

**For discussion on
7 July 2025**

**Legislative Council Panel on
Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

Reviewing and enhancing the on-the-job training of legal practitioners

Purpose

To facilitate the Panel Members' discussion of the captioned subject, this paper seeks to provide an overview of the on-the-job training of legal practitioners provided by the Department of Justice ("DoJ").

2. A self-regulatory regime is applied for Hong Kong's legal profession. Both the Law Society and the Bar Association have all along been offering on-the-job training for legal practitioners by established committees for reviewing such matters as legal professional development and continuing education.
3. The DoJ will continue to support the two legal professional bodies in their ongoing review and enhancement of the professional training so as to nurture more legal talents for Hong Kong.

Training provided by the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy

4. Capitalising on Hong Kong's bilingual common law system and the unique strengths and advantages under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy ("Academy") was launched on 8 November 2024.
5. The Academy makes the most of Hong Kong's bilingual common law system (in English and Chinese), as well as the international status, regularly organises different practical legal courses, seminars and international exchange initiatives so as to promote talent exchanges in the region and beyond, and provide foreign-related legal talent training for our country, and practical training for the local solicitors and barristers (including young legal professionals) for professional development.

6. Since its establishment, the Academy has organised several training programmes, some of which the target audience include local legal practitioners, namely,

- (1) the Conference on Climate Change and International Trade Law, co-organised with the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, which was held in March 2025, discussed how the international trade law could effectively support the achievement of climate action goals set by the international community, and attracted about 600 registrations from around 70 jurisdictions in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, Africa and Hong Kong;
- (2) the two-day programme entitled “Mainland Civil and Commercial Legal Practice Training Course 2025”, held in Hong Kong in June 2025, was designed for the local legal and dispute resolution sector and attracted over 200 registrations. This Course was delivered by experienced judges, experts and legal professionals, covering various aspects of Mainland civil and commercial legal practice. Representatives from Mainland enterprises and the arbitration sector were invited to exchange and share with the participants during the panel discussions. The programme provided a platform for legal exchanges and collaboration between legal practitioners from Hong Kong and the Mainland, and deepened local sectors’ understanding of Mainland civil and commercial law and practice.

7. The Academy will organise a seminar related to criminal prosecution in Hong Kong in September this year for prosecutors from our country and ASEAN member states, as well as local legal practitioners.

8. The Academy will continue to maintain close communication and cooperation with the two local legal professional bodies, exploring the professional needs of practitioners in law, dispute resolution, arbitration, and related fields and organising specialized training programmes to continuously support the development of legal talents in Hong Kong.

Local Training Opportunities

(a) Professional Exchange Programme

9. The programme aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices between lawyers in the private sector and DoJ. Qualified private sector lawyers can apply through their law firms/chambers for attachment to DoJ; law firms/chambers interested in accepting exchange lawyers from DoJ can also contact DoJ.

10. The programme was launched in September 2019. As at the end of May 2025, a total of 20 lawyers (eight lawyers in the private sector and 12 government counsel) have participated in the programme.

11. The Professional Exchange Programme has been well-received by the legal sector since its launch. The feedback of participants on the programme has been positive. Participants considered that their attachment facilitated cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience and the exchange of best practices between lawyers in the private sector and DoJ. We will continue to maintain close communication with law firms/chambers to facilitate the formulation of suitable exchange arrangements; and will continue to review the implementation of the programme and make refinement in a timely manner.

(b) Training on Fundamental Principles of Chinese Law

12. DoJ regularly organises training courses to deepen government counsel's understanding of our country's latest development, including its legal and judicial systems, socio-economic conditions and development direction. With the support of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, DoJ has co-organised with Tsinghua University five rounds of the course "The Fundamental Principles of Chinese Law" since 2020.

13. To broaden the reach of the training and strengthen the legal sector's understanding of the national legal framework, private practice lawyers have been invited to participate since the third round of the course held in 2021. The course covers a wide range of topics, including the Constitution, the Basic Law,

the Hong Kong National Security Law, the national judicial system and the overall development of the country.

(c) Understudy Programme (Civil / Prosecution Work)

14. Launched in mid-2020 by DoJ, the Programme aims to provide training opportunities for the less-experienced barristers and solicitors (i.e. with less than five years' post call / admission experience) to handle civil and prosecution work of the Government in order to broaden their horizon, enrich them with valuable experience and improve their case management skills. As at 31 May 2025, a total of 299 solicitors / barristers with less than five years' qualification participated in various civil and criminal works through the Programme, i.e. around 70% of eligible participating barristers / solicitors have taken part in various civil and criminal work through the Programme. For criminal work, the training mainly involved assisting in handling more complex cases conducted in the District Court or the Court of First Instance or magistracy cases with lengthy trials. For civil work, about 45% of participated solicitors / barristers were engaged for drafting of legal opinions and conducting legal research, about 35% had participated in hearing preparation works, acting as junior counsel to senior counsel or counsel or Government Counsel and about 20% were engaged for observing lawyers in action in different levels of courts and various hearings. The DoJ has, from time to time, received expressions of interest from solicitors / barristers to participate in the Programme, reflecting the continued support and participation from the sector and satisfactory response. The DoJ will continue to review and select suitable work to provide more training opportunities to participating solicitors and barristers.

(d) Prosecution on Fiat Training Programme

15. The Prosecutions Division ("PD") is committed to enhancing the on-the-job training of legal practitioners, particularly those junior barristers and solicitors in private practice. To this end, the PD collaborates with the Hong Kong Advocacy Training Council and the two legal professional bodies to organise the "Prosecution on Fiat Training Programme" regularly. This programme, combining seminars, written assignments, and a full-day mock trial, aims to equip young and less-experienced barristers and solicitors with comprehensive training on prosecuting in the Magistrates' Courts. Participants receive guidance and constructive feedback from experienced judicial officers, barristers and solicitors presiding over the mock trials, ensuring they are well-prepared to undertake prosecutorial responsibilities effectively.

16. In addition, the PD regularly conducts fiat assessments to evaluate the suitability of junior barristers and solicitors in private practice for inclusion on our fiat list to prosecute in the Magistrates' Courts. These assessments involve a thorough review of legal knowledge, advocacy skills, and case management abilities, conducted by a panel of senior prosecutors. Successful candidates are then given opportunities to prosecute criminal cases independently on fiat.

17. Furthermore, the PD periodically reviews the performance of private practitioners handling prosecutions on fiat, providing them with feedback on their legal arguments, presentation techniques, and strategies for case enhancement on appropriate occasions. This ongoing support aims to elevate their prosecutorial effectiveness and uphold the highest standards of prosecution.

(e) Investment Law and Investor-State Mediator Training

18. The implementation of the CEPA Investment Agreement's Mediation Mechanism for Investment Disputes underscores DoJ's commitment to establishing Hong Kong as a premier hub for international legal and dispute resolution services. In collaboration with the Asia Academy of International Law, the DoJ has successfully co-organised four editions of the Investment Law and Investor-State Mediator Training since 2018. This comprehensive program features two modules: one focusing on international investment law and the other on mediation techniques for investor-state disputes. Since its inception, the training has equipped over 300 participants from more than 40 jurisdictions with essential skills in this specialized field, further strengthening Hong Kong's position as a centre of excellence for dispute resolution.

(f) Outcome Related Fee Structures for Arbitration ("ORFSA")

19. The ORFSA regime was fully implemented upon the commencement of the Arbitration (Outcome Related Fee Structures for Arbitration) Rules on 16 December 2022, adopting recommendations from Law Reform Commission's Report on ORFSA. Since then, a series of training and promotional seminars has been launched, including a talk on ORFSA for legal practitioners in small and medium law firms held in June 2023 and various trainings organised by the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association for their members since 2023. The Guidance Note and Checklists for ORFSA was published by the DoJ in November 2023 to provide practical and user-friendly information on the essential features of the ORFSA regime to assist legal

practitioners and arbitration users wishing to enter into ORFSA agreements.

Training for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (“GBA”) lawyers

20. Eligible Hong Kong legal practitioners, upon passing the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination (“GBA Examination”) and obtaining a Lawyer’s License (GBA), are allowed to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA¹ on certain civil and commercial matters to which the Mainland laws apply. GBA Examinations have been held four times from 2021 to 2024. Over 1,800 Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners have enrolled in the GBA Examinations. As at the end of May this year, over 560 Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners have obtained the Lawyer’s License (GBA).

(a) GBA Lawyers’ Practical Legal Training

21. With a view to meeting the needs of GBA lawyers in both theoretical and practical aspects, the first Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Lawyers’ Practical Legal Training Course was held from 19 to 20 July 2024 and was attended by around 100 GBA lawyers. It was organised by the Supreme People’s Court and the Ministry of Justice, and hosted by the High People’s Court of Guangdong Province as well as the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province. The DoJ actively collaborated with them in organising the training course. Experts and lawyers from the people’s courts, arbitral institutions and commercial mediation institutions, etc. in the Mainland gave lectures on topics including civil and commercial litigation, arbitration and mediation.

(b) Intensive Training on Mainland Law and Practice

22. DoJ is also actively supporting various forms of professional training targeted for GBA lawyers, including intensive training on Mainland law and practice held in August 2024 and May 2025, co-organised by China Legal Services (H.K.) Ltd. and supported by DoJ and other organisations. The courses focused on the latest developments in Mainland law, covering practical areas such as Mainland litigation procedures, evidence rules, inheritance laws, etc.

¹ i.e. Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing of Guangdong Province.

Roundtable discussions are also arranged, bringing together cross-sector representatives from the GBA to jointly explore the opportunities and challenges for GBA lawyers, thereby broadening the discussions on legal services in the region.

(c) GBA Mediator Training Course

23. To advance the integration of the non-litigation dispute resolution services in the GBA, the DoJ organised the first GBA Mediator Training Course of Hong Kong on 16 August 2024, with around 400 participants. The event brought together mediation experts from Guangdong and Macao to provide an overview of their respective mediation systems and practices, alongside practical insights drawn from their professional experience. Participants engaged in the discussion on the latest developments of cross-boundary disputes mediation in the GBA, examining the cultural differences and integration in mediation of the three places, and discussed topics including the means and skills in handling cross-boundary disputes.

LawTech and Artificial Intelligence (“AI”) Training

(a) Roundtable Series and Events

24. The DoJ is organising a series of roundtables and events within 2025 to enhance the legal industry’s awareness and understanding of LawTech. The first LexGoTech Roundtable was held on 12 June 2025. These events will facilitate cross-fertilisation and sharing of expertise, experience and innovative ideas among legal practitioners, thereby enhancing their LawTech awareness and competencies.

(b) Engagement with Legal Education and Training Stakeholders

25. The DoJ will engage with the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training to ensure that law students are equipped with a strong understanding of LawTech, fostering early proficiency that will translate into more effective and innovative legal practice.

(c) Development of LawTech Roadmap

26. Recognising the need for structured guidance, the DoJ will develop and publish a roadmap for legal practitioners to embark on or further their journey in technology adoption. This roadmap will outline clear, actionable steps for practitioners' reference in adopting and advancing technology use within legal practices. By providing this resource, the DoJ aims to enhance the effectiveness of LawTech training initiatives and support continuous professional development in the legal sector.

(d) Professional development of Government Counsel

27. The DoJ has been actively enhancing the professional development of Government Counsel with respect to LawTech through organising internal training initiatives and participation in overseas conferences.

28. Since the participation of the DoJ in the pilot run of the local large language model ("LLM") developed by the Hong Kong Generative AI Research and Development Center ("HKGAI") and the generative AI document processing copilot application developed based on that LLM (i.e. HKPilot) earlier this year, the DoJ has organised training for its staff on the functions and effective use of HKPilot. The training was attended by Government Counsel from different levels and received positive response.

29. In addition, the DoJ has sent Government Counsel to participate in LawTech conferences in Singapore in September 2024 and in London last month. These conferences provided valuable insights into the latest advancements in legal technology and facilitated knowledge exchange with international peers.

30. The DoJ is committed to fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation amongst Government Counsel to enable them to better serve the community and strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region.

Secondment Programmes to Relevant International Organisations

31. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has, with the support of the Central Government, made standing secondment arrangements with the Hague Conference on Private International Law and the International Institute

for the Unification of Private Law, which are open to application by all qualified local legal professionals from the public and private sectors (irrespective of the size of the law firms they work in). Since the secondment arrangements have been put in place, a total of six local barristers and solicitors from the private sector, have participated. The DoJ will continue to promote relevant secondment programmes to the legal sector.

Concluding Remarks

32. To conclude, DoJ has been committed to providing professional training in various areas for legal practitioners and been working closely with the two legal professional bodies to review and enhance the on-the-job training of legal practitioners. Looking ahead, DoJ will continue to foster even closer collaboration with them in a joint effort to promote legal training for legal practitioners so as to consolidate Hong Kong as the leading centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Advice Sought

33. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

Department of Justice
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