Questionnaire on Special Topic (Grace Period)

The grace period reconciles an inventor's need to disclose an invention before filing with the requirements for patentability. It serves to protect inventors and promote innovation through early information sharing. At the same time, balancing this protection with predictability and legal certainty for third parties remains a common challenge across jurisdictions.

Grace period rules, such as availability, duration, eligible disclosures, treatment of third-party disclosures, and procedural requirements, differ significantly across countries and regions. A pre-filing disclosure that is permissible in one country may constitute a loss of novelty in another, potentially causing serious disadvantage. An accurate understanding of each jurisdiction's rules and their practical operation is therefore essential.

The APAA Patent Committee has adopted the grace period as this year's Special Topic. The objectives are to compare and analyze each country's system, deepen understanding of the differences among them, and contribute to their improvement. To this end, the Committee is conducting this questionnaire with the cooperation of each regional group.

Please answer the following questions regarding the grace period as defined below.

(Definition)
A grace period refers to a specified period preceding the filing or priority date of a patent application during which certain disclosures of an invention made within that period are disregarded when determining novelty, etc. of the invention claimed in the patent application.

A. Current System

I. Availability of a Grace Period

1) Is a grace period available for patent applications in your country or jurisdiction?
☒ Yes
□ No

Article 60.3 and 60.4 of the Vietnamese IP Law provide statutory exceptions to novelty for qualifying pre-filing disclosures.

Article 60. Novelty of inventions

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3. An invention shall not be considered to have lost its novelty if it is publicly disclosed by a person having the right to registration specified in Article 86 of this Law, or by a person who obtains information about the invention directly or indirectly from such person, provided that the patent application is filed in Vietnam within twelve months from the date of disclosure.

4. The provision of Clause 3 of this Article shall also apply to an invention disclosed in an industrial property registration application or an industrial property protection title published by the state management authority for industrial property where such publication is contrary to law or the application was filed by a person who did not have the right to registration.

Article 61. Inventive step of inventions

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2. A technical solution constituting an invention disclosed in accordance with Clauses 3 and 4 of Article 60 of this Law shall not be used as a basis for assessing the inventive step of that invention.

II. Legal basis of the Grace Period

1) What is the underlying legal rationale of the Grace Period in your jurisdiction? Please select the option that best describes its primary characterization:

□ Broad protection for inventors (acting as a general safety net against pre-filing disclosures, e.g., the U.S.).
☒ Statutory relief as an exception to lack of novelty (saving the inventor's own disclosures under specific procedural requirements, e.g., Japan).
□ Ensuring legal certainty for third parties (allowing exceptions to the novelty requirement only in strictly limited circumstances, e.g., Europe).
□ Standardization with foreign jurisdictions.
□ Other (please specify: _____).

III. Duration

1) How long is the grace period? (Multiple answers permitted.)
□ 6 months
☒ 1 year
□ Other (Please specify the exact period.)

(Where multiple grace periods exist, please indicate the applicable period for each type of act listed in Section IV below.)

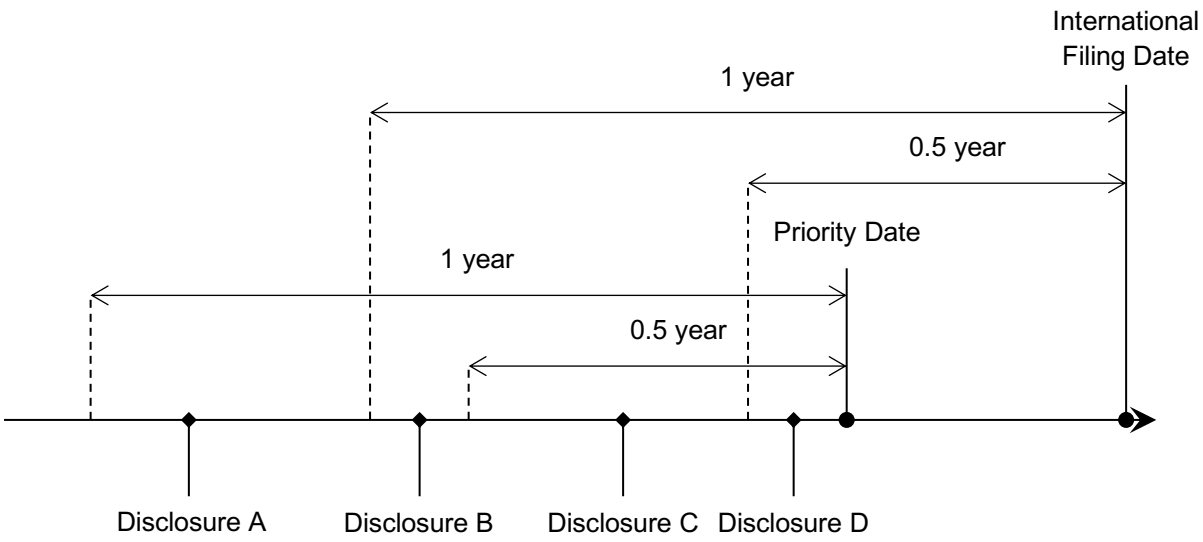
2) Assume that a national phase application is derived from an international application claiming priority from a foreign patent application or utility model application.

In the case of examination of such a national phase application, which of the disclosures made at time points A to D in the figure below would be excluded from prior art for determining novelty and the like? In this connection, the disclosure is eligible for the grace period in your country, and if any procedure is required for excluding such disclosures, such procedure shall be deemed to have been duly carried out.

(Multiple answers permitted.)

- □ Disclosure A
- ☒ Disclosure B
- ☒ Disclosure C
- ☒ Disclosure D
- □ Additional conditions are required (please explain)
- □ All disclosures are considered during examination

Articles 60.3, 91 and 108 of the IP Law; PCT Article 11(3) provides that a qualifying international application has the effect of a regular national application in each designated State as of its international filing date.



3)In the above question (2), if the application forming the basis of the priority claim were a patent application or utility model application filed in your country, which of the disclosures would be excluded from prior art for determining novelty and the like?

(Multiple answers permitted.)

☐ Disclosure A
☒ Disclosure B
☒ Disclosure C
☒ Disclosure D
□ Additional conditions are required (please explain)
□ All disclosures are considered during examination

IV. Disclosures Eligible for Grace Period

1) Does the grace period apply irrespective of the manner of disclosure of the invention?

☒ Yes
□ No

Article 60.3 is not limited to a closed list of media or forms of disclosure. Eligibility turns principally on the source/circumstances of disclosure and the statutory time limit.

2) If the form or manner of disclosure is relevant, which of the following are covered? (Multiple answers permitted.)

2-1) Disclosure by a person having the right to obtain a patent
☒ Publication in academic journals or conference proceedings
☒ Publication in books or pamphlets
☒ Publication on websites containing academic papers or conference abstracts
☒ Publication on the applicant's own website
☒ Publication on e-commerce websites
☒ Publication on social networking services (SNS)
☒ Presentation at meetings (e.g., academic conferences, seminars, presentations for investors or customers)
☒ Disclosure through public trial or testing

☒ Disclosure at an official or officially recognized international exhibition (Art. 11 of the Paris Convention)

☒ Disclosure through public display (e.g., other exhibitions, trade fairs, expositions)
☒ Disclosure through advertising, sale or distribution of products embodying the invention
☒ Disclosure through press conferences or appearances on live television or radio programs

2-2) Disclosure by Patent Office

☒ Publication in the laid-open patent publication or patent gazette of the applicant's own patent application.

Article 60.4 separately addresses specified Patent Office/publication situations, including publication contrary to law and an application filed by a person who had no right to file. Ordinary lawful publication of the applicant's own application should not automatically be treated as a grace-period event.

2-3) If a third party acting with the authority of and at the request of a person having the right to obtain a patent makes any of the disclosures listed in 2-1 and/or 2-2 above, is the grace period applicable?

☒ Yes
□ No

2-4) If a third party makes any of the disclosures listed in 2-1 and/or 2-2 above against the will or without the authority of the person having the right to obtain a patent, is the grace period applicable?

☒ Yes
□ No

Yes, where the third party obtained the relevant invention information directly or indirectly from the person having the right to file.

V. Procedures

1) Are any procedures required in order for the grace period to apply?

☒ Yes, to enjoy all of the available forms of grace period
□ Yes, to enjoy some but not all of the available forms of grace period
□ No

2) If any procedures are required, is it necessary to submit documents proving the fact of disclosure?

☒ Yes
□ No

Article 20 of Circular No. 10/2026/TT-BKHCN provides that: "2. In order not to be considered as lacking novelty in cases where the invention has been disclosed under the exceptions prescribed in Clauses 3 and 4 Article 60 of the Law on Intellectual Property, the applicant shall submit relevant documents relating to such disclosure to prove eligibility for the exception. Such documents must be submitted with the application or supplemented in accordance with regulations on amendment and supplementation of applications.

3) If yes, what is required and for which forms of grace period?

☒ A written statement/declaration indicating that the grace period requirements are satisfied

☒ Evidence specifically showing that the requirements for application are satisfied

4) By when must the statement/declaration, and/or evidence referred to in 3) above be submitted?

☒ At the time of filing the patent application

☒ Other (Please specify the deadline.) within 02 months from the date of request.

Section 22.2.4 of Guideline for examination of the IPVN provides that: "In order to enjoy grace period, the applicant should submit relevant documents to prove the date on which the event occurs and the contents of the disclosure. If such documents have not been submitted upon filing, the Examiner shall request the applicant submit the documents within 2 months from the date of request. Where the applicant fails to submit the requested documents, the application cannot enjoy the grace period of novelty as provided for in Item 3, Article 60 of Law on IP."

VI. Other

1) In what circumstances can a grace period be applied based on the relationship between the prior disclosure and the invention under examination?

□ when the disclosed invention and the invention under examination are completely identical

□ when the disclosed invention and the invention under examination are substantially identical

☒ Other (Please briefly explain.)

Vietnamese law does not expressly formulate the grace-period test as "completely identical" or "substantially identical." Section 22.2.4 of the Patent Examination Guidelines merely states that, where the subject matter of an invention is disclosed under any of the prescribed circumstances within 12 months before the filing date, the disclosed subject matter is not considered part of the prior art. The effect of the exception should be assessed by reference to the subject matter actually disclosed and the claims under examination. Qualifying disclosures under Article 60.3/60.4 are disregarded for novelty and, under Article 61.2, are also excluded from inventive-step assessment.

2) Where “Declaration as to Non-Prejudicial Disclosures or Exceptions to Lack of Novelty” has been made in a PCT application and the application enters the national phase in your country, can the applicant benefit from the grace period without any additional procedure?

□ Yes
☒ No

A PCT declaration does not dispense with Vietnamese evidentiary requirements. The Vietnamese Office may require supporting evidence establishing the circumstances of the disclosure, if only a “Declaration as to Non-Prejudicial Disclosures or Exceptions to Lack of Novelty” has been made in the PCT application.

3) If an international application enters the national phase in your country without “Declaration as to Non-Prejudicial Disclosures or Exceptions to Lack of Novelty” having been made in the PCT application, can the applicant still benefit from a grace period?

☒ Yes, for all forms of available grace period
□ Yes, for some forms of available grace period
□ No

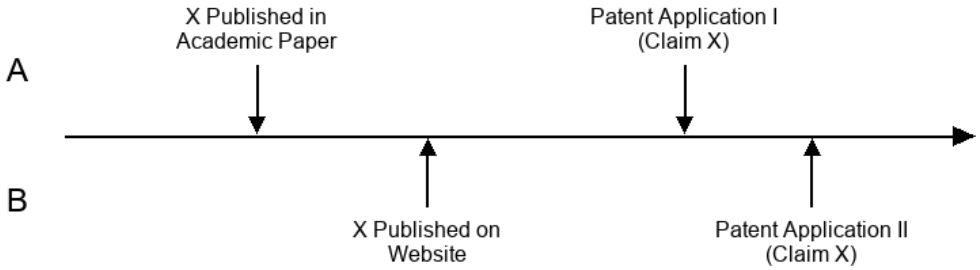
The PCT declaration is not a substantive condition under Article 60.3/60.4. The applicant may establish eligibility directly before the Vietnamese Office, subject to the applicable evidence/procedure requirements.

B. Hypothetical Cases

Please answer the following hypothetical cases on the assumption that all procedures required to obtain the benefit of the grace period have been duly completed.

<u>Hypothetical 1</u>

1) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper.
Inventor B independently invented X and published X on a website between the publication of the academic paper and the filing of Patent Application I. Inventor B filed Patent Application II within the applicable grace period after Inventor B’s publication and after the filing of Patent Application I.



Will either patent application be rejected?

1-1) Will Patent Application I be rejected?

☒ Yes

□ No

B independently disclosed X before Application I was filed. Because B's disclosure was independently created and was not derived from A, it is not protected by A's grace period and may destroy novelty of claim X.

1-2) Will Patent Application II be rejected?

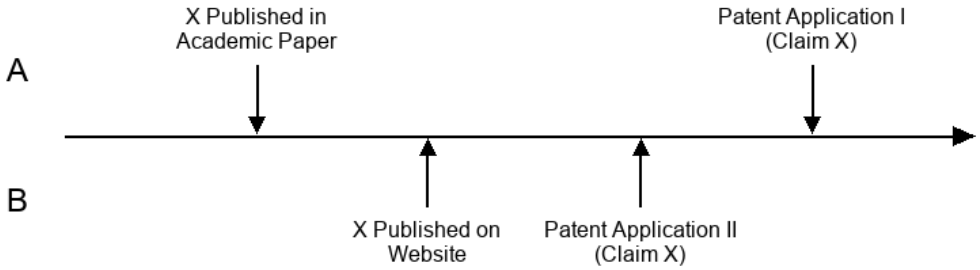
☒ Yes

□ No

A's earlier academic publication of X is an independent prior disclosure against B. B cannot use B's own grace period to neutralize A's independent earlier publication.

Hypothetical 2

2) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper. After the publication of Inventor A's academic paper, Inventor B independently invented X, published X on a website before the filing of Patent Application I, and filed Patent Application II within the applicable grace period from Inventor B's publication and before the filing of Patent Application I.



Will either patent application be rejected?

2-1) Will Patent Application I be rejected?

☒ Yes

□ No

B independently published X before Application I. That disclosure is independent of A and may be used as prior art against A.

2-2) Will Patent Application II be rejected?

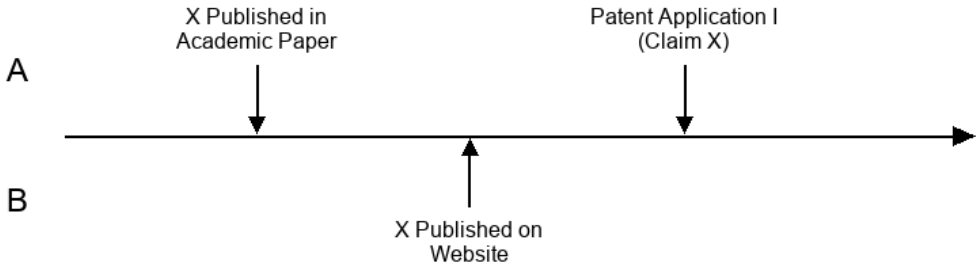
☒ Yes

□ No

A's academic publication predates Application II and is independent of B; it remains prior art against B even though B filed Application II before Application I.

Hypothetical 3

3) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper. Mr. B saw Inventor A's publication, produced X, and published X on a website before the filing of Patent Application I.



3-1) If B's disclosure is regarded as being derived from A's disclosure, will Patent Application I be rejected?

□ Yes
☒ No
□ Other

If B obtained X from A's disclosure, B's re-disclosure is derivative of information originating from the person entitled to file. Assuming the statutory time and evidentiary requirements are met, the disclosure can fall within Article 60.3 and should not prejudice Application I.

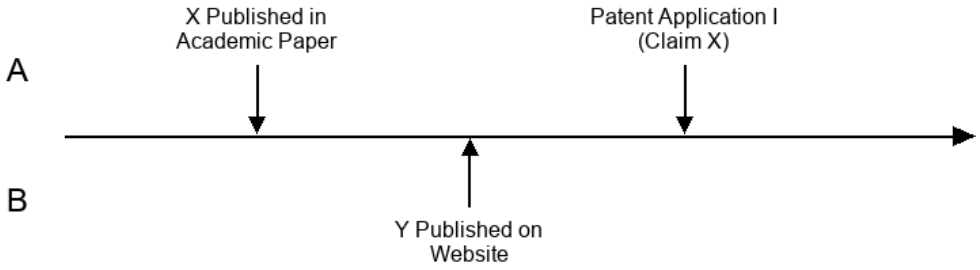
3-2) If B's disclosure is not regarded as being derived from A's disclosure, will Patent Application I be rejected?

☒ Yes
□ No
□ Other

An independent third-party disclosure of X before Application I is not protected by A's grace period and may destroy novelty.

Hypothetical 4

4) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper. Mr. B saw Inventor A's publication, developed Y as an improvement of X, and published Y on a website before the filing of Patent Application I. Note that Y is substantially different from X, but does not have sufficient differences from X to establish an inventive step over X.



4-1) If B's disclosure of invention Y is regarded as being derived from A's disclosure of invention X, will Patent Application I be rejected?

□ Yes
☒ No
□ Other

4-2) If B's disclosure of invention Y is not regarded as being derived from A's disclosure of invention X, will Patent Application I be rejected?

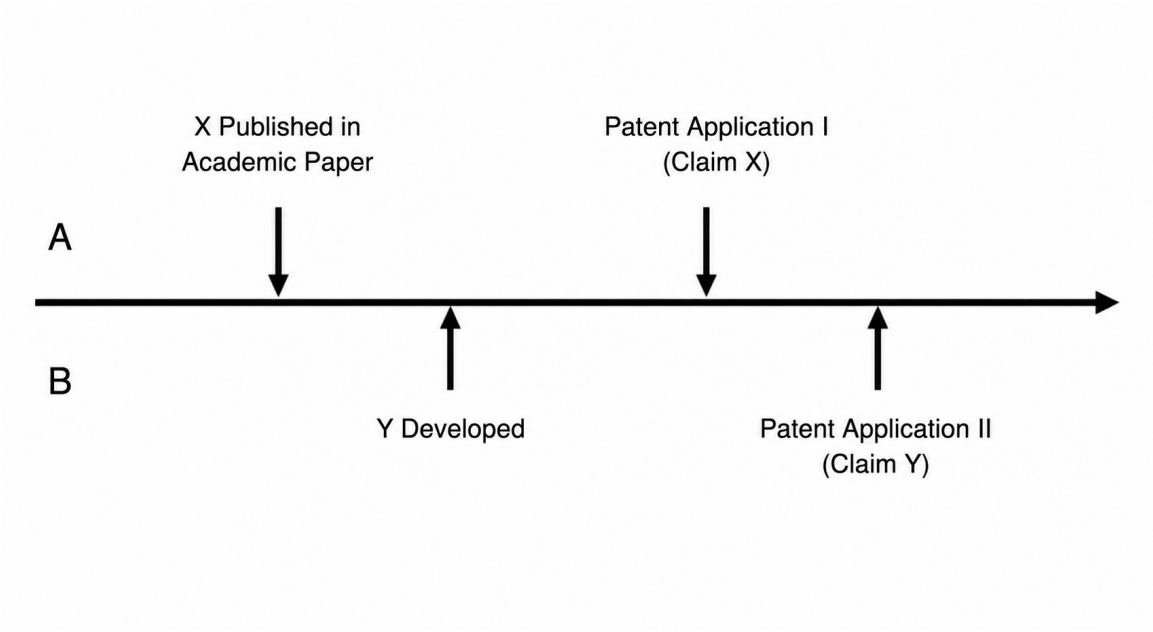
□ Yes
□ No
☒ Other

If B's disclosure of Y is not regarded as being derived from A's disclosure of X, it may constitute prior art against Patent Application I. However, whether Application I will be rejected depends on whether Y destroys the novelty or inventive step of X. The fact that Y is an improvement of X and lacks inventive step over X does not necessarily mean that X lacks novelty or inventive step over Y.

Hypothetical 5

5) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper. Mr. B saw Inventor A's publication, developed Y as an improvement of X, and filed Patent Application II for Y after the filing of Patent Application I. Note that Y is substantially different from X, but does not have sufficient differences from X to establish an inventive step over X.

Y was not disclosed before the filing of Patent Application II.



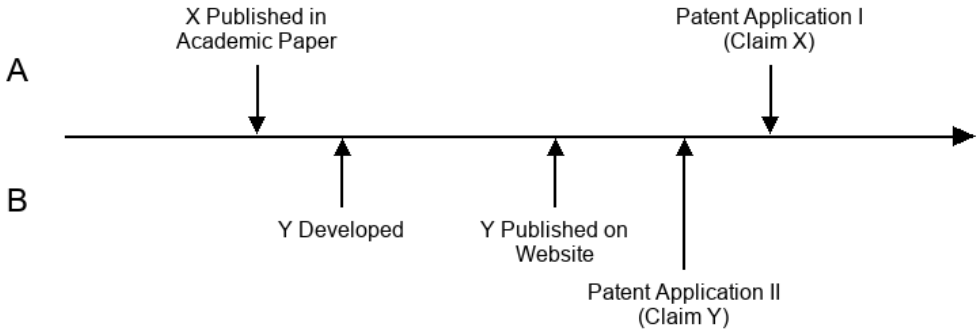
Will either patent application be rejected?

5-1) Will Patent Application I be rejected?
□ Yes
☒ No
□ Other

5-2) Will Patent Application II be rejected?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Other

Hypothetical 6

6) Inventor A invented X, published an academic paper disclosing X, and filed Patent Application I within the applicable grace period after the publication of the academic paper. After the publication of Inventor A's academic paper, Mr. B saw Inventor A's publication, developed Y as an improvement of X, published Y on a website, and filed Patent Application II for Y before the filing of Patent Application I. Note that Y is substantially different from X, but does not have sufficient differences from X to establish an inventive step over X.



Will either patent application be rejected?

6-1) Will Patent Application I be rejected?
□ Yes
□ No
☒ Other

A's own disclosure of X qualifies for the grace period under Article 60.3 of the IP Law of Vietnam. However, the effect of B's disclosure of Y depends on whether and to what extent the disclosed subject matter is regarded as being derived from A's disclosure of X.

Application I would not be rejected on the basis of B's disclosure if the relevant disclosed subject matter qualifies for the grace period and any remaining non-qualifying subject matter does not affect the novelty or inventive step of X.

Conversely, Application I would be rejected if B's non-qualifying disclosure constitutes prior art that destroys the novelty or inventive step of X. In this regard, the fact that Y lacks inventive step over X does not necessarily mean that X lacks novelty or inventive step over Y.

6-2) Will Patent Application II be rejected?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Other

C. Opinion Survey for the Preparation of an APAA Resolution on Grace Periods

Please answer the following questions based on your views and experience as a patent practitioner in your jurisdiction. The results of this survey will be used as a basis for discussing and formulating an APAA Resolution on grace period systems.

1) Do you think it is appropriate to allow a patent to be obtained under the grace period system for an invention that was disclosed by the inventor before filing, or disclosed against the inventor's will before filing?

☒ Yes
□ No
□ Conditionally Yes
(Please provide reasons.)

2) Are you satisfied with the current grace period system as it applies to patents in your jurisdiction?

☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot say either way
(Please provide reasons if any.)

3) Do you think that the grace period system currently maintains an appropriate balance between the rights of applicants and the interests of the public?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot determine

4)Do you think that the grace period system promotes the early use of technical information by others in the same field by allowing inventors to disclose research results before filing a patent application?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot say either way

5) Do you have any concern that differences in grace period systems between jurisdictions may create risks, such as the loss of novelty in foreign patent applications, even where a grace period is available for a domestic application?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Depending on the situation

6) Do you think it is desirable for jurisdictions to adopt common standards regarding the availability of grace period systems, the types of disclosures covered, and the duration of the grace period(s)?

☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot determine
(Please provide reasons.)

7) What types of pre-filing disclosures do you think should be covered by the grace period system?
☒ It is preferable to broadly cover disclosures regardless of the manner of disclosure
□ It is preferable to limit coverage to certain types of disclosures
□ Cannot determine
(Please describe the types of disclosures you consider appropriate, or the criteria for limitation if coverage should be limited.)

8) What duration of grace period do you consider appropriate?
□ 6 months
☒ 12 months
□ More than 12 months
□ Other
(Please provide reasons if any.)

9) Do you think it is necessary to promote consistency in the procedures for securing grace periods across jurisdictions?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot determine
(If applicable, please describe the procedures that you consider should or should not be made consistent, and provide reasons.)

10) Do you think it is desirable to establish a system whereby a single procedure for claiming the benefit of the grace period can have effects in as many countries and jurisdictions as possible?
☒ Yes
□ No
□ Cannot determine
(Please describe any expectations or concerns regarding such a system if any)

11) Do you think it reasonable to require applicants to submit evidence of the circumstances of the disclosure in order to benefit from a grace period?

☒ Yes
□ No
□ Conditionally Yes
(Please describe the procedures you consider appropriate.)

12) In view of International grace period, which approach do you consider the most preferable starting point for measuring the grace period?

The “international grace period” provides a maximum two-year period, consisting of one year under your country’s patent law (e.g., where a one-year grace period applies) and an additional one year through the Paris Convention priority system.

☒ A grace period measured from the earliest priority date
□ A grace period measured from the filing date of the patent application
□ Other (please explain)