

# Life Sciences Patent Eligibility: The US and Beyond

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# U.S. Patent Eligibility: Statute



#### 35 U.S.C. §101 – Four Categories of Eligible Subject Matter

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful **process**, **machine**, **manufacture**, **or composition of matter**, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

Judicial exceptions (JE) made by US courts: one cannot claim a law of nature, a natural phenomena, or an abstract idea.

Why: granting a monopoly over the basic tools of scientific and technological work would pre-empt use of these tools in all fields, thereby impeding innovation.

Article I, Section 8, Clause 8 of the constitution empowers the US Congress:

<u>To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts</u>, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries.

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### U.S. Patent Eligibility: SCOTUS



# Prometheus v. Mayo (SCOTUS, March 2012) • The claims do not add enough.

A method of optimizing .. treatment of an immune-mediated gastrointestinal disorder, comprising:

- (a) administering a drug providing 6-thioguanine to a subject; and
- (b) determining the level of 6-thioguanine in the subject,

wherein a level of 6-thioguanine less than about 230 pmol per 8x108 red blood cells indicates a need to increase the amount of the drug and wherein a level of 6-thioguanine greater than about 400 pmol per 8x108 red blood cells indicates a need to decrease the amount of the drug.

- The claims do not add enough to the NL to describe an eligible process.
- administering merely refers to a preexisting audience.
- determining merely a routine activity.
- wherein merely describes the natural law without instructing its application.
- application must be significant, not too preemptive of JE, and include elements beyond the JE that constitute an "inventive concept" that is significant and separate from the NL itself.
- "appending conventional steps, specified at a high level of generality, to laws of nature, natural phenomena, and abstract ideas cannot make those laws, phenomena, and ideas patentable." (WURC)

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#### Alice Corp. v. CLS Bank (SCOTUS, June 2014)

- Confirms that the Mayo test is the test for claims under § 101.
- Analyze steps individually & as ordered combination (*Diehr* claims cannot be deconstructed into their component steps but must be considered as a whole).
- The Mayo/Alice two-step test:
- (1) Is the claim directed to a JE (NP, AI, NL)?
- (2) Does the claim contain an "inventive concept" sufficient to "transform" the claim into a patent-eligible application of the JE?

Dicta *(below)* supports the idea that a **solution to a technical problem** is not a JE, and a claim drawn to such a solution, even if broad, will satisfy the *Alice/Mayo* two-step.

According to SCOTUS, "the claims in *Diehr* were patent eligible because they improved an existing technological process, not because they were implemented on a computer." In contrast, the *Alice* claims did not "improve the functioning of the computer itself" or "effect an improvement in any other technology or technical field."

 $(1)\ method\ for\ exchanging\ financial\ obligations,\ (2)\ computer\ system;\ (3)\ computer\ -readable\ medium$ 

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