

***This Circular has been superceded by HMD Circular 4 of 2017.***

**Proprietor's Evidence in Trade Mark Revocations (HMD Circular No. 2/2011, dated 08 April 2011)**

This circular pertains to trade mark revocations on the ground of non-use and the proprietor's obligation to file evidence in defence of his trade mark registration.

Rule 58(3) of the Trade Marks Rules (Cap 332) 2008 Rev Ed requires a proprietor to file evidence of use together with his counter-statement (Form TM 12).

***Mode of Giving Evidence***

Rule 69(1) provides that "evidence shall be given by way of a statutory declaration, unless otherwise provided by the Act or these Rules or directed by the Registrar."

In both the Trade Marks Act and Rules, there are no exceptions given to Rule 69(1) in terms of how evidence is to be given by a proprietor under Rule 58(3). Hence, Rule 69(1) applies to Rule 58(3).

In practice, this means that if a proprietor intends to defend his trade mark registration against revocation for non-use, he needs to file evidence of use by way of statutory declaration together with his counter-statement.

On the other hand, if a proprietor intends to defend his trade mark registration by giving proper reasons for non-use, there is no issue of evidence of use. Hence, he merely needs to give his reasons for non-use in the counter-statement without a statutory declaration.

***Content of Evidence***

At the counter-statement stage, a proprietor is only required to show that he has an arguable case. The evidence does not need to comprise the proprietor's entire defence in relation to use. More detailed evidence, if any, can be filed later in the proceedings.

The requirement in Rule 58(3) for a proprietor to file *prima facie* evidence of use upfront reflects the statutory burden on the proprietor of a registered mark to show what use has been made of it, under Section 105.

As a matter of best practice, the proprietor's *prima facie* evidence should comprise:

- (i) some material showing the mark in use e.g. catalogues, product labels, advertisements
- (ii) some indication of sales e.g. invoices, purchase orders

### ***Grace Period***

The consequence of not filing evidence in accordance with Rule 58(3) is that the application for revocation will be granted under Rule 59(1). This means that the proprietor's registered mark will be revoked.

As the Registrar has accepted counter-statements containing information on the use of the mark without sworn evidence under past practice, there will be a grace period of 6 months from 1 May 2011 to 31 October 2011 for proprietors to adjust to the change set out in this circular.

Where the proprietor's counter-statement is filed during this grace period, if his information on the use of the mark is not filed by way of a statutory declaration, the Registrar will direct the proprietor at the Case Management Conference to remedy this defect in evidence by re-filing it as a statutory declaration and will allow the proceedings to continue. However, if the counter-statement does not already contain any information on the use of the mark, nor proper reasons for non-use, the Registrar will apply Rule 59(1) to grant the application for revocation.

After the grace period, from 1 November 2011 onwards, the Registrar will apply Rule 59(1) to grant the application for revocation if no evidence by way of statutory declaration is filed with the counter-statement.

### ***Evidential Rounds***

After the proprietor's counter-statement and evidence by way of statutory declaration is filed, Rule 59(1) provides that Rules 32 to 40 apply with the necessary modifications to terms of reference.

In effect, this means that the applicant for revocation files his evidence after the counter-statement under Rule 32. This is followed by the proprietor's second set of sworn evidence under Rule 33, and the applicant's evidence in reply, if any, under Rule 34. If the proprietor does not file evidence under Rule 33, Rule 59(2)(d) applies and he is treated as admitting to the facts alleged by the applicant for revocation.

In practice, if the proprietor has already filed evidence of use amounting to his entire defence together with his counter-statement, after the applicant for revocation files his evidence, the proprietor may file a simple statutory declaration to refer to the statutory declaration filed earlier with his counter-statement as his entire evidence in defence. There is no need to adduce all the earlier evidence afresh in such a case. As there is no further evidence for the applicant to reply to in such a case, evidence for the matter will be deemed closed. The matter will move on to the Pre-Hearing Review stage.

On the other hand, if, beyond the evidence of use filed together with his counter-statement, the proprietor has more evidence to adduce after the applicant files his evidence, the usual evidential process in Rules 33 and 34 applies.