

Conversation with a Certified Licensing Professional (CLP)

Hugh Spotswood, PhD, PGCert(IP), CLP, Merck KGaA



Hugh Spotswood supports certain franchises within Merck's life science business ("MilliporeSigma" in North America) with the in- and out-licensing of tangible property and intellectual property rights. He works as part of project teams to negotiate and paper license agreements that enable the onboarding of new products, services and technologies or monetize IP and materials developed by Merck KGaA's R&D teams.

Hugh earned the CLP credential in July 2020.

A resident of the United Kingdom, Hugh dedicates some of his spare time to coaching a junior rugby team, a group of 9 year olds that includes the son of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver.

What motivated your pursuit of the CLP credential in 2020?

I earned the CLP certification after 12 years of working in a business development and licensing capacity. My line manager is one of a few individuals at Merck who had already earned the CLP certification so she tipped the balance after I showed interest. That said, in 2019 I completed a degree that qualifies as the foundational patent exams in the UK so I was looking for something to take me on to the next stage. I have also been engaged in negotiations over the past three years with a number of US licensees/licensors, and I was seeking to learn more about aspects of US IP law that could benefit my day-to-day work, such as the America Invents and Bayh Dole Acts.

In your experience, what role does professional certification play in the industry?

The CLP designation provides a standard to follow in the industry. My experience has been that CLP-certified colleagues I have interacted with are on the whole more professional and knowledgeable and provide me with greater confidence that we will get a deal done that works for both parties. The need to maintain the qualification keeps those that have obtained the CLP designation on their toes and has me reviewing what I can do to contribute towards credits.

I would recommend anyone with the requisite experience to pursue the CLP certification. For individuals based in Europe, such as myself, it provides the added value of providing exposure to substantive US IP law. CLP certification has given me the substance to be better at my job, improving my knowledge and increasing my confidence in situations in which I would previously have felt uncomfortable.

How does your employer support the ongoing professional development of its licensing team?

My line manager and employer are massively supportive of personal development. We each maintain a development plan and regularly review with our line managers. The CLP certification represents a significant target to aim for for all licensing professionals. My employer funded the LES preparatory course and funded the cost of the exam.

How did you prepare for the CLP exam?

I participated in a virtual (on account of COVID) preparatory exam review class in April 2020 given by LES via Zoom, which was excellent. I also spent a number of weekends in the run up to the exam learning/revising the corresponding 200+ slide deck received as part of the review course participation.

"CLP CERTIFICATION HAS GIVEN ME THE SUBSTANCE TO BE BETTER AT MY JOB, IMPROVING MY KNOWLEDGE AND INCREASING MY CONFIDENCE IN SITUATIONS IN WHICH I WOULD PREVIOUSLY HAVE FELT UNCOMFORTABLE."