

IPONZ International Patent Classification of patents

Current practice:

- Class symbols from the International Patent Classification (IPC) are entered against New Zealand patent records when a provisional specification is filed, when a Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) application enters national phase in New Zealand, and by the patent examiner during the examination of a complete specification.
- Class symbols are not generally amended or added to a patent record after acceptance and publication of the specification.
- Class symbols entered against a national phase patent record at the time of entry into national phase are simply copied from those published by WIPO in the PCT pamphlet. Each class symbol, though it was in force at the time it was applied by the International Searching Authority, may no longer be in force in the latest version of IPC advanced at the time of entry into national phase in New Zealand.
- If a class symbol is added to a patent record during examination or when a provisional application is filed then that symbol is taken from the latest version of IPC advanced level that is in force at that time.
- During examination the New Zealand examiner may add “in force” symbols to the record and may even delete symbols that are either inappropriate for the subject matter of the patent or have been retired from the IPC. Nevertheless, a patent record, even at the time of publication, may include class symbols that have been retired from IPC advanced, and as time goes by more of those symbols may be retired from the IPC.
- To say that a symbol has been retired from the IPC means that the symbol is no longer used in the IPC, though it was obviously an active or “in force” symbol in the IPC before it was retired, and may have been recorded on many patent documents. Symbols that have been retired are not reused with a new definition in later editions of the IPC.

Reclassification:

- To date, at least not since the introduction of IPC4, IPONZ has not performed any reclassifications of NZ patent records. In other words, IPONZ does not presently have an ongoing program to update the classification symbols recorded on patents to be in accordance with the latest version of the IPC.
- Nor has the patent search facility on the IPONZ database been augmented in order to search retired class symbols on the basis of entry of only current or “in force” symbols into the search query.
- Consequently, to do a thorough search using classification symbols, both “in force” IPC class symbols and retired IPC class symbols should be utilised in the search query.
- Appropriate retired IPC symbols and definitions may be found by inspection of older versions of the IPC available on the WIPO IPC website.

Display of classification information on New Zealand patent records:

The Schedule and Edition associated with class symbols displayed on a patent record on the IPONZ website is specified on the basis of the classification system (e.g. IPC) and the last edition of that system in which the symbol was or is in force.

For example, Patent 333718 shows:

Class (51)

Schedule and Edition	Classification
IPC2009.01	G06F19/00
IPC7	G06F159:00; G06F17/60

meaning that symbols G06F159:00 and G06F17/60 were retired by the introduction of IPC 2008.01 and were last in force in IPC7, and symbol G06F19/00 is still in force in IPC 2009.01.

There is no reclassification, symbol G06F19/00 having come into force in IPC6, and applied to patent 333718 sometime after that.

