

**HKU SPACE Submission on Legal Education and Training
to the Legislative Council Panel on
Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

Re: Final Report of the Consultants on the Comprehensive Review of Legal Education and Training in Hong Kong (commissioned by the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training).

HKU SPACE wish to provide Members with further information concerning Recommendation 4.5 in the Final Report of the Consultants on the Comprehensive Review of Legal Education and Training ("the Final Report") which states as follows:

We invite legal executive training providers to investigate with the law schools and the profession, the feasibility of developing a more advanced legal executive qualification, leading to direct entry to the PCLL, and would encourage the Law Schools to be receptive to any initiatives in that respect.

Legal Executives play a key role in our legal system, and their training is closely regulated through detailed Benchmarks for Legal Executive Courses set out by the Law Society of Hong Kong. The Judiciary already recognise the qualifications of Legal Executives in Practice Directions 14.1 and 27, which confer limited rights of audience on Legal Executives with at least three years' legal work experience. It is therefore highly anomalous that Legal Executives in Hong Kong are currently denied any similar credit for their considerable legal work experience when they seek to enter the P.C.L.L. to qualify as solicitors or barristers.

As the Final Report notes, this is an area where Hong Kong has fallen behind other major common law jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom and North America, which now provide pathways into their legal profession for legal executives (sometimes also known as paralegals). In the United Kingdom, for instance, Legal Executives have even been appointed to serve as Judges.

We therefore warmly welcome the Final Report's recommendation that Hong Kong seek to catch up with developments in other common law jurisdictions in this area. As the largest Legal Executive training provider in Hong Kong, HKU SPACE confirms that we would be happy to work with the law schools and legal profession to come up with a mutually acceptable advanced Legal Executive qualification leading to direct entry to the P.C.L.L. Subject to consultation, we provisionally suggest this mirror the requirements already set out by the Judiciary in Practice Directions 14.1 and 27, with Legal Executives required to accumulate at least three years' legal work experience before they become eligible to apply to the P.C.L.L.

It is important to stress the numbers opting for this new pathway are likely to be very small. Only 30-40 Legal Executives graduate from our courses annually, and many of these choose other careers. Nonetheless such a pathway could play a modest role in widening access to the local legal profession and we hope Members will support Recommendation 4.5

HKU SPACE

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