

Patent Registration in Pakistan

A Practical Guide to Filing a Patent Application with
IPO-Pakistan

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Important legal note:

This guide is written for general information and client education. Patent strategy depends on the invention, ownership history, prior disclosure, international filing plans, and the current practice of IPO-Pakistan. Before filing, obtain tailored advice from a qualified patent lawyer or registered patent agent.

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1. What Is Patent Registration in Pakistan?

Patent registration is the legal process through which an inventor or rightful applicant asks the Patent Office of Pakistan, working under the Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan), to grant exclusive rights over a new and useful invention.

A patent does not protect an idea in the abstract. It protects a technical invention that is properly disclosed in a patent specification and claimed with legal precision. A patent may relate to a product, a process, an apparatus, a composition, a machine, a technical improvement, or another patentable technical solution.

Simple explanation:

A patent is a legal right to stop others from commercially using your protected invention in Pakistan without permission. In return, you must disclose the invention clearly enough for a skilled person to understand and perform it.

Main Patent Laws in Pakistan

Patents Ordinance, 2000 - the principal law governing patentability, filing, examination, grant, rights, renewal, revocation and enforcement of patents in Pakistan.

Patents Rules, 2003 - the procedural rules dealing with forms, fees, document format, specifications, drawings, advertisement, opposition, sealing, renewal and related patent-office practice.

IPO-Pakistan and the Patent Office - the administrative framework responsible for patent applications and granted patents in Pakistan.



2. What Is an Invention?

In practical terms, an invention is a technical solution to a technical problem. It may be a new product, a new process, a new apparatus, or a useful technical improvement of an existing product or process.

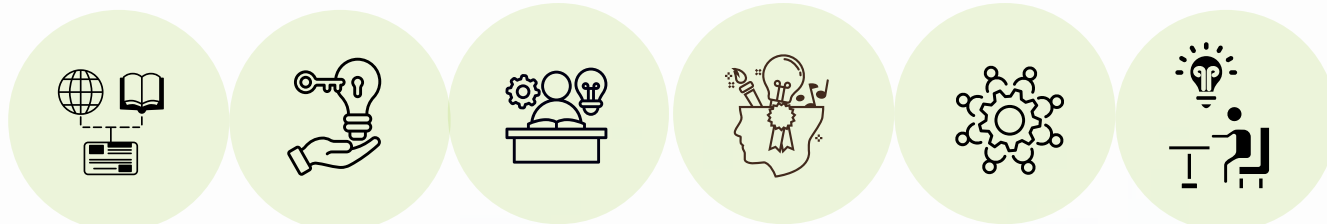
To qualify for patent protection in Pakistan, the invention must satisfy the legal tests of novelty, inventive step and industrial application. These tests should be assessed before filing through a professional patent search and legal review.

3. Patentability Requirements in Pakistan

Requirement	Meaning in plain language
Novelty	The invention must be new. It should not already form part of the state of the art before the filing date or priority date.
Inventive step	The invention must not be obvious to a person skilled in the relevant technical field, considering what was already known.
Industrial application	The invention must be capable of being manufactured or otherwise used in industry or a practical technical field.
Clear disclosure	The specification must describe the invention clearly and completely enough for a skilled person to perform it.
Proper claims	The claims must clearly define the legal scope of protection and be fairly based on the disclosure in the specification.

Patent search before filing:

Before investing in drafting and filing, applicants should search patent databases, scientific publications, product literature, technical manuals and market disclosures to identify prior art that may affect novelty or inventive step.



4. What Cannot Be Patented in Pakistan?

Not every useful idea qualifies for a patent. Pakistani law excludes certain subject matter from being treated as an invention and also prevents patents for certain categories even if they are technical. Common exclusions include:

- A discovery, scientific theory or mathematical method.
- A literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work, or another purely aesthetic creation.
- A scheme, rule or method for performing a mental act, playing a game or doing business.
- The presentation of information.
- Substances that exist in nature, or that are isolated from nature as such.
- Inventions whose commercial exploitation must be prevented to protect public order, morality, life, health or the environment.
- Plants and animals other than micro-organisms, and essentially biological processes for producing plants or animals, subject to statutory wording.
- Diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical methods for treating humans or animals.
- A new or subsequent use of a known product or process.
- A mere change in physical appearance of a chemical product where the chemical formula or manufacturing process remains the same, unless the statutory patentability criteria are satisfied.

Important:

Software, business methods, medical methods, biological material and chemical/pharmaceutical inventions require careful legal analysis before filing because the outcome depends on the way the invention is claimed and described.

5. File First - Publish Later

The safest rule for inventors is simple: file the patent application before making the invention public. A public disclosure can destroy novelty and may prevent a valid patent from being granted.

Public disclosure may include journal articles, conference papers, theses, posters, lectures, investor presentations without confidentiality, product launches, exhibitions, website posts, user manuals, demonstrations, sales, public testing, YouTube videos, pitch decks circulated without restriction, or any other disclosure that makes the invention available to the public.

Confidentiality tip:

Before discussing the invention with manufacturers, investors, consultants, universities, vendors or potential partners, use a properly drafted non-disclosure agreement (NDA). Do not rely only on verbal assurances.

6. Who Can Apply for a Patent in Pakistan?

A patent application may be filed by the true and first inventor, by an assignee or successor-in-interest, or by the legal representative of a deceased person who was entitled to apply. Where the applicant is not the inventor, the legal chain of title should be documented carefully.

Employee Inventions

Where an invention is made by an employee during employment, ownership can depend on the employment contract and the facts. The Patents Ordinance contains special rules for employee inventions. Employers, startups and universities should use written IP assignment clauses, invention disclosure policies and founder/employee IP agreements to avoid disputes.

7. Types of Patent Applications in Pakistan

Type	When used	Key point
Ordinary application	Where the applicant files directly in Pakistan without claiming foreign priority.	May be filed with a complete or provisional specification, subject to legal requirements.
Provisional specification	Where the invention is developed enough to disclose but final claims may need further drafting.	A complete specification must be filed within 12 months; otherwise the application is deemed abandoned.
Complete specification	Where the invention is ready for full filing, examination and claims.	Must contain full description, claims and abstract, and may include drawings where necessary.
Convention application	Where the applicant claims priority from an earlier application in a Convention country.	Usually requires filing in Pakistan within 12 months of the earliest priority application and must be accompanied by a complete specification.
Divisional application	Where an application contains more than one invention or needs division before acceptance.	The divisional application must not go beyond the disclosure of the first application.
Patent of addition	Where the invention is an improvement or modification of a main invention.	Used in relation to an existing main patent/application, subject to statutory requirements.

PCT Status - Important for International Filing Strategy

As of this guide date, Pakistan should not be treated as a Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) national-phase jurisdiction. International applicants should verify the current status before relying on any PCT route, and should normally plan a direct Pakistan filing or Convention priority filing where protection in Pakistan is required. Because treaty status can change, always confirm before finalizing an international patent filing strategy.

8. Step-by-Step Patent Registration Process in Pakistan

Step 1 - Initial invention review: Identify the technical problem, the technical solution, the commercial product or process, the inventors, and the ownership chain. Decide whether the invention is suitable for patent filing or whether trade-secret protection is more appropriate.

Step 2 - Confidentiality and disclosure control: Stop public disclosure until filing. Use NDAs with investors, developers, manufacturers, consultants and collaborators. Record dates of conception, testing and disclosure.

Step 3 - Patentability and prior-art search: Search Pakistani and international patent databases, scientific papers, product manuals, online publications and market materials. The purpose is to assess novelty, inventive step and drafting risk.

Step 4 - Select the correct filing route: Choose ordinary, provisional, complete, Convention, divisional or patent-of-addition filing depending on the invention status and international priority position.

Step 5 - Prepare ownership documents: Collect inventor details, applicant details, assignment documents, board authorization where the applicant is a company, address for service in Pakistan, and power/authorization to agent if filing through counsel.

Step 6 - Draft the patent specification: Prepare the title, abstract, field, background, detailed description, examples or embodiments, claims and drawings. The claims should be drafted by a patent professional because they define the legal monopoly.

Step 7 - File with the Patent Office/IPO-Pakistan: File the prescribed forms, specification, drawings where required, priority documents where applicable, authorization to agent where applicable, and prescribed official fee.

Step 8 - Formal review and examination: The Controller refers complete specifications for examination. The examiner reviews novelty, inventive step, disclosure, claims, drawings and compliance with the Ordinance and Rules.

Step 9 - Respond to examination objections: If the Patent Office issues objections or an examination report, respond with legal and technical arguments and amendments where appropriate. Missing deadlines can lead to refusal or abandonment.

Step 10 - Acceptance and Gazette advertisement: If the application is found allowable, the complete specification is accepted and the acceptance is advertised in the Official Gazette. The file then becomes open to public inspection.

Step 11 - Opposition period: Any person may oppose the grant within the statutory opposition period. If opposed, the applicant must file a counterstatement and evidence as required, and the matter may proceed to hearing.

Step 12 - Sealing and grant: If no opposition succeeds and the statutory requirements are completed, the applicant requests sealing of the patent within the prescribed time. Once sealed, the patent is granted and entered in the Register.

Step 13 - Renewal and enforcement: Maintain the patent by paying renewal fees. Once granted and sealed, the patentee may take legal action against infringement, subject to the Ordinance and case-specific advice.

9. Documents Usually Required for Filing

Exact documents depend on the application type, applicant type and priority position. A typical filing package may include:

- **Prescribed patent application form, such as ordinary or Convention application form depending on the case.**
- **Provisional specification or complete specification, as applicable.**
- **Abstract and claims for a complete specification.**
- **Drawings, flowcharts, diagrams, chemical structures, sequence listings or technical figures where needed.**
- **Inventor and applicant details, including full name, address and nationality.**
- **Assignment deed, employment/IP assignment or proof of right where the applicant is not the inventor.**
- **Authorization to patent agent or legal representative, if applicable.**
- **Priority document and certified foreign filing details for Convention applications, where applicable.**
- **Official filing fee and any additional page/claim fees under the current IPO fee schedule.**
- **Address for service in Pakistan.**

Fees: Official fees may change. Confirm the current IPO-Pakistan fee schedule before filing. For professional work, also budget for patent search, drafting, drawings, filing, office-action responses, hearings, renewals and enforcement advice.

10. How to Draft a Complete Patent Specification

A complete patent specification is the most important document in the patent application. It should disclose the invention clearly and support the claims. Poor drafting can make a patent narrow, easy to design around, or vulnerable to objection and revocation.

Title of the Invention

Use a clear technical title. Avoid a title that is too broad, too narrow, misleading or marketing-based. A title should indicate the subject matter without revealing unnecessary commercial branding.

Abstract

Summarize the technical field, the technical problem, the gist of the solution and the principal use of the invention. The abstract is for technical information and should not be used to define claim scope.

Field of the Invention

Explain the technical area to which the invention relates. Example: "This invention relates to solar-powered irrigation systems and, more particularly, to an automated control unit for variable water distribution."

Background / Prior Art

Explain the existing problem and shortcomings of known solutions. Do not over-admit prior art. Avoid language that unnecessarily limits the invention or concedes that key features are already known.

Summary of the Invention

Give a concise overview of the technical solution. This section should align with the independent claims but should avoid limiting phrases unless intentional.

Brief Description of Drawings

List each drawing figure and identify what it shows. For example: "Figure 1 is a schematic view of an embodiment of the device."

Detailed Description / Embodiments

Describe the invention in enough detail for a skilled person to perform it. Use terms consistently. Include variations, alternatives, materials, operating steps, examples and preferred embodiments.

Claims

Claims are the legal boundaries of the patent. Use at least one independent claim and suitable dependent claims. Claims should be clear, concise, supported by the description and directed to one invention.

Drawings

Use drawings where necessary to explain the invention. Drawings should be black and white line drawings with reference numerals, not marketing images or colored artwork.

Drafting practice: When describing embodiments, prefer wording such as "in one embodiment" or "in some embodiments" rather than repeatedly saying "the invention is". This may preserve flexibility in claim interpretation, depending on the case.

11. Formal Requirements for Specifications and Drawings

The Patents Rules set document-format requirements. The following practical formatting rules should be followed unless the current Patent Office practice requires otherwise:

- **Documents should be in English. If a document is in another language, an English translation verified to the Controller's satisfaction may be required.**
- **Use A4 paper and only one side of the sheet.**
- **The request, description, claims, drawings and abstract should each begin on a new sheet.**
- **Use legible black permanent/indelible ink or printing, with at least 1.5 line spacing for documents other than drawings.**
- **Maintain minimum margins for ordinary application documents: top 2.0 cm, left 2.5 cm, right 2.0 cm and bottom 2.0 cm.**
- **Keep terminology, reference numerals, units and symbols consistent throughout.**
- **Use metric units and Celsius where relevant, or provide metric equivalents.**
- **Every specification, provisional or complete, should begin with the title and be signed and dated at the end by the applicant or agent.**

Drawing Requirements in Practice

- Drawings should be on separate sheets and prepared for reproduction.
- Use durable black lines, sufficiently dense and dark, uniformly thick and well-defined.
- Do not use colors unless specifically permitted or required by the Patent Office.
- Use reference numerals to identify parts. Avoid descriptive wording on the drawings unless the rules/practice permit it.
- Mention the drawings in the specification and explain them in the detailed description.
- Drawing margins should follow the Patents Rules, including top 2.5 cm, left 2.5 cm, right 1.5 cm and bottom 1.0 cm.

12. Examination of Patent Applications

Once a complete specification is filed, the Controller refers the application to an examiner. The examiner reviews the application, specification, claims and drawings, if any, and reports on whether the invention is new, involves an inventive step, and complies with the Ordinance and Rules.

If the examiner finds deficiencies, the applicant is given an opportunity to comply and amend. In practice, responses may include legal arguments, claim amendments, corrected drawings, amended description pages, explanations of prior art, or clarification of ownership and formal documents.

Deadline discipline: Patent prosecution is deadline-driven. Missing a response, extension, sealing or renewal deadline may result in refusal, deemed refusal, abandonment or lapse. Maintain a docketing calendar from the filing date.

Common Examination Objections

- The invention is not new over prior art.
- The invention lacks inventive step or is obvious.
- Claims are unclear, too broad or not supported by the description.
- The application contains more than one invention.
- The specification does not disclose the invention clearly enough.
- Drawings are unclear or not properly referenced.
- The invention falls within excluded subject matter.
- Priority documents or applicant/inventor documents are incomplete.
- Foreign application information or examination results are required by the Controller.

13. Acceptance, Advertisement and Opposition

If the complete specification is accepted, the Controller gives notice to the applicant and advertises the acceptance in the Official Gazette. After advertisement, the application, specification and priority documents, where filed, become open to public inspection.

Any person may oppose the grant within the statutory four-month period from the advertisement of acceptance. The opponent may rely on grounds such as lack of patentability, insufficient disclosure, unclear or overbroad claims, or that the applicant obtained the invention from the opponent.



Opposition Procedure in Simple Terms

14. Opponent files notice of opposition in the prescribed form with grounds and supporting statement.
15. Controller sends the opposition to the applicant.
16. Applicant files a counterstatement if the applicant wants to proceed.
17. Opponent and applicant file evidence according to the prescribed sequence.
18. Hearing may be appointed by the Controller.
19. Controller decides whether the application proceeds, is amended, or is refused.

14. Sealing, Grant and Patent Certificate

After acceptance and completion of the opposition stage, the applicant must request sealing of the patent within the statutory period. If the request is properly made and no successful opposition or refusal remains, the patent is sealed, granted and entered in the Register.

Once granted, the patent gives the owner exclusive rights in Pakistan, subject to statutory limitations, renewal obligations and possible challenges to validity.

15. Patent Rights in Pakistan

For a product patent, the patentee may generally prevent unauthorized third parties from making, using, offering for sale, selling or importing the patented product for those purposes in Pakistan. For a process patent, the patentee may generally prevent unauthorized use of the process and certain acts relating to the product obtained directly by that process.

A patent owner may assign the patent, transfer it by succession, license it to others, and institute court proceedings against infringement, subject to statutory requirements. However, infringement proceedings are not available until the patent has been sealed.

16. Patent Term and Renewal

Under the Patents Ordinance, the term of a patent is twenty years from the filing date. To keep the patent alive, renewal fees must be paid according to the statutory schedule and current Patent Office practice.

Renewal fees become relevant after the fourth year from the date of the patent and for succeeding years during the patent term. Failure to pay renewal fees can cause the patent to lapse, although restoration may be possible in limited circumstances and within the prescribed time if the statutory requirements are met.

17. Special Issues for Foreign Applicants and International Strategy

- Patent rights are territorial. A Pakistani patent protects the invention in Pakistan only.
- Foreign applicants may file in Pakistan through a local patent lawyer or patent agent with an address for service in Pakistan.
- If claiming foreign priority, ensure the Pakistan filing is made within the relevant priority deadline and file certified priority documents as required.
- Pakistan residents should obtain advice before filing first outside Pakistan because the Ordinance contains restrictions on foreign filing by Pakistan residents unless statutory conditions are met.
- Do not assume that a patent granted in the United States, United Kingdom, European Patent Office, China or any other country automatically protects the invention in Pakistan.



18. Practical Pre-Filing Checklist

- Have we identified all inventors correctly?
- Does the applicant own the invention, or do we need an assignment?
- Has the invention been disclosed publicly anywhere in the world?
- Have all collaborators, contractors and employees signed appropriate IP documents?
- Has a prior-art search been conducted?
- Do we need a provisional filing first, or is the invention ready for complete specification?
- Are drawings, diagrams, flowcharts, examples and test data ready?
- Are international priority dates being tracked?
- Is Pakistan filing required before any public launch, fundraising disclosure or exhibition?
- Have official fees and professional fees been budgeted?
- Has the renewal docket been created?

19. Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Publishing too early - filing after a public disclosure may destroy novelty.
- Using a scientific paper as a patent specification - patent drafting requires legal claims and disclosure strategy, not only academic explanation.
- Not searching prior art - a basic novelty problem can often be discovered before filing.
- Weak claims - claims that are too narrow may be commercially useless, while claims that are too broad may be rejected.
- Missing the 12-month complete-specification deadline - a provisional filing must be followed by a complete specification within the legal time.
- Ignoring ownership - inventor, employer, university, founder, contractor and investor rights must be documented.
- Treating foreign patents as Pakistani rights - foreign patents do not automatically protect the invention in Pakistan.
- Missing renewal deadlines - failure to pay renewals may cause lapse.
- Assuming Pakistan is a PCT national-phase country - verify current treaty status before planning international filings.
- Not responding properly to examination objections - technical and legal responses should be prepared carefully.

20. How Our Law Firm Can Assist

Our Intellectual Property team assists inventors, startups, universities, manufacturers, software and technology companies, pharmaceutical and chemical businesses, engineering firms, SMEs and multinational clients with patent protection in Pakistan.

- **Patentability review and prior-art search strategy.**
- **Confidentiality advice and NDA drafting before disclosure.**
- **Patent drafting, including claims, specification and drawings coordination.**
- **Filing patent applications before IPO-Pakistan and the Patent Office.**
- **Convention priority and international filing coordination.**
- **Responses to examination reports and Patent Office objections.**
- **Opposition, hearings, amendments and prosecution strategy.**
- **Patent renewals, assignments, licensing and due diligence.**
- **Patent infringement notices, enforcement strategy and litigation support.**

Frequently Asked Questions - Patent Registration in Pakistan

How long does a patent last in Pakistan?

The statutory term is twenty years from the filing date, subject to payment of renewal fees and continued validity.

Can I patent only an idea?

No. A patent protects a technical invention that is properly disclosed and claimed. A general business idea, concept or plan is usually not enough.

Can I disclose my invention to investors before filing?

You should file first or use a strong confidentiality agreement before disclosure. Even third-party disclosure can create novelty problems.

What is a provisional specification?

It is an initial filing that can secure a filing date while the invention is still being developed. A complete specification must be filed within 12 months or the application is deemed abandoned.

Do I need drawings?

Drawings are required where they are necessary to describe the invention, especially for mechanical, electrical, device, apparatus or process-flow inventions.

Can foreign applicants file patents in Pakistan?

Yes. Foreign applicants can seek patent protection in Pakistan, normally through local counsel or a patent agent and with an address for service in Pakistan.

Is Pakistan a PCT national-phase country?

Do not assume PCT national-phase entry is available for Pakistan. As of this guide date, applicants should verify current treaty status and usually plan direct national or Convention filing for Pakistan.

Can I enforce a pending patent application?

The Ordinance provides certain privileges after acceptance, but infringement proceedings are not available until the patent is sealed.

What happens if someone opposes my patent?

The matter proceeds before the Controller. The applicant may need to file a counterstatement, evidence and legal submissions, and attend a hearing.

Should I file a patent or keep the invention as a trade secret?

That depends on whether the invention can be reverse engineered, how long secrecy can be maintained, the commercial value, and whether disclosure through patent filing is strategically beneficial.

Need help filing a patent in Pakistan?

Contact [Your Law Firm Name] for patentability assessment, patent drafting, IPO-Pakistan filing, office-action responses, patent renewals and enforcement advice. Replace this line with your phone number, email, address and website link before publication.

Source References Used for This Guide

This guide is based on the Pakistani patent-law framework and public legal sources, including:

- Patents Ordinance, 2000 (as amended), including provisions on patentability, novelty, application, specification, examination, opposition, grant, patent rights and term.
- Patents Rules, 2003, including rules on forms, fees, document format, specifications, abstracts, drawings, advertisement, opposition, sealing and renewals.
- WIPO Lex legal texts and treaty information for Pakistan, including Paris Convention status and PCT contracting-state information.

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