This chapter considers the nature and manner of operation of the patent system. Patents date back to around the 14th century. For the United Kingdom they began as a means to encourage the importation of foreign skills and technology, fell into disrepute as they were used by monarchs to confer monopolies in respect of the sale of well-known objects such as playing cards and eventually from the late seventeenth century settled into their present role of granting temporary monopolies to those who make inventions. The chapter examines the criteria that will be applied in determining whether an invention is eligible for patent protection and the procedures that will required to be followed in order to obtain this. Unlike copyright which applies effectively on a global basis, the patent system has operated on a national basis. A UK patent will be valid and enforceable in the UK but nowhere else. There are international agreements, however, designed to simplify the task of obtaining protection in a range of countries and the operation of these will be considered as well as the treatment of intellectual property within the General Agreement on Trade in Services and the World Trade...
14. Key elements of the patent system

Organisation. Within the European Union, the possible introduction of a unitary patent has been the subject of discussion for many years and appears likely to come to fruition in the near future although the involvement of the UK post Brexit is uncertain.