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Central Reexamination Unit

The Central Reexamination Unit (CRU) oversees the examination and handling of all post-grant patent proceedings, including ex parte reexaminations, supplemental examinations, and reissue applications. Ex parte reexamination is a process whereby the patent owner or a third party requester can have an issued patent reexamined by a Patent Reexamination Specialist to verify that the claimed subject matter is patentable in view of prior art submitted with the request for reexamination.

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The CRU is staffed with senior primary patent examiners and supervisory patent examiners having a wide range of technical expertise and advanced patent legal knowledge. Effective September 16, 2012, with the passage of the America Invents Act (AIA), a post grant proceeding, called Supplemental Examination, was established which provides patent owners a new process to request supplemental examination of an issued patent to "consider, reconsider, or correct information" believed to be relevant to the patent. In addition, while the passage of AIA eliminated the ability for requesters to file new inter partes reexaminations, the CRU continues to oversee the prosecution of those remaining inter partes reexamination proceedings still pending before the Office.

In 2014, the Office transferred the responsibility and oversight for all reissue applications to the CRU, providing a consistent Office practice with respect to the interpretation of 35 U.S.C. § 251. The CRU has expanded greatly in both size and duties. The division and personnel continue to exercise the ability to rapidly adapt to changes in patent law, as well as changes in the general patent practice landscape.

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