

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

FACULTY OF LAW

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HKU Law responds to the Law Society of Hong Kong's proposed Common Entrance Examination

6 January 2016

We note the statement by the Law Society of Hong Kong on the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) issued on 6 January 2016. While the Law Society's proposal of a CEE has been debated in the community, no consensus has yet been reached amongst the stakeholders. In April 2015, the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training, a statutory body chaired by Justice Patrick Chan, commissioned a panel of international consultants, headed by Justice K.H. Woo, to conduct a comprehensive review of legal education in Hong Kong, including the introduction of a CEE. This review began in October 2015 and remains ongoing.

Thus we are surprised that the Law Society has decided to proceed with the CEE while the comprehensive review is still ongoing. We believe the Standing Committee, in which all stakeholders are represented, is the best forum in which to discuss the topic of the CEE after the consultants have reported on their review.

The Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL) has been a responsibility of universities since 1972, and thousands of solicitors and barristers have been trained by the PCLL programmes. The PCLL was reviewed and enhanced after the last comprehensive review of legal education in 2000/2001. Thus we are pleased to see that the Law Society recognizes the importance of the PCLL and believes that it should remain a requirement to entering the legal profession. It is also well noted that the Law Society will not be setting any particular form of exam for the PCLL. While we note that the Law Society may periodically review the prerequisites for taking the CEE, we believe any relaxation that allows taking the CEE without the PCLL will have serious implications for the system of legal education and entry into the legal profession.

While the Law Society's statement states the purposes of the CEE, it does not provide justification for why the CEE is needed. We await to learn more about the reasons justifying the need for the CEE and the details of the proposal.

As always, we hope to discuss and work with all stakeholders, including the two professional bodies, in order to improve legal education and training in Hong Kong.

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