

This Circular is superceded by HMG Circular 4 of 2015

Attendance at Opposition / Revocation / Invalidation / Rectification Hearings (HMD Circular No. 5/2011, dated 26 August 2011)

This circular seeks to clarify the application of rule 37 of the Trade Marks Rules (Cap 332, 2008 Rev Ed).

Rule 37 relates to attendance at an opposition hearing. In particular, rule 37(3) provides that any party who intends to appear at the hearing shall file Form TM 13 before the hearing. Rule 59 extends the application of rule 37 to revocation / invalidation / rectification proceedings.

Form TM 13 not filed by one party: Registrar will usually proceed with hearing

If no Form TM 13 is filed on behalf of a party, he may be treated as not desiring to be heard. The Registrar may proceed with the hearing in the absence of that party or may, without proceeding with the hearing, give his decision, dismiss the proceedings or make such other order as he thinks fit (R37(4)). Where Form TM 13 is filed by only one party, the Registrar will, under ordinary circumstances, proceed with the hearing in the absence of the party who did not file Form TM 13.

In practice, if a party has not filed Form TM 13 but appears at the hearing desiring to be heard before the session formally begins, the Registrar will require the party to file Form TM 13 immediately or extract a solicitor's undertaking, where relevant, from the party's agent that Form TM 13 will be filed by the end of the next working day.

Form TM 13 filed but party does not appear: Registrar will usually ascertain party's intention

Where a party does not attend the hearing after filing Form TM 13, the Registrar may proceed with the hearing in the absence of that party or may, without proceeding with the hearing, give her decision, dismiss the proceedings or make such other order as she thinks fit (R37(5)).

In practice, the Registrar will contact the absent party/parties as far as reasonably possible to ascertain his/their intention. Where a party has filed Form TM 13 but fails to turn up at the hearing, the Registrar will be slow to move the matter ahead with the other party who is present without hearing further from the absent party who has filed Form TM 13. Likewise where both parties do not attend the hearing, but Form TM 13 has already been filed by both parties, the Registrar will be slow to strike out the proceedings without verifying their intention. If it is a party's intention to be heard but he cannot be present for legitimate

reasons (e.g. medical reasons), the Registrar will, where reasonable, vacate the hearing and refile it for another day.

Form TM 13 not filed by both parties and both parties do not appear: Registrar will usually strike out the proceedings

Where both parties do not attend the hearing, and Form TM 13 has not been filed by either party, the Registrar will, under ordinary circumstances, strike out the proceedings. The proceedings may, however, be restored on the Registrar's direction (R37(6)).

In practice, where parties do not intend to attend the hearing, they would usually have informed the Registrar in writing before the hearing date. They would also have requested the Registrar to make a decision without their presence at a hearing. In such cases, where the parties' intention is clear, the Registrar will decide on a case by case basis whether to proceed to make a decision without a hearing (if both parties are not present) or dismiss the proceedings under Rule 37(4) or strike out the proceedings under Rule 37(6). Generally, the initiator of an action is expected to attend the hearing to prove his case unless there are exceptional reasons, for example, the responding proprietor in an invalidation action has shown no interest in defending his registration and has not filed any document through the process.

Restoration of proceedings

Where the Registrar has exercised her discretion to strike out the proceedings, a party may apply to restore the proceedings under Rule 37(8). Such an application must be made within 7 days after the Registrar's notice that the proceedings have been struck out.