



About PILnet's Law for Change Student Competition

PILnet creates opportunities for social change by unlocking law's full potential. Simply put, PILnet's goal is to make law work for all. It does so by building networks and collaborations of lawyers who understand how law works then using that knowledge to serve the public interest.

Issues relating to the rule of law in Hong Kong are a growing part of public discourse, and it is important that the discourse includes using law as a tool for social change. Rule of law and access to justice for low-income and vulnerable communities are core elements of public interest law and are necessary pillars of a fair and just society.

The Law for Change Student Competition is intended to stimulate interest in public interest law and create opportunities for implementing sustainable initiatives to address the access to justice needs of the communities in Hong Kong. Graduate and undergraduate students are invited to select and research a social issue in Hong Kong related to the theme of the year's competition and subsequently conceive and develop a project that will use law to address that particular issue. The winner and each of the two runner-up teams will be awarded a seed grant of HK\$50,000 and HK\$25,000, respectively, to implement their projects.

Theme for 2020: "Community Resilience"

"Community" has been the overarching theme for the Law for Change Student Competition since 2018. A community brings individuals together and empowers them to work together in daily life, in pursuit of betterment beyond one's self or group. The theme serves as a platform for potential collaboration and partnership across sectors, professions, generations, race, gender, and cultural identity.

This year, "resilience" is the chosen focus. Students are invited to develop projects that use the law to build community resilience. Resilience is the capability to respond, adapt and recover from challenges and adversities. Community resilience is the ability of a community to deal with internal and external disturbances and stresses while retaining its essence and to move towards a better environment, social and economic health and wellbeing. The Hong Kong community is facing enormous and unprecedented challenges: a pandemic, the widest wealth gap in 45 years, ongoing social and political unrest - building community resilience is especially important in these turbulent times.

A resilient community provides capacity and resources for its members to cope with adversity and can withstand and deal with internal conflict. As members of the Hong Kong community, we should utilize our creativity, knowledge and skills, rise up to the challenges and take responsibility for our collective future.

While law is often seen as a tool to serve the interest of the powerful few, this year's competition challenges participants to devise projects that use the law to build community resilience. In particular, students are encouraged to find methods of collaboration within the community, especially in the areas of health and well-being, social cohesion and good governance. Projects could aim at capacity building, legal empowerment, policy change/law reform, creating strategic partnerships, among others.

Interested in becoming a mentor for a Law for Change student team?

Contact us at: competition@pilnet.org.

For more details:



Background of legal mentorship

Legal mentorship has been the key component of the competition to provide a unique opportunity for students to learn from the mentors' invaluable experience and expertise. Each of the eight selected finalist teams will be matched with legal mentors who will provide feedback and advice throughout the competition. The legal mentors who participated in previous competitions played a crucial role in contributing to the success of the competition, and they found the experience both inspiring and rewarding.

PILnet believes that there is immense value connecting law students who have innovative ideas with experienced legal practitioners who can mentor, guide, and encourage them as they formulate practical ways to incubate their ideas in the legal sector. This year, PILnet hopes to further foster this mentoring culture in Hong Kong by extending this opportunity to all legal practitioners, and encouraging legal practitioners who have not participated before to become legal mentors in the competition.

Requirement and Commitment

All law firms, in-house counsel and barristers are welcome to form a team with at least three members to join the competition as legal mentors. After PILnet has selected the finalist student teams in late September, the mentor teams will be informed with the topics and will have a week to indicate three topics that they are interested in. PILnet will match the eight student teams with the legal mentor teams, based on the number of mentor teams registered and their indicated interest in the topics. Student teams and legal mentors will first meet at an opening event in early October.

The competition will last for five months, from October 2020 to February 2021. Legal mentors are expected to meet with the student team at least four to five times during the competition. PILnet will provide support to the mentors and student teams throughout the competition.

Roles and Responsibilities

Legal Mentors

- Be approachable and accessible
- Share insight, knowledge and experience, particularly on analytical and advocacy skills
- Connect student team to relevant resources and network(s)
- Commit required time throughout the competition
- Be passionate to mentor and invest in the next generation of public interest-minded lawyers

Recommended Topics for Meetings

Legal mentors are expected to meet with their student team to discuss on the recommended topics below. PILnet strongly encourages legal mentors to develop a relationship with their respective student team beyond these meetings. Students are recommended to update the progress and discuss with their legal mentors regularly.

MEETING	POSSIBLE DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES
1 Setting expectations	Students and mentors to 1) set out and discuss format and specifics of mentorship and 2) review content of the Executive Summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review problem analysis of selected social justice issues• Discuss preliminary research plan and gap analysis• Brainstorm and develop project concept and ideas particularly with regards to the legal dimension of the project
2 Refining project concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up discussion on research and gap analysis• Determine overarching goals, objectives, strategy and scope of project• Identify potential partners and stakeholders
3 Developing project proposal	Mentors to provide guidance and comments on proposal prior to submission, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation plan & budget• Monitoring & evaluation plan• Sustainability plan
4 Preparing the pitch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss presentation strategy, format and style• Run a mock presentation of project
5 Debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debrief and reflect on the process• Discuss the future plan

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