

Standing Committee on Member Services

2016



THE
LAW SOCIETY
OF HONG KONG
香港律師會

The Standing Committee on Member Services formulates and oversees the implementation of strategies and programmes that enhance members' benefits and interests. It is the Standing Committee's mission to provide the best benefit for our members and to unite them with a common goal of developing the legal markets locally and internationally. The Standing Committee also makes recommendations to other Standing Committees on issues pertaining to members' legal practice. The Standing Committee met eight times in 2016.

Members' Forum and Dinner Gathering

The Standing Committee organised one large scale Members' Forum and Dinner Gathering on 28 July. The topic this year was "*Best Uses of Technology in Legal Practice*" and members made useful submissions thereon.

At the Forum, members of the Technology Committee introduced three Apps relevant to members' practice to the general members.

At the "*Dialogue with the President: What Can We Do for You?*" session, members raised questions on the floor and the President, together with Vice-Presidents and other Council members, gave answers on the spot.

Members' Quarterly Lunch Gatherings

The Standing Committee introduced the idea of quarterly lunch gatherings this year for more interactions with members on topical issues with the view to assist general members to meet their demands in practice. Two lunch gatherings were successfully held in 2016:

Limited Liability Partnerships ("LLPs") on 5 May

Mr. Joseph Li, the Chairman of The Law Society's Working Party on LLP, Ms. Regina Chan, Director and Head of Specialty, Aon and our Secretary General gave an overview of LLP which was then newly introduced to our legal scene. Around 50 members attended the gathering.

Competition Law on 13 October

Ms. Clara Ingen-Housz and Mr. James Wilkinson, members of The Law Society's Competition Law Committee, spoke to members on a number of topics covering First and Second Conduct Rules, Merger Rule, Exclusions and exemptions, enforcement and tribunal proceedings. 61 members attended the gathering.

Other topics considered included New Emerging Markets and The Belt and Road.

"Law Society-Lexis" Online Research Platform

The annual induction event of the offsite research services "*Law Society-Lexis*" was held on 3 June.

Clubhouse

During the year, the Standing Committee also considered proposals regarding the development of the Clubhouse.

Law Library

The Standing Committee worked to gradually transform the Law Library into an online one. Major online research platforms are now available in the Library for members' research purpose.

During the year, the Standing Committee arranged a total of two demonstration sessions on new workflow-based online solutions "Practical Guidance" and "Practical Law". Members who attended the "Practical Law" sessions also enjoyed one month offsite free trial. A one-month onsite free trial of 'Practical Law' was offered in the Library from September to October.

Online Payment

During the year, the Standing Committee considered introducing online payment of Law Society's services via The Law Society App, and recommended the commission of an overall study on payment options and channels.

Other Practice Issues

Changes in the Legal Market

The Standing Committee considered the rapid change in the legal market with different service providers emerging including ABS, LDPs and others which work in a variety of ways. The Standing Committee made recommendations to the Academy of Law to arrange RME electives alerting members of the risks involved in working for these service providers.

Mandatory Practice Management Course (in consultation with Practice Management Committee)

The Standing Committee worked with Practice Management Committee for the implementation of a new Mandatory Practice Management Course pursuant to the amendment of Section 6(6B) of the *Legal Practitioners Ordinance* ("LPO") requiring solicitors who intend to apply for an unconditional practising certificate to satisfy Council, in addition to compliance with the two-year employment requirement, that they have successfully completed such course. The Course materials had been finalized during the year.

In November, the Council resolved that instead of a mandatory course, the Course should be first conducted on a trial basis in 2017 as a Risk Management Education ("RME")

elective.

The Standing Committee also made recommendations to the Council on other topics which were relevant to members' practice.

Professional Indemnity in Pro Bono Legal Services

The Standing Committee considered the newly introduced Guidelines for Applications for Exemption from the Requirements to Have and Maintain Professional Indemnity Under the *Solicitors (Professional Indemnity) Rules* ("SPI Rules") in relation to Pro Bono Legal Services with the Application Form and Statutory Declaration, and made recommendations to the Academy of Law to arrange RME elective educating members on the risks involved in pro bono work.

Expansion of Solicitors Practice into the Work of Estate Agents

The Standing Committee considered the feasibility and desirability of the Council's suggestion of allowing solicitors to expand the scope of their services to include estate agency work. A Working Party will be set up to look into the matter.

Networking trip

The Standing Committee will sponsor the Young Solicitors' Group ("YSG") for a networking trip in Macau with focal discussions on how Hong Kong and Macau lawyers can tap into the opportunities in Portuguese-speaking territories. The trip will take place in January 2017.

CLUBHOUSE COMMITTEE

The Committee oversees the operations of the Clubhouse, make recommendations to strengthen the services of the Clubhouse and organise activities to enhance its widest use by members.

The Clubhouse is open for breakfast, lunch and private functions (with alcohol serving). In 2016, there were 32 private functions hosted by members and 61 Law Society events, including Continuing Professional Development ("CPD") courses, seminars and networking functions held by various departments.

The Clubhouse, providing free WIFI access and a selection of newspapers, is not only an exclusive venue for members of The Law Society to unwind and relax, but also an ideal venue for meetings and social gatherings.

To promote the Clubhouse as a good venue option for members' exclusive social gatherings, the Clubhouse Committee organised the "*Western Dining and Social Etiquette Workshop*" at the Clubhouse. 17 members participated in the Workshop.

A certified etiquette instructor was invited to explain and demonstrate to members how to refine their western dining and social etiquette skills – from sending invitations to the correct use of silver wares, drinking glasses and napkin as well as the know-how of placing food and beverage order. Whilst enjoying the four-course dinner, participating members obtained useful tips for arranging and attending business meals in future.

IN-HOUSE LAWYERS COMMITTEE

The In-House Lawyers Committee (“IHLC”) is committed to provide a platform for sharing of experiences and resources, exchanging of views and ideas amongst in-house lawyers (“IHLs”) and strengthening the communication between IHLs and private legal practitioners.

The Committee held its annual conference in September, bringing together over 400 members including 300 in-house lawyers to share their experiences. Topics discussed included “One Belt, One Road”, reform of foreign investment law in PRC, legal privileges and internal investigation in corporate, Hong Kong competition law, and “corporate social responsibility” and “environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG)”. 16 speakers and panelists from various sectors and industries shared their valuable experiences and insights on these topics.

In May, the Committee organised a visit to Alibaba Group’s headquarter in Hangzhou. The visit included a discussion and presentation session held by Alibaba’s legal department. Members were enlightened by the innovative ideas as presented in relation to managing and resolving legal matters in-house. Over 20 members participated in this company visit.

The Committee promotes the sharing of experiences amongst in-house lawyers also through its “Sweat & Glory” sessions. A number of topics were being discussed in these sessions in 2016:-

- *“A Look Behind the Cards: Unique Challenges of Gaming Law in Macau from an In-House & Private Practice Perspective”*
- *“Protection of Personal Data Privacy: Practical Tips for In-House Lawyers”*

A seminar on the topic *“What an In-House Lawyer Needs to Know about Working with LLP Law Firms”* was also organised where the panelists gave the audience an introduction of LLP and addressed some of the major issues that LLP might concern in-house lawyers.

The Committee wrapped up the year with its finale session during which members discussed various challenges faced in their in-house practices and possible solutions. The collective wisdom and experiences would be studied and considered for discussion of further consolidation into “best practices” reference for members in the future. The forum was followed by a networking drink session.

MEMBER BENEFIT COMMITTEE

The Committee works towards identifying services and benefits for Law Society members. The Committee's work ranges from improving personal well-being of The Law Society members to business promotion and development for the profession. The Committee also makes recommendations on promotion items received by The Law Society from time to time.

In 2016, the Working Group on Member Wellness Programme merged with the Committee. The Committee will continue to promote overall wellness of members via creating and implementing various types of wellness programmes and activities.

Luncheon Talks, Evening seminars and workshops

The Committee organised the following luncheon talks, evening seminars and workshops on a variety of topics:

- An evening Coffee Tasting workshop by Mr. Liam Lai, founder of a local coffee shop was held on 19 April.
- Jointly organised with Public Policy Committee, the second education seminar entitled “*Seminar/ Debate on Hong Kong’s Education Policy*” was held on 10 May. Speakers included Legislative Council Member Mrs. Regina Ip, Legislative Council Member (Education) Mr. Ip Kin Yuen.
- An evening Espresso & Latte Art workshop by Ms. Lamont Loo, a licensed Q-grader, was held on 4 August where members had the chance to make their unique cup of latte art.
- Two visits to the Court of Final Appeal were held on 25 August and 18 October respectively.
- A Japanese style flower arrangement class was held on 2 December by Ms. Kathy Lam, an instructor of Ikenobo classes in Hong Kong.

The Law Society’s Annual Christmas Party 2016

The Committee organised the Annual Christmas Party with the theme “Sparkling like the Fireworks!” on 15 December. Nearly 200 members and guests attended the party and celebrated the festive season together. The Party featured live music performance by the VIP Band and the talented vocalists from The Law Society’s Live band – TLF.

Programmes for Members’ Children

The Committee organised a guided visit for members’ children to Yakult Co. Ltd in September. Members and their children found the visit interesting as they were able to see the manufacturing of health drinks and lactic acid dairy products in action.

The Law Society's Credit Card

The Committee continued its collaboration with American Express on the “The Law Society American Express Platinum Card”. The Committee has been liaising and exploring the feasibility to extend the card eligibility to trainee solicitors.

Other Benefits/Events offered by the Committee

The Committee sourced and/or offered an exclusive range of products and services for the benefit of members throughout the year. The year round benefits are now categorised into six categories, namely Culture & Lifestyle; Dine & Wine; Education & Learning; Health & Leisure; Household & Living and IT products & services. The offers are available on Law Society's website and Law Society's App for members' easy reference. Other benefits included offering free lai see packets, complimentary tickets to international art fairs and travel expo.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Practice Management Committee is dedicated to serving members in best-practice endeavours. The scope of its work includes providing guidance to members on the opportunities and risks arising from the business of law practice, and on formulating strategies to expand law practice, manage risks in practice, enhance services to clients, motivate staff and manage finance and information. It aims to help law firms to achieve practice management excellence. It formulates guidelines and practice manuals and organises training programmes, seminars and conferences on practice management. The Committee met 3 times this year.

Mandatory Practice Management Course

Section 6(6B) of the *LPO* has been amended to include a requirement that solicitors who intend to apply for an unconditional practicing certificate must satisfy the Council, in addition to compliance with the two-year employment requirement, that they have successfully completed a practice management course provided or approved by The Law Society (“the Mandatory Practice Management Course”).

The Committee had a busy year reviewing course materials, preparing the guidelines in relation to the Mandatory Practice Management Course, and liaising with the College of Law (the designer of the Course materials). The Course materials had been finalised during the year.

Helping Members to Manage and Grow their Businesses

The Committee commissioned the writing of five articles which were published during the year in the following issues of *Hong Kong Lawyer*:

- “*Keeping SME Firms Relevant in an Era of Globalisation*” published in February

- “*Managing Profitability as a Competitive Tool*” published in May
- “*Alternative Business Structure: A UK Perspective*” published in July
- “*Disconnection in an Increasingly Connected World*” published in September; and
- “*Developing Client Relationships in the New Age*” published in November.

Partnership Association in Mainland

The Committee organised a seminar on Partnership Association in Mainland on 19 September with Past President Ambrose Lam and member Mr. Eric Lui sharing with the audience their personal experience about their respective firms’ associations with Mainland partners. The seminar received overwhelming response.

The Committee also resolved engaging a consultant for the development of checklists relating to the running of a law practice. The checklists will be introduced in 2017.

ISLAMIC FINANCE WORKING PARTY

The Working Party provides recommendations on the legal development of Islamic financial products and services in Hong Kong. It aims to equip members with updated knowledge and insights in the rapidly growing Islamic Finance market in Hong Kong. It works closely with financial institutions, government, non-governmental organisations, international organisations and universities relating to Islamic finance. The Working Party also meets with lawyers from local firms and overseas lawyers to discuss developments in Islamic finance globally and the foundation that already exist in Hong Kong for Islamic finance, such as the issue of halal certificates and the launch of the second sukuk by Hong Kong government.

The Committee co-organised a CPD course with Hong Kong Academy of Law Limited (“Academy”) on 21 April entitled: “*Islamic Finance: Where can we go from here?*” The Chairman of the Working Party and Mr. Kingsley Ong, member of the Working Party were the speakers.

On 4 November, the Working Party held its fourth annual networking reception themed under “Islamic Finance and the Belt and Road Initiative” with distinguished guests from various consulates, government bodies, financial institutions and corporate attending.

WORKING PARTY FOR SME FIRMS

The Working Party was established under the Practice Management Committee to make recommendations to the Committee on any support and guidance which the Working Party may consider desirable for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (“SME”) law firm practice management; to provide a forum for networking, sharing of experience, exchange of views and discussion of common problems of sole practitioners and small partnership firms on practice management; and to provide a channel of communications between such firms and The Law Society.

PRO BONO COMMITTEE

The Committee is formed to review the types of pro bono work undertaken by the profession, promotes public awareness of members' pro bono services and encourages participation by the profession in pro bono work.

During the year, the Committee reviewed various pro bono schemes in which The Law Society has organised and/or coordinated participation by its members. They included the Free Legal Helpline; 45 minutes of Free Legal Consultation, Free Legal Advice on Building Management, Duty Lawyer Service, and various programmes for social enterprises, non-governmental organisations (“NGOs”) and secondary school students.

Free Legal Helpline

The Helpline was established in late August 2013 offering pro bono legal advice to the public in need of professional legal services on three areas of law, namely personal injury, matrimonial law and criminal law.

The Pilot Scheme on Mediation, which was launched in December 2014 under the Helpline to provide free telephone session on mediation, has been extended until 31 December 2017.

Up to the end of December 2016, over 5,000 calls had been handled through the Helpline.

Figure 1: Number of cases received in 2016

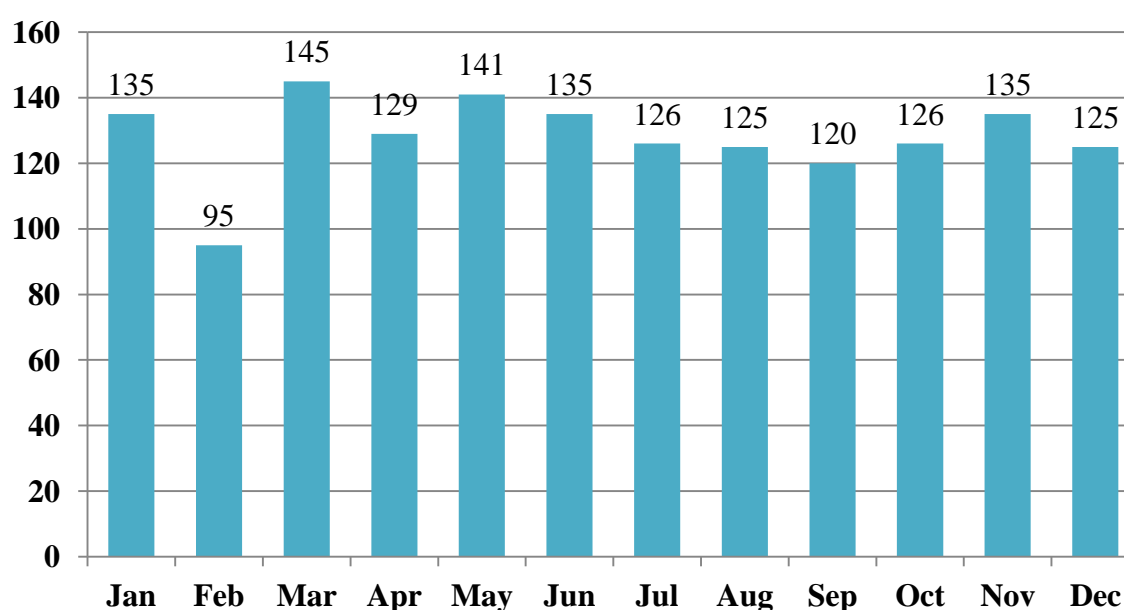
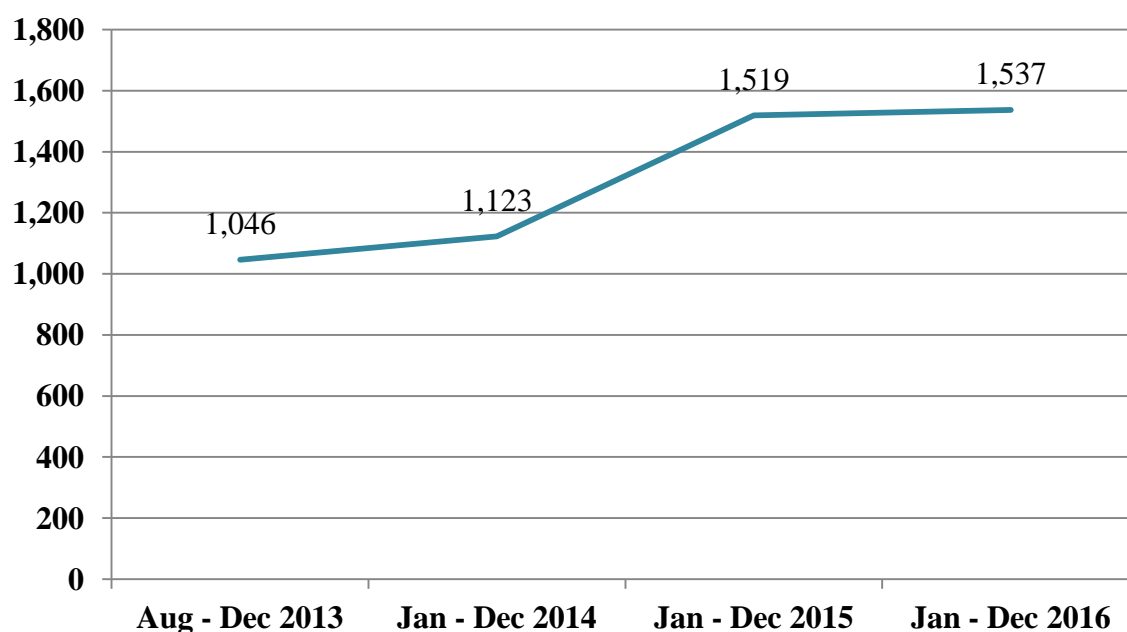


Figure 2 : Number of cases received during 2013 – 2016



Collaboration with Hong Kong Council of Social Service (“HKCSS”)

The Law Society continued to partner with HKCSS on their “NGOs Governance Platform Project” to promote best practice and experience sharing about NGO governance among board members of their NGO members by inviting our members to speak at their sharing sessions and/or joining the visits to the boards of various NGOs.

Collaboration with Education Bureau

The Committee continued its collaboration with the Education Bureau in its “Business-School Partnership Programme” (“BSPP”) with the aim of promoting better co-operation and closer alliances between the legal sector and the schools, to lead students out of the classroom to gain a wider perspective of the world and to get them better prepared for life in the society.

Subsequent to the overwhelming response received from secondary school students in 2015, two visits to High Court followed by a seminar on Rule of Law and the Criminal Justice System were held on 18 October and 24 November. 81 students from 11 secondary schools were given the opportunity to participate in these two visits. The Secondary 4 - 6 students who participated in the visits had the valuable chance to experience real court hearings, to grasp the basic concept of Rule of Law and the Criminal Justice System and to learn from the volunteer solicitors who shared with the students their career experience and the path to becoming a solicitor.

Column on “Volunteering and Business” in Hong Kong Economic Journal

As a participating member of Hong Kong Council of Volunteering, the Committee was again invited to contribute articles to the column “Volunteering and Business” (談商言義) in Hong Kong Economic Journal. Two articles entitled “Volunteer workers striving for professionalism” (義工專業化) and “Volunteers realise truths about life through contributing to the society” (義工悟出人生哲理) were published on 14 April and 15 July respectively.

WORKING GROUP ON INSURANCE FOR PRO BONO WORK

The Working Group reviews the regulatory framework relating to professional indemnity and insurance arrangement and coverage to ensure that members are sufficiently covered when they carry out pro bono services.

The Council has adopted the view that if a solicitor provides pro bono services to the public with some degree of formality and regularity, the solicitor will be carrying on a Practice falling within the scope of rule 6 of the *SPI Rules*. Additionally, if the pro bono services are offered in the solicitor’s personal capacity and not as part of the practice of his or her law firm, the pro bono services will not be covered by Indemnity to which the firm is entitled under the *SPI Rules*. In such conditions, in order not to breach rule 6(1) of the *SPI Rules*, an exemption must be obtained pursuant to rule 7 of the *SPI Rules* before taking on pro bono services.

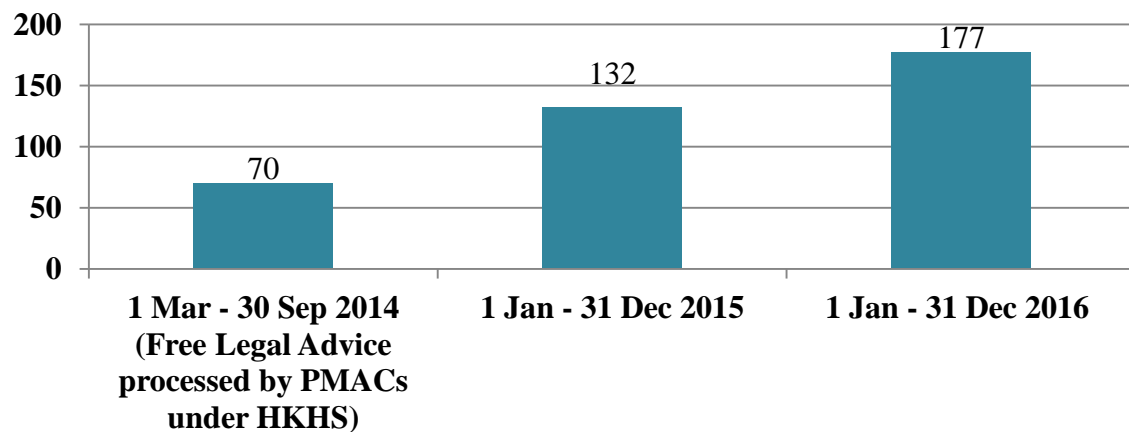
Following up the Council’s resolutions, the Committee and Working Group will continue to facilitate the understanding of the relevant stakeholders on The Law Society’s stance on pro bono services and explore relevant insurance products available in the market for the benefit of the members; and will keep track of feedbacks and development surrounding this matter.

WORKING GROUP ON PRO BONO PROJECTS ON BUILDING MANAGEMENT WORK

The Working Group oversees the pro bono projects in relation to building management. It updates panel members on new developments, cases and legislations in the building management spectrum from time to time.

Since early 2015, the Working Group has been working with the Home Affairs Department (“HAD”) on the Free Legal Advice Service on Building Management (“the Service”). 177 cases were processed during the year of 2016.

Figure 3 : Number of cases processed by Hong Kong Housing Society (“HKHS”) in 2014 and cases processed by HAD in 2015 and 2016



A basic course on building management was held from 13 September to 13 October (5 sessions, 2 hours per session) to provide volunteer lawyers who would like to be admitted to the panel of solicitors of the Group with a better understanding of the relevant topics on building management. 31 lawyers completed the course.

A refresher course on property management was held on 27 October and 48 panel members completed the course.

The Working Group also organised a sharing session for panel members on building management on 1 December. Ms. Vega Wong, Assistant Director of HAD was the guest speaker. During the seminar, the Government’s new initiatives on Building Management and the new *Property Management Services Ordinance* (Cap. 626) were introduced.

WORKING GROUP ON PRO BONO WEBPAGE

The Working Group would continue to review the Pro Bono webpage in the members’ zone of The Law Society’s website so as to encourage participation by members in pro bono work and promote public awareness.

WORKING GROUP ON SEMINARS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

The “*Social Enterprise Legal Seminar Series*”, a collaboration project between The Law Society and The Hong Kong Council of Social Service to help social enterprises better understand the legal aspects of their operation, has been running for the fifth consecutive year.

It is administered by this Working Group under the Pro Bono Committee.

One seminar on operating “community” or “shared” kitchens was held on 24 May under the title “Exploring Social Needs and Major Factors of Consideration in Operating Shared Kitchens”. The seminar covered the legal and regulatory issues governing these kitchens and was attended by about 40 representatives from social enterprises.

The seminar was conducted by Davyd Wong, a member of The Law Society’s Pro Bono Committee, together with Gon Yeung and Catherine Lam.

PRO BONO AND COMMUNITY WORK RECOGNITION COMMITTEE

The Committee is tasked to promote and encourage active participation of individual members and law firms in pro bono and community work by showing appreciation for and recognition of their outstanding commitment to volunteering at the Award Ceremony.

Since its inception in 2011, the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Programme has established itself as one of The Law Society’s signature events offering recognition to the outstanding commitment to pro bono and community work by solicitors and law firms.

In 2016, the Programme continued to gain recognition among the legal profession and a record-breaking number of over 160 applications were received. The Award Ceremony and Cocktail Reception took place on 16 December at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center.

Graced with the presence of Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma and Secretary for Justice Rimsy Yuen, the Ceremony kicked off with a cocktail reception well attended by distinguished guests from the government, NGOs and charitable organisations, Council Members of The Law Society, awardees, their friends and families.

A total of 112 Individual Awards, 22 Law Firm Awards and 9 Distinguished Awards were presented at the Ceremony, including the Distinguished Pro Bono Service Award, the Distinguished Community Service Award, the Distinguished Pro Bono Law Firm Award, Individual Awards as well as the Law Firm Awards.

The awardees of the three Distinguished Awards were selected by a judging panel for their outstanding contribution and commitment to pro bono and community work throughout the year. The panel comprised Prof. Alfred Chan, Chairperson of Equal Opportunities Commission; Ms. Serina Chan, Council Member of The Law Society and the Chairperson of Pro Bono Committee of The Law Society; Mrs. Angelina Cheung, Deputy Secretary for Education; Ms. Florence Hui, Under Secretary for Home Affairs; Mr. Ip Shing Hing, Past President of The Law Society of Hong Kong; Mr. Thomas Kwong, Director of Legal Aid; Mr. Ken Ngai, Deputy Executive Director of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups; and Ms. Melissa Pang, Vice-President of The Law Society and Chairperson of the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Committee.

RECREATION AND SPORTS COMMITTEE

The Recreation and Sports Committee (“RSC”) aims at promoting and encouraging members to take part in a wide range of recreational and sporting activities to help them achieve work-life balance and foster friendships.

Throughout the year, the Committee held six formal meetings, and members participated in hundreds of events interacting with over 1,000 members. Captains and convenors of various teams also met in formal bi-monthly meetings to report on their activities.

We have a record number of over 750 active members regularly joining the Recreation and Sports Programme 2016, with many more who attended individual events. Members took part in a wide variety of events, competitions and regular practice sessions organised by the recreational and sporting teams and interest groups including badminton, basketball, cycling, distance running, dragon boat, football, golf, hiking, snooker, swimming, table tennis, tennis, tenpin bowling, volleyball, bridge, Chinese calligraphy and painting, cookery, food and wine appreciation, dancing, live band, singing and yoga. Together with the two newly set up photography and martial arts interest groups in August, RSC offered a total of 23 teams and interest groups to cater to the different interests and needs of members.

Major events in the past year included the large scale 6th *Members and Family Fun Day* at Sandy Bay, the 6th *Legal Professional Cup Dragon Boat Race* at the Stanley Main Beach, *Annual Swimming Gala* in South Island School, the space-themed 11th *Recreation and Sports Night*, and Japanese-themed *Cooking and Tasting Competition*.

The RSC teams and groups also made us very proud for winning numerous championships, awards and displayed strong sportsmanship when participating in different external competitions including various joint professionals and invitational matches with overseas legal professionals, public bodies, industry associations, charitable organisations and student unions.

Recreation and Sports Club for Hong Kong Professional Bodies

The Law Society is a member of the Recreation and Sports Club for Hong Kong Professional Bodies (“RSCP”) and takes part in inter-professional sports and recreational tournaments regularly held by RSCP. RSCP forms a networking platform enabling members to bond with members of other major professional bodies in Hong Kong.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

The Technology Committee provides technology knowhow and services to members. It met five times.

The Committee co-organised a number of seminars with the Academy during the year, all

were well received:

- “*Legal Systems Vulnerability for Lawyers Following Mossack Case*” on 15 June
- “*Handling Digital Data with Secure and Forensically Sound Practices*” on 15 July
- “*Cybercrime from a Law Enforcement Perspective*” on 28 October
- “*Introduction to Computer Forensics*” on 28 October
- “*App Talk @ Lunch: Sharing on Useful Apps for Lawyers – Session 1*” on 31 October
- “*RME Elective – Big Data, Artificial Intelligence and Privacy*” on 12 December

Apps and their Applications

This year, “The Law Society’s App” was upgraded to include new features including running text and keyword search functions. Over 6,000 members have downloaded the App to communicate with The Law Society and/or sign up for Law Society events.

In 2016, three functional features of the mobile App were enhanced/implemented. The App has been actively used by Law Society’s committees/working parties/working groups for promotion and registration of events, and collection of views/suggestions/comments on specific issues.

At the Members Forum in July, members of this Committee introduced three other Apps relevant to legal practice to the general members.

Information Security Guidelines for Legal Practitioners

The Committee was actively engaged in the preparation of a set of Information Security Guidelines recommending good practice in the area of information security and seeking to provide general principles and specific security actions to help legal practitioners to satisfy their fiduciary and legal obligations to their clients. The Guidelines will be introduced in 2017.

Updating The Law Society Software Directory and Selection Guide (“Guide”)

With the Solicitors’ Accounts Rules coming into effect on 1 July, the Committee invited proposals to update the Guide (last updated in 2013). The purpose of the updated Guide is to identify the available practice management software with an objective assessment of their respective features/functionalities/comparative pricing. The updated version will be published in 2017.

Others

During the year, the Committee further:

- (a) considered Big Data and its influence on change in the legal profession;
- (b) considered the proposed amendments to the Solicitors Practice Rules on the requirements for law firms to show certain information on their letterhead and electional mail and made recommendations to the Guidance Committee; and

(c) made recommendations to the Working Party on Virtual Office.

WORKING GROUP ON THE LAW SOCIETY'S APP

The Working Group is tasked to serve members through maintaining and promoting the widespread adoption of The Law Society's mobile App, and to review/enhance features and functionality of the App under the auspices of the Technology Committee.

The Law Society's App is one of the first of its kind to be introduced by law societies around the world. Since its release in 2013, it has cumulated 6,337 downloads on iOS and Android devices. In 2016, there were 750 new activations and the "hit rate" of instances of members clicking within the App reached 300,000.

In 2016, three features of the mobile App were enhanced / implemented:-

- the mobile app form
- the location review by, and plug-in of, Google Maps in the *Law List*
- the availability of the "Manual on Solicitors' Accounting" under *Law Society Publications*

To encourage increased use of the mobile App, the Working Group has been actively promoting The Law Society's mobile App as an effective platform for various committees/working parties/working groups to advertise their events and collect views/suggestions/comments on specific issues, e.g. the Young Solicitor's Group launched the "*Survey on Young Members' Needs and Preferences*" at the end of November to collect feedback from young members so as to enhance their services/events in the future.

LAW FIRM TECHNICAL SUPPORT INTEREST GROUP

The Committee formed a Law Firm Technical Support Interest Group for members, trainee members and law firm technical support staff. Its main function is to provide a forum for sharing of experience and resources and exchange of views relating to technological issues in legal practice.

YOUNG SOLICITORS' GROUP ("YSG")

The YSG was established to serve the needs and interests of young members (those with less than five years' post-qualification experience and trainee solicitors). Its mission is to facilitate and assist the career and personal development of its members by offering diversified services and activities that are interesting and beneficial to its members. In addition, YSG also serves as an interactive platform for our junior and senior members, as well as local law school students and members of the profession.

Friday Lunch Gathering

The “*Friday Lunch Gathering*” is an activity series held monthly with a view to introduce our new members and trainee members to The Law Society and YSG. This series fosters communications among junior and senior members of the profession.

In 2016, 108 newly qualified solicitors and trainee solicitors attended the Friday Lunch Gathering and interacted with members of The Law Society Council and Standing Committee on Member Services, as well as YSG committee members in informal and relaxed settings.

Welcome Drinks for Trainee Solicitors

To welcome trainee solicitors to The Law Society, a “*Welcome Drinks for Trainee Solicitors*” was held on 25 November. More than 90 young, passionate and energetic trainee solicitors joined the event at The Law Society Clubhouse, where Vice-President Melissa Pang received the new trainee solicitors and generously imparted invaluable advice on practical steps to take during training contracts to obtain rewarding and memorable experiences.

Council member and YSG Chairlady Serina Chan introduced the activities organised by the YSG, while Council Members Bonita Chan and Nick Chan introduced a range of initiatives benefitting young members, including international exchange opportunities, recreation and sports activities, as well as The Law Society member benefits programme. Other senior legal practitioners also shared practical career advice on how trainee solicitors could productively get the best out of their time during their training contracts and lay the foundations necessary for successful legal careers.

The eventful evening also marked the exciting launch of the YSG’s mobile app survey to collect comments and suggestions from our young members to gain deep insights of their needs and interests.

YSG Survey

To understand the needs of Law Society members, especially young members, YSG has launched a survey entitled the “*Survey on Young Members’ Needs and Preferences*”. The feedback received would be used to further enhance YSG’s services and to improve its events in the future.

Communication with Law Students

The “*Lawyers x Lawyers-to-be Drinks Evening*” was organised on 22 September, where over 90 law students from all three of Hong Kong law schools were invited to meet Council Members and members of various committees of The Law Society and to mingle with practitioners.

The law students actively engaged in dialogues with President and other Council Members.

Practitioners also shared interesting experiences about their legal careers with and gave advice to the students on how to prepare themselves to become solicitors.

CONNECTED Mentorship and Buddy Programme

“CONNECTED”, a mentorship and buddy scheme for mentee-trainee solicitors, has become a flagship event organised by YSG over the years, enjoying tremendous popularity among trainee solicitors and members alike. This year was the fifth anniversary of the “CONNECTED” programme and has attracted around 250 member-participants.

The purpose of the scheme is to provide opportunities for trainee solicitors to meet both junior members (their “buddy”) and senior members (their “mentor”) of The Law Society, and establish “mentorship to life-long friendship” relationships through participating and interacting in a series of team-building activities. The activities in 2016 were as follows:

- Kick-off event: “*The Amazing Race*” on 9 April
- Second event: “*Soap Recycling*” on 30 July
- Closing event: “*Cocktail Workshop x Live Music x Trivia Quiz and Games @ 1563*” on 26 November
- Social gatherings were also self-organised among mentors, buddies and mentees

Distinguished Speakers’ Luncheon

The YSG’s Distinguished Speakers’ Luncheon was held on 25 June and 24 September respectively.

In the first Luncheon, Professor Albert Chen and Professor Johannes Chan, SC (Hon) were invited to share their views on “*The Implementation of ‘One Country Two Systems’ and the Future of Basic Law in 2047*” by examining the application of the Basic Law in the past and discussing issues concerning its future development. In the second Luncheon, the Honourable Lam Woon-Kwong GBS, JP gave a talk entitled “*The Making of Hong Kong: A Long Winding Road*” by highlighting important milestones in the history of Hong Kong, which have shaped Hong Kong into not only a vibrant society but also one of the world’s most important financial centres.

Members found the guest speakers’ sharings highly enlightening and insightful.

Cross Strait Four Regions Young Lawyers Forum 2016

The YSG and the Greater China Legal Affairs Committee jointly organised the *Cross Strait Four Regions Young Lawyers Forum 2016* with a theme entitled “*Opportunities and Challenges arising from Cross-border Practice*” on 14 October. Reputable speakers including Wesley Wong Wai-chung, SC, Solicitor General, Department of Justice, and Nicholas W. Yang, JP, Secretary for Innovation and Technology, addressed the topic of the opportunities and challenges arising from cross-border business and associated risks. The forum also provided professional exchanges and networking opportunities for young lawyers from the Mainland, Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong.

Joint Professional Activities

To foster closer relationships with other young professionals, YSG jointly organised a series of events with the young groups of other professional bodies, including the Hong Kong Bar Association, Hong Kong Dental Association, Hong Kong Institute of Architects, Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Hong Kong Institute of Chartered Secretaries, Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects, Hong Kong Institute of Planners, Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors and Hong Kong Medical Association.

Joint professional activities organised in 2016 included:

- “*Joint Professional Architectural Tour in Central and Networking Drinks*” on 28 May
- “*Joint Professional Networking Party 2016 – Hawaii Aloha*” on 30 June

YSG, as a member body of the Young Coalition Professional Group (“YCPG”), together with the Education Bureau, co-organised the Joint Professional Career Day on 30 April. The Programme targeted students from secondary schools with lesser resources to provide career guidance support. Over 50 professionals from 10 member institutes of YCPG conducted 16 career talks and sharing sessions, and benefited around 200 secondary school students from nearly 30 secondary schools in Hong Kong.

Community and Pro Bono Services

The YSG has been collaborating with the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (“TWGHs”) in providing voluntary community services to help young children of under-resourced families in the past decade. The programme aims to raise awareness among the children about the importance of abiding by the law and the core values of the Hong Kong legal system, strengthen their interest and confidence in using English, as well as broaden their general horizons through interactions with Law Society volunteers.

In 2016, the YSG’s TWGHs community service day was held as a part of the series of Law Week events and was held on 3 December in Tuen Mun. Immediate Past President opened the event by explaining the role of lawyers as well as highlighting the rights and duties of citizens in the society. Council member and YSG Chairlady Serina Chan then led an interactive ice-breaking session and briefly introduced the key concepts of freedom and human rights.

Over 20 Law Society volunteers shared the book entitled “*We are all born free*” with around 40 primary school students and introduced the core values of natural justice and equality, procedural fairness of the judicial system, fundamental human rights as well as anti-discrimination protection to them.

INTEREST GROUP ON MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

The Group was formed with the primary aims of setting up a platform for sharing information on mergers and acquisitions; to have in place an effective mechanism to collate relevant information on the needs of potential investors from the Mainland and understanding their investment objectives; formulating how Hong Kong solicitors can assist in the process in advising Mainland enterprises in relation to their diversification of investments abroad pursuant to the national "going out" policy; and inviting those with the relevant expertise to express their interest to be involved.

WORKING PARTY ON HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

The Working Party is tasked to recommend a policy for the establishment and maintenance of an archive ("Archive") for The Law Society so that documents and materials of historical value can be systemically preserved, maintained and made accessible in the future.

It has submitted a report which sets out in general terms the Working Party's suggestions for an archival policy, the appointment of an archivist; the selection and acquisition of relevant documents and materials for the Archive; and the broad principles for future access to the Archive.

If and when the Council of The Law Society decides to set up the Archive, the Working Party stands ready to assist with its establishment and maintenance as may be required.

WORKING PARTY ON LAW LIBRARY

The Working Party on Law Library was set up to reorganise the existing law library collection and facilities with an aim to better serve our members.

WORKING GROUP ON ONLINE RECRUITMENT SERVICES

The Working Group was established by end of 2013 to consider providing an online recruitment platform for law firm employers and member employees. A request for proposal was issued early in the year.

Taking into account the extra manpower required in previewing the job seekers' information and the matching service and the minimal value to be added due to limited gap in the recruitment market, the Working Group resolved to shelve the idea.

WORKING GROUP ON STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

The Working Group was established to provide recommendations to the Standing Committee on matters regarding student membership of The Law Society, including but not limited to recruitment of student members, enhancement of their benefits, and coordination of different committees on provision of better services to student members.

Two career talks for law students were held on 13 October and 1 November at the City University of Hong Kong (“CityU”) and The University of Hong Kong (“HKU”) respectively. Council members Bonita Chan, Nick Chan and Serina Chan spoke to students about the legal career path, on job interviews and how to boost their chances of turning an internship into a training contract.

Initiated by the Working Group, The Law Society participated in the Hong Kong Law Fair held on 10 September aiming at promoting its role and function as well as its student membership at the occasion.

The Working Group has made great efforts in recruiting student members through distribution of student membership application forms at law schools’ orientation camps and Law Society’s gatherings. A total of 131 new student membership applications were received in 2016.