

Report on Standing Committee on Practice Development 2018

1. The main objectives of the Standing Committee on Practice Development (“**the Standing Committee**”) for the year 2018 are to (1) heighten the awareness amongst barristers to do practice development, as permitted by the Bar Code; (2) to build up the confidence of younger barristers; and (3) to develop basic skills and provide practical tips to younger barristers to further develop their practice, such as how to develop relations with their solicitors, how to expand their network and what not to do in practice.
2. The Standing Committee held 4 meetings during the year in the nature of brain-storming sessions. Members of a range of seniority volunteered to assist in the planning and organization of the following events.

Bench and Bar Dialogue

3. The Standing Committee made plans to hold a series of talks, entitled “Bench/Bar Dialogue” with the aim of encouraging exchanges and sharing of views, knowledge, experiences and good practices between the Bench and the Bar. Judicial officers across all levels of courts/tribunals and from different divisions are invited to speak at these practice seminars, with a seasoned member of the Bar moderating. We are pleased to report that the Bench/ Bar Dialogue program received strong support from the Judiciary, and the Chairman has been working closely with the CJHC and leaders of all levels of courts in this regard. Senior members of the Bar has also participated in extending the invitation to appropriate speakers or moderating the talks. More junior members of the Standing Committee assisted in the logistics.
4. The first talk of the Bench/Bar Dialogue was held on 7 December 2018 in the Jurors’ Assembly Room. It was a dialogue between magistrates and practitioners where perspectives were exchanged in the context of magisterial practice. Magistrates Madam Lily Wong and Mr Daniel Tang, were invited to be the speakers. The fireside chat format of these talks allowed for an informal exchange of views, and the explanation of the perspective from the Bench of the conduct of cases in the magistracy level in a relaxed atmosphere.
5. On 11 December 2018, the Hon Mr Justice Zervos JA gave the second talk under the Bench / Bar Dialogue series. Around 30 members of the Bar gathered in the Judges Mess in the High Court building to hear Zervos J share helpful tips on appellate advocacy, with interactive Q and A from the audience.
6. The Chairman of the Standing Committee received personal messages from attendees after these talks with very positive feedback from members. Apparently there is a long-felt want for sharing of this kind that allows questions to be raised in an informal manner and in a relaxing and cordial environment from judicial officers who are there to be communicative and helpful.
7. On 18 January 2019, the Hon Madam Justice E Toh and the Hon Madam Justice A Pang would give the third talk under the Bench / Bar Dialogue series to share their insight on the conduct of criminal proceedings in the District Court and the High Court.
8. Further talks will be arranged next year that will cover other aspects of barristers’ practice.

Building Your Practice Skills

9. The Standing Committee have also planned for a series of practice seminars with the aim of educating members, especially junior members, on practice management. In 2016, a similar series have been staged by Douglas Clark with considerable success. It is considered beneficial that the series should be re-run for the benefit of more existing and new members.
10. The topics of the “Building Your Practice Skills” seminars include (1) Practice Management; (2) Document Management; (3) Financial Management; (4) Solicitors Expectations; and (5) Barristers in the Digital Age.
11. The seminars will begin in early 2019.

“Career Path and Crossroads” Series

12. The Standing Committee has also planned for a new series of talks, the Career Path and Crossroads series, with selective members or former members of the Bar of a diverse range of career history invited to share their career paths and insights in professional development with other members. This will likewise be in the form a fireside chat with members being given the opportunity to meet other members /former members at a close range to conduct an informal chat on how their career paths had taken shape. The first of the series will be for two new silks to take the sofas. Further details will be announced in due course.

Joint Talks with Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC)

13. The Standing Committee has in the past hosted talks with the Association of Corporate Counsel, thanks to arrangements made by Osmond Lam and José Maurellet SC. The relationship between the two associations go back a few years with successful events held in the past which involved an after-work talk made by members of the Bar for the benefit of ACC, followed by mingling in a social setting. It give the chance to all members to mingle with corporate counsel to share knowledge on their practice, and make friends. The two associations share the bill on every occasion in the past.
14. The first event took place on 14 March 2018 at the Hong Kong Bankers' Club, with Russell Coleman SC speaking on war stories in big-ticket matrimonial matters. It attracted a full house of corporate counsel to interact and mingle with members of the Bar. As the first of the event had already been organized at the time when the new bar council was fully constituted and began to deliberate on general matters, the budget paper reached the council at a time close to the holding of the event. It was most unfortunate that the proposed budget for the event was simply rejected without the author of the paper being invited to the meeting to give urgent clarification, presumably due to a lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of council members in the newly constituted council about the continuous work and past practice of the Standing Committee, which was clearly for the benefit of the Bar as a whole and has never been controversial. In the end, the Bar's half-share of the cost had had to be absorbed by a generous member of the committee out of his own pocket. This should not happen again.
15. With the perceived lack of support from council, our relationship with the ACC suffered a period of uncertainty. The ACC has since been turning to the private sector to seek opportunities for knowledge exchange.

Working Group on Sports Law and Practice

16. At the third meeting, the Standing Committee discussed the feasibility of establishing the captioned group in order to explore and expand practice areas and opportunities for the Bar. It was resolved that we establish a working group on Sport Law and Practice with a view to build a professional network of stakeholders to promote the awareness of this area of the law, to build knowledge and advance the status of the Bar in the area of professional legal services, and to promote dispute resolution services in this area in conjunction with an association of Sports Law to be set up in the future. *Ad hoc* members outside the Bar will be invited to join the working group to further the above purposes. Other members of the Bar who have the intention to contribute to the causes of the working group will be invited to express interest. A draft bar circular for that purpose will be prepared for the Chairman's approval.

Outlook for the Future

17. Looking ahead, the Standing Committee hopes to rekindle its relationship with the Association of Corporate Counsel in order to benefit a wider sector of the Bar as a whole, and to raise the profile the Bar and awareness of opportunities for in-house counsel to work with barristers directly. Lectures, talks, drinks and mixers will take a form that members of ACC will find attractive. This cannot be carried out without funding support from the Bar.
18. The existing series of talks and seminars will be repeated in format and improved upon with the feedback from members attending.
19. We consider the marketing of these talks to be less than effective at present, with only bar circulars being relied on for marketing. Many members do not read bar circulars regularly, or even if they do, may not respond to event advertisements promptly without repeated reminders. We shall be exploring better ways of marketing the events of the Standing Committee in order to draw a larger audience for the benefit of members, and a user-friendly channel of communication that will foster a closer tie between members and the Standing Committee to help us conduct our work in a more targeted manner and to make improvements.

Membership:

Winnie Tam SC (Chairman)
José-Antonio Maurellet SC (Vice Chairman)
Osmond Lam (Vice Chairman)
Tim Chi Hang Yu (Honorary Secretary)
Po Wing Kay
Calvin Cheuk
Deanna Law
Douglas Clark
Azan Marwah
Wendy Yeung
Lareina Chan
Harprabdeep Singh Brar
Moses Wanki Park
Sabrina Leung

Winnie Tam SC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Practice Development

12 December 2018