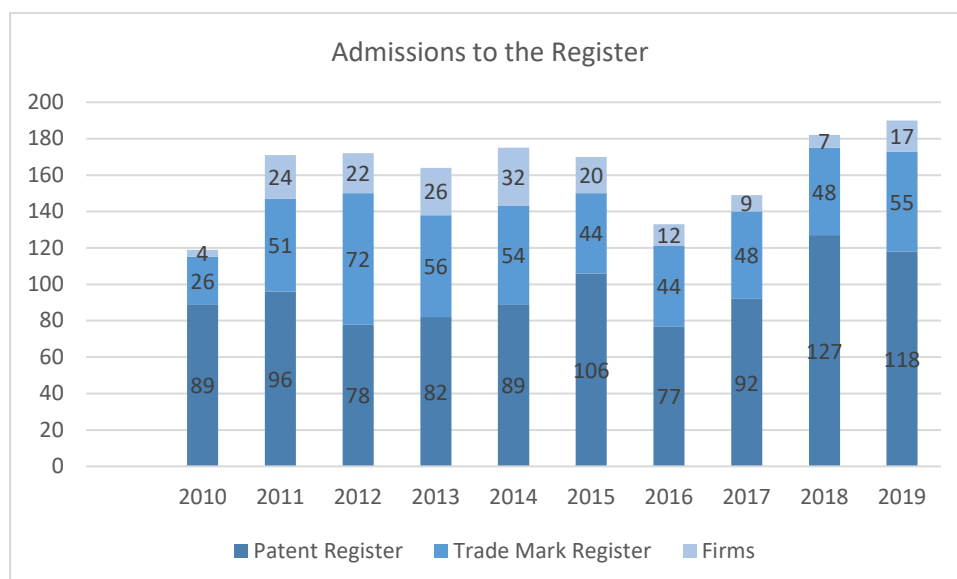
Patent attorneys make up just over two-thirds (67.8%) of registered attorneys, trade mark attorneys represent 23.8% and those who are both a patent attorney and trade mark attorney comprise 8.4%.

#### 4.4 Admissions

The bar chart below sets out the number of applications from individuals for admission to the patent attorney register and the trade mark attorney register received by IPReg each year over the last nine years (since IPReg's inception). The chart also includes the number of applications received annually by firms that applied for entry on to one or both registers. To be admitted to the register, attorneys must complete a rigorous examination and training programme. To remain on the register attorneys must undertake further professional training each year. Successful admission to the patent and/or trade mark attorney register means that an individual or firm is registered with and regulated by IPReg and is subject to its rules and regulations. From a consumer protection perspective, using an IPReg-regulated attorney or firm affords consumers the confidence that in the event of any problem arising from the work carried out they will be protected by professional indemnity insurance and can in some cases complain to the Legal Ombudsman and/or IPReg. In addition, there are certain types of work (e.g. the conduct of litigation) that only attorneys and firms registered with IPReg or another legal regulator can carry out.

In 2019, there were 173 admissions to the attorney register, 118 of these were patent attorneys (including one admission from a registrant already on the trade mark register and 55 were trade mark attorneys (including two admissions from registrants already on the patent register).

Figure 4 – Breakdown of Admissions to Register 2010 – 2019



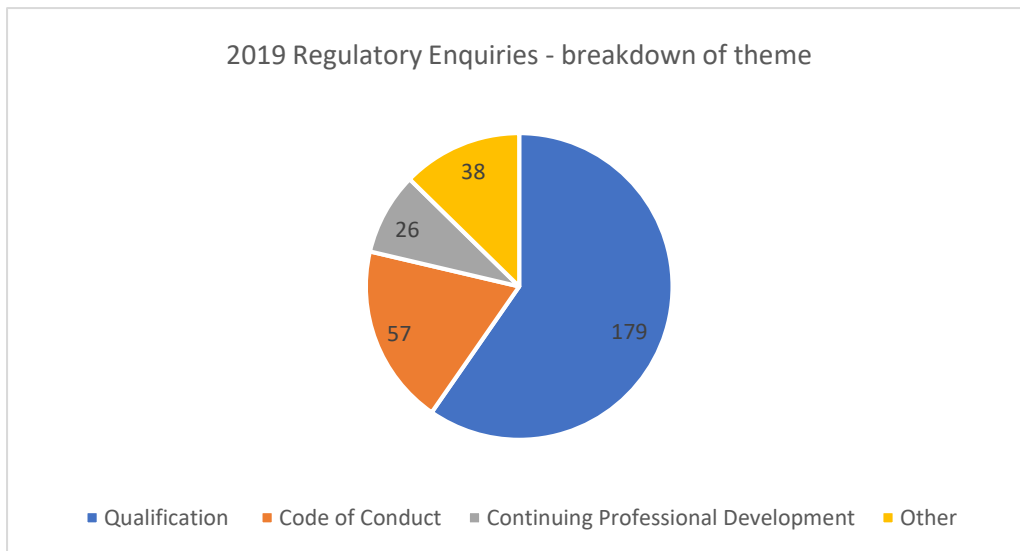
**4.5 Enquiries to IPReg** - each year, IPReg receives a significant amount of enquiries to its 'Info' email address. In 2019 over 9100 contacts were made. This equates to approximately 175 contacts a week, though there are times such as the annual re-registration process when there are significantly more contacts and – often at some points over the summer – when there are fewer. Whilst the majority are 'business as usual' administrative contacts, relating to issues such as the registration status of an individual, register applications, fee payment and category queries, calendar events etc., a minority, but vital element of those contacts, are the substantive regulatory enquiries. As of late September 2019, the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system (see item 5.2) has enabled individuals to make their enquiry online, they are asked to self-categorise their enquiry (choosing from a selection of pre-populated categories), with the CRM automatically recording the enquiries and replies. In 2019, IPReg received 300 substantive regulatory thematic enquiries.

Of those 300 enquiries, the three most frequent theme of the enquiries remained as they were in 2018:

1. Qualification/Registration accounted for over half - 179 - of the enquiries (129 in 2018);
2. Rules of Conduct accounted for 57 enquiries (55 in 2018);
3. Continuing Professional Development accounted for 26 (20 in 2018).



Figure 5 – Breakdown of Regulatory Enquiries received in 2019



A more detailed breakdown of these three themes follows.

Qualification/Registration: - of the 179 categorised as qualification/registration enquiries, the most frequent remain how to become a trade mark attorney (55); and how to become a patent attorney (44). These are followed by the process for becoming a registered entity (27), non-EU cross recognition of qualifications (20) and EU cross-recognition (14).

A total of 112 queries came from individuals based in and educated in the UK seeking information on entry and experience requirements. Another 34 queries came from those based and educated (and often professionally qualified) abroad, and came from a range of EU and non-EU residents, with queries on how to qualify from countries including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, India, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey.

Although there is a significant amount of information on our website about registration requirements, examinations and exemptions, the frequency and complexity of enquiries about this told us this needs to be clearer. Informed by an analysis of these queries we published online [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Rules of Conduct Enquiries: by their very nature, the (57) Rules of Conduct enquiries have an eclectic reach, though as in previous years there is (limited) commonality of themes:

- Entity (Re) Structure – 11 enquiries; including dealing with a fallout between directors, seeking advice on whether the services of a solicitor could be provided, mergers, and queries on issues, or interest in, becoming a Licensed Body (Alternative Business Structure);
- Conflict of Interest – 6 enquiries; commercial conflict between two clients (not in relation to trade mark representations), taking equity and possibly directorship in a client company; owning equity in a competitor firm;
- Client Monies – 4 enquiries; including concern about a money laundering risk and issues setting up a client bank account;
- Difficult Client – 4 enquiries; client ignoring requests for fees payment, ceasing to act for a client who is neither paying fees nor issuing instructions, providing a detailed breakdown of costs;
- File Transfer – 2 enquiries; including previous firm reluctance to pass on client file because it was owed money.

The remaining Rules of Conduct enquiries fell into a very broad range of other subjects, including the impact of Brexit on insurance, whether it is permissible to sponsor a competition by providing time in kind (rather than prize money), extent to which the attorney should make efforts to trace a client, enforcement of a limitation of liability, foreign exchange rate fluctuations, disbursements and bank charges.

Queries made by non-attorneys covered areas such as requesting information on what sanctions were available if attorneys do not meet their regulatory responsibilities, whether it is permissible for an IP law firm to be a strategic investor in a company and also advise that company on IP law, what “legal advice” a trade mark administrator could provide, who can register a trade mark for financial gain.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): We received 26 enquiries concerning CPD and the majority (24) came from registered attorneys. Many of these related to whether the removal of the 25% cap relating to non-interactive activities applied across the board (it does) rather than relating only to watching a webinar. The removal of the cap in June 2019 was directly informed by evidence, including regulatory enquiries, of the potential for the restriction to lead to attorneys undertaking professional development in areas irrelevant to them or the service they provide simply because the activity was uncapped. These figures do not include the high frequency of queries relating to an individual’s CPD declarations and any pro rata/waiver etc. requests, which are administrative/particular to the attorney rather than thematic issues.

#### **4.6 Complaints made to IPReg**

We can deal with complaints about “regulated persons”; this includes registered attorneys, registered firms (including alternative business structures), as well as managers and employees of registered firms. Where we receive information that a regulated person may not have met the standards of professional practice set out in the [Rules of Conduct](#), or where we have information that a registered person’s character and suitability to be on the register has been called into doubt, we consider taking action under the [Disciplinary Procedure Rules](#).

If a complaint about a regulated person is received, we may seek additional information before deciding how to proceed. We can also initiate complaints where it appears to us that a regulated person has breached one or more of the Rules of Conduct or has otherwise been non-compliant with any of our regulatory requirements.

In 2019, IPReg received or initiated 14 complaints against regulated persons, all of whom were registered attorneys or firms:

- Acting without / deviating from instructions – 1;
- Unprofessional practice – 3;
- Poor service standards (including poor communication, poor advice) – 1;
- Acting where there was a conflict of interest – 4; and
- Lack of insurance / financial management – 5.

Where it appears that one of our regulatory arrangements has been breached, we can refer it to the Complaints Review Committee which will consider whether there is a *prima facie* case to be answered. The Complaints Review Committee may close the case or deal with it summarily if it would be disproportionate to refer it to a full disciplinary hearing before the Disciplinary Board. The Disciplinary Board is an independent Board made up of lay and professional members of the Joint

Disciplinary Panel and has a wide range of sanctioning powers up to, and including, imposing fines of up to £5 million on individuals (£25 million on registered bodies and £250m on an ABS) and removal from the register(s).

#### 4.7 First Tier Complaints

Registered attorneys and firms must have effective procedures in place to deal with complaints. IPReg's [Rules of Conduct](#) require all regulated attorneys in private practice to have an established procedure for dealing with complaints. Clients must be informed at the point of engagement about the process for making a complaint and written details of the complaints procedure must be provided to the client on request. A complaint made by a client to the registered attorney or firm, is known as a "first tier complaint".

During our annual registration renewal process, all regulated attorneys in private practice must provide us with information about the number of first-tier complaints they received during the previous year. If the attorney works in a regulated firm, it is the firm that provides this information. Collecting this information can help us to identify good practice or, if we identify what appear to be widespread or systemic issues, we can require information to allow us to investigate further.

When a complainant is not satisfied with the way a regulated attorney or firm has handled their complaint they may be able to complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

Complaints statistics for the reporting year ended 31 December 2019, were collected from:

- Firms – 229 firms reported on the number of complaints received, with 37 of those firms declaring receipt of one or more complaints; and
- Sole practitioners – 124 sole practitioners reported on the number of complaints received, with 5 sole practitioners declaring receipt of one or more complaints.

The four main areas of reported complaints for 2019 (for regulated entities and sole practitioners) are:

- Costs information deficient/costs excessive - 65 total complaints (102 in 2018);
- Failure to keep informed/failure to reply - 31 total complaints (33 in 2018);
- Delay/failure to progress - 21 total complaints (32 in 2018); and
- Failure to follow instructions – 19 total complaints (20 in 2018)

Whilst the nature of these complaints continues to reinforce the importance of providing clear information to consumers about price, service and quality, the [Transparency Guidance](#) (see item 5.11) published by IPReg in May 2019 may have played a part in the significant reduction in the complaints regarding cost.

In addition, there were 12 complaints about failure to advise or gave poor/wrong advice (22 in 2018 which made it the fourth highest category overall).

#### 4.8 Regulatory Action

In 2019, IPReg suspended from the register:

- 17 registrants and 1 firm for non-payment of fees;
- 33 registrants for failure to make a compliant CPD declaration (of which 8 had also not paid fees); and
- 1 registrant for failure to provide information about their professional indemnity insurance.

In 2019 we removed 10 registrants from the register for continued failure to pay their practising fee.

## **5. Review of progress against 2019's Business Plan activities**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Since 2017, a new Chief Executive, a new Chair, and a new role of Head of Registration have joined the small IPReg team. Together these appointments provided ideal opportunity for reviewing the way in which IPReg was carrying out its core regulatory activities. Three main priorities were identified for 2019: development of a new CRM system, ground work for improving the regulatory arrangements, and a move to new offices.

These workstreams were in addition to our business as usual "core activities", which include;

- considering applications from individuals and entities for registration;
- providing advice on our regulatory arrangements;
- investigating complaints and taking disciplinary action where necessary;
- dealing with enquiries via both the new online contact form and the "Info" email box;
- a rolling accreditation process of examination agencies and considering applications from new entrant agencies;
- responding to LSB consultations and requests for information (e.g. regulatory performance data); and
- policy development (e.g. removal of the 25% CPD cap, consultations on run-off cover and pro bono).

### **5.2 Implementing a new CRM system**

The database which had supported the operation and maintenance of the registers since 2013 needed substantial improvements to its functionality. Making the required changes would have been very high-risk and not cost-effective. The IPReg Board therefore decided that it would be an appropriate use to its reserves to develop a new CRM system. Scoping, developing, testing and implementation of the new CRM system inevitably took a considerable amount of the IPReg team's time. We were delighted to have it in place for the 2020 annual renewal process, though the renewal process was started slightly later (December) than had been intended initially.

The annual renewal process was intensive for the IPReg team. We had to support registrants through a new process which required information about their fitness to practise as well as their CPD. We anticipate that the level of support required by registrants will reduce in future years as they become familiar with the new system. In addition, the new CRMS system will enable us to provide bespoke information to specific categories of registrant to help them with the annual renewal process. For the IPReg team, the CRM has enabled better ways of working and enhanced interaction with registrants, efficiency gains, and reduced data risks. New features include an online application processes for registration with IPReg, and for voluntary removal from the register as well as facility for making an online enquiry.

### **5.3 Improving our regulatory arrangements**

IPReg is embarking on an ambitious and exciting project to put in place new regulatory arrangements. The new arrangements will ensure appropriate levels of consumer protection while removing unnecessarily restrictive regulatory requirements and barriers to entry. We want the new arrangements to encourage competition and innovation in the provision of intellectual property legal services. The IPReg Board wants the new arrangements to be primarily principles-based and

only to have rules when required by statute or where otherwise justified by reference to the Legal Services Act's regulatory objectives. Given the size of the project, it will be undertaken over a period of 2-3 years to ensure we maximise the input we get from the consultation process. During 2019 we built upon the work begun in 2018 and scoped the review with an intention of an initial consultation taking the form of a call for evidence. We have had to suspend the call for evidence as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and will publish a revised timetable once the process for ending the lockdown becomes clearer.

Ahead of this scheduled wider review we undertook consultations relating to professional indemnity insurance run-off cover and pro bono advice.

[Run off cover consultation](#) – this consultation ran from 25 July until 9 October 2019 and proposed making clear on the face of our regulatory arrangements that PII run-off cover must be put in place for at least six years to ensure former clients of a closed firm continue to be protected. We also proposed requirements about providing information to clients about PII arrangements. . The application was made to the LSB on 4 December; the LSB approved the application on 4 March 2020.

[Removing restrictions on providing pro bono advice](#) – this consultation also ran from 25 July until 9 October 2019 and sought to remove restrictions on attorneys providing intellectual property legal advice without charge to consumers and small business which they might otherwise not be able to afford. IPReg continues to work with the IP Federation and other stakeholders to determine how best to implement the required changes.

#### **5.4 Improving the application process for individuals and entities**

The new CRM system includes an online registration application platform. It also provides structured process for an individual attorney to request alteration of their practising status, changing of the role an individual has within a firm, such as Head of Legal Practice, manager, administrator etc. and application for voluntary removal from a register.

In July 2019, we worked with the Solicitors Regulation Authority to enable a firm we regulated to merge with one regulated by them in what was believed to be the [first deal of its kind](#).

#### **5.5 More appropriate categories of registrant**

The current registration practising categories do not necessarily reflect commercial reality and can be confusing, for example, “sole trader employing others”. During the 2019-20 annual renewal process the IPReg team worked with registrants to determine the most appropriate category to reflect their current practising status and to gather information on commercial practice to inform the regulatory arrangements review.

#### **5.6 Moving offices**

For many years IPReg occupied a fifth-floor office at Outer Temple. This office was not fit for purpose in many ways, in particular it was not accessible (the lift only went to the fourth floor with a number of stairs up to our office) and no running water on the fifth floor. In December 2019 the IPReg team moved to the [Office Space in Town](#) offices at Little Britain. These are serviced offices with full kitchen facilities on each floor and are accessible. They also have meeting rooms on site and reasonably costed overnight accommodation options Board members. As part of the move we also replaced our legacy IT equipment with up-to-date models which has made working from home during the Covid-19 pandemic easier than it would otherwise have been.

## 5.7 Diversity funding

IPReg has a ringed fence reserve to fund diversity initiatives focused upon the intellectual property sector. [IP Inclusive](#) is an initiative “which brings people together from across the IP sector in pursuit of a common goal: to promote and improve equality, diversity and inclusion within our community”. In 2019, IPReg donated £1,000 to IP Inclusive for its 2019 operating costs. The December 2019 Board meeting agreed to donate £2,000 to its 2020 operating costs (and paid in early 2020).

IPReg secured a place in the 2019 [London Pride parade](#) alongside the BSB, CILEx Regulation, the LSB and the SRA. This presence sought to increase awareness of both the legal regulators and [Legal Choices](#).

We want to gather much more comprehensive diversity information than we have been able to previously and the new CRM system will enable us to do this. Ideally we would start this as a standalone exercise during 2020 but this may not be practical in the midst of the current pandemic. However, in future annual return rounds we will be asking attorneys to complete the diversity information on their accounts. Once we have built up a clearer picture of the diversity profile of registered attorneys we hope to be able to identify additional funding priorities. We anticipate working closely with groups such as IP Inclusive to do this.

## 5.8 Education

At the beginning of the year, CITMA formally shared student feedback on the IPReg-accredited Queen Mary University London (QMUL) Trade Mark Law and Practice Certificate. This strongly suggested that elements of the course content and administration fell below the expected standards in the [IPReg Accreditation Handbook](#). Given the extent of the concerns, the IPReg Board created a dedicated Education Working Group which had ongoing formal correspondence and meetings with QMUL representatives throughout the year, aimed at aiding QMUL to acknowledge and address the issues. This work continues into 2020 and there have been some recent encouraging developments and constructive dialogue.

IPReg re-accredited Nottingham Trent University for both its Professional Certificate in Trade Mark Practice attorney qualifying course and its Basic Litigation Skills Course.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#) were published informed directly by analysis of the enquiries made to IPReg about education, qualification and admission to the register (see item 4.5).

In order to aid transparency of the accreditation process, the Education Working Group agreed that IPReg would publish all accreditation assessment reports, findings and recommendations, along with the implementation plans and progress reports (the 2020 accreditation assessment of Brunel University will be the first to be published).

In 2020, the programme of the Education Working Group continues to build on this work, introducing annual reporting requirements on accredited bodies and [consulting](#) on an accreditation withdrawal procedure.

## 5.9 Promotion of IPReg and its regulatory approach

The Board continued to network with individuals in other organisations involved in IP so that a wider audience understands IPReg’s purpose and its value as an independent specialist regulator. In 2019,

the Chair and Chief Executive, together, represented IPReg at 6 events, the Chair an additional 5 events and the Chief Executive another 14, and representatives of the Board attended 9 events, all to promote awareness of IPReg and its regulatory approach, as well as to help gain market insight. These events included student induction days and multi-stakeholder meetings with business and industry representatives.

#### **5.10 Other – Regulatory Performance**

IPReg became the first legal regulator to be found by the Legal Services Board (LSB), the oversight regulator of the regulated legal services sector, to have met all of the regulatory outcomes, as set out in the [LSB Regulatory Performance Report December 2019](#).

IPReg publishes its performance management datasets which can be found [here](#).

#### **5.11 Other – Price and Service Transparency Guidance**

In May 2019, IPReg issued [Guidance](#) to help regulated firms and attorneys decide what information to provide about their services and costs in order to enable consumers and small businesses to be able to make informed choices about who is the best person or firm to give them advice on intellectual property law.

The Guidance applies specifically to firms (including sole traders) that advise individual consumers and small businesses (of up to 10 employees) on IP-related matters, though all attorneys and firms are welcome to adopt it. To that end, the guidance includes links to a substantial amount of research which shows that providing better information about price and services is likely to have commercial advantages for law firms.

#### **5.12 Other – International Conference of Legal Regulators**

IPReg attended, for the first time, the International Conference of Legal Regulators, held in Edinburgh in September 2019.