

Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services on Legal Education and Training in Hong Kong

Submission by the Undergraduate Law Society of the Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong

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The Law Faculty of the Chinese University of Hong Kong composes of undergraduates who mostly want to pursue a legal career, which would require following the attainment of the required postgraduate qualifications. Upon conducting a general inquiry across the board, it has been found that one of the main concerns involved the Law Society Examination proposed by the Law Society recently.

We understand that the LSE is designed to be an independent assessment which takes in students rejected by the highly competitive Postgraduate Certificate in Laws. Increasing access to legal profession, including the Bachelor of Laws, Juris Doctor, as well as overseas law qualifications, increases competition and creates a bottleneck situation. LSE perhaps is the alternative entry path to the extremely competitive PCLL programs at the three law schools in Hong Kong.

However, there are some major concerns surrounding the possible enactment of the LSE. CEE was rebranded as LSE after previous talks broke down with the three law schools over collaborating on a new CEE by 2021. This was due to the Law Society not releasing enough details to the public, bypassing the ongoing comprehensive government review of legal training in the city. This problem recurs again here, where details of the exams remain unannounced but is confirmed to be pushed forward. Regardless, we do know that with the implementation of LSE, PCLL will not be the only prerequisite for trainee contracts in Hong Kong law firms. This change could result in serious consequences for legal standards, which have been set in corporation by all three law schools in Hong Kong previously. There is a possibility that the LSE will be seen by employers as a second-rate qualification, given its intended purpose and timing, to which some of us have suggested that increasing PCLL admission numbers would curb the problem with less uncertainty.

Thus, we appreciate the Panel's conducive effort to investigate the performance of legal education in the city and reach out to legal bodies for consultation and further information. Overall, we hope that our concern towards legal training and education as potential legal workers is voiced out, specifically with regards to the proposed changes in postgraduate law qualifications.