

PILnet Public Interest Law Mentorship Program

Fourth Round

Guide for Mentors and Mentees

About the Mentorship Program

PILnet is pleased to launch the fourth round of its Public Interest Law Mentorship Program (the “Program”) in Hong Kong. This round will begin in March 2025 and end in June 2025. The Program is made possible with the generous support of the WYNG Foundation.

Mentees will consist of law students or young legal professionals with an interest in social justice and public interest law. Student mentees should be those currently studying law, who are enrolled in LLB, JD, GDL, GDEHKL, or PCLL courses in Hong Kong. Young professionals, including trainee solicitors and barristers / pupil barristers, should have completed their legal studies or qualified within the past two years.

Mentors will be experienced lawyers, based in Hong Kong, with a demonstrated interest in public interest law or pro bono legal work. Mentors may be barristers, solicitors at international or local law firms, in-house counsel, or lawyers working at local NGOs.

Objectives of the Program

In addition to promoting mentees’ personal and professional development, the Program will aim to inspire and give mentees a broader perspective of their future careers, by demonstrating how public interest work can be a real part of their legal practice, and providing examples of alternative career paths with a focus on social justice or public interest law.

Mentees’ Responsibilities

1. Meetings with mentors: Mentees are expected to meet with their mentors around once a month, for a total of at least four meetings over the duration of the Program. Since mentors are busy lawyers with full schedules, the onus is on mentees to take the initiative to reach out to their mentors and propose dates and times for each meeting. Mentees should come to each meeting prepared with ideas for discussion, and will gain the most from their mentorships if they have thought about their overall goal both for the Program and for each meeting with their mentors.
2. Program events: Mentees are also expected to attend all the events arranged during the course of the Program, namely the Opening Event, Sharing Event, and the Closing Event (as shown in the Program timeline below). At all three events, mentees will have a chance to practice their networking skills in a relaxed and supportive environment with their fellow mentees and mentors. Mentors are outstanding lawyers in the public

interest space in Hong Kong, and this is an excellent opportunity to expand one's professional network.

3. Mid-term check-ins: In addition to the Program events and meetings with mentors, PILnet will arrange a mandatory "mid-term check-in" with each mentor-mentee pairing, which will be a brief call conducted online. Mentees are responsible for scheduling this check-in, on behalf of their mentor and themselves, with PILnet.
4. Reflection paper: At the end of the Program, mentees are required to write a brief reflection paper on their experience of the Program, which will help PILnet in evaluating and improving the Program.

Mentors' Responsibilities

1. Meetings with mentees: Mentors are similarly expected to meet with their mentees around once a month, for a total of at least four meetings over the duration of the Program. Mentors are asked to be responsive and carve out the necessary time to meet with their mentees. In addition to sharing about their own public interest law or pro bono work, PILnet encourages mentors to provide practical advice for young professionals embarking on a legal career. Mentors should take the lead and guide conversations with their mentees, ensuring that their meetings are as productive as possible. Mentors are welcome to propose meetings with other mentor-mentee pairings, which can be a good opportunity for mentors to network with their fellow mentor peers.
2. Mid-term check-ins: Around the midway point of the Program, mentors will be expected to attend a "mid-term check-in" with PILnet and their mentee, which will be a brief call conducted online.
3. Program events: Mentors are also encouraged to attend the three Program events organized by PILnet (as shown in the timeline below), in particular the Opening Event marking the launch of the Program, where they can meet their mentees in person for the first time.

PILnet will arrange optional introductory calls with mentors who are joining the Program for the first time, in order to clarify expectations, offer tips, and answer any questions.

Throughout the duration of the Program, PILnet will be available to provide support to mentors or mentees wherever needed. We understand that both mentors and mentees are extremely busy, but we urge all participants to dedicate the time needed to make this experience as rewarding as possible.

Program Timeline and Expected Commitment

Key Dates	Events	Role of Mentees & Mentors
14 February 2025	Mentee application deadline	Prospective mentees must submit an online application by the deadline.
17 to 26 February 2025	Interviews with prospective mentees	PILnet will contact shortlisted mentees to schedule a short interview.
28 February 2025	Mentees notified	PILnet will notify mentees on the success of their applications.
7 March 2025*	Opening Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This event will mark the launch of the Program and will be a great opportunity for all mentors and mentees to meet each other for the first time. • Mentees are expected to attend, and mentors are strongly encouraged to attend. • PILnet will introduce each mentee-mentor pairing by email ahead of the event.
March - June 2025	Mentee-mentor meetings	Mentor-mentee pairings are expected to meet around once per month, for a total of at least four meetings, and more often if they wish.
Late April - early May 2025	Mid-term check-in with PILnet	PILnet will arrange a short online meeting with each mentor-mentee pairing during this period, to conduct a mid-term check in and discuss what additional support PILnet can provide.
29 April 2025*	Sharing Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This event will feature a keynote speaker on a public interest law topic, and will include an opportunity for participants to network and share their experience. • Mentees are expected to attend, and mentors are strongly encouraged to attend.
5 June 2025*	Closing Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This event will mark the completion of the Program, and will be a great opportunity for participants to celebrate their contributions and share their takeaways from the Program. • Mentees are expected to attend, and mentors are strongly encouraged to attend.

**To be confirmed. Note that all Program events are expected to be held in-person.*

Suggested Topics for Mentee-Mentor Meetings

Mentors and mentees are expected to meet around once a month for a total of four meetings, and certainly more often if desired. These meetings can be either in person or online - whatever works best. PILnet recommends aiming for around one hour per meeting.

While there are no “required” topics that must be discussed during these meetings, you can consider the discussion points below. These can help get the conversation started and ensure the discussion touches on the key objectives of the Program.

Topic	Discussion Points
Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career history and current role or studies • Reason for choosing to study law • Interests outside of work • Types of public interest law or pro bono work you have done / are interested in • The mentee’s expectations for the mentorship
Career Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your dream job? • 3- and 5-year plans • Strengths that might help you get there • Weaknesses or obstacles that might hinder your progress • Incorporating pro bono work or public interest law into your career plan • How pro bono work can help advance your career • Achieving financial stability while practicing public interest law
Relationship Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with challenging superiors and colleagues • Persuading your manager to allow time for pro bono work • Juggling competing deadlines / very busy schedules • Understanding a senior lawyer’s perspective
Public Interest Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of public interest law and pro bono legal work • Ways for young professionals to get involved • Alternative legal careers • Volunteering outside of work • Training or courses to consider • Handling matters outside of one’s area of expertise • Working with pro bono clients • The value of public interest law and pro bono to NGOs, lawyers, law firms, and society at large • Why law firms invest in pro bono work • How to contribute if one’s firm does not have a pro bono practice/culture • How to contribute to pro bono work before qualifying as a lawyer • The kind of pro bono work that barristers, solicitors, and in-house counsel can do • How to make the most out of networking events
Work/Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical tips during PCLL, training contract / pupillage, first year as a qualified lawyer • How to juggle day-to-day work with pro bono work • How to push back gracefully • Time and project management tips

Matching of Mentors and Mentees

Prospective mentees can apply for the Program by submitting an [online application form](#). Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, and PILnet will reach out to shortlisted candidates to schedule a brief interview. Successful applicants will be introduced to their mentors via email, and may also meet their mentors in person at the Opening Event.

PILnet will attempt to match mentees to suitable mentors according to their preferences and perceived compatibility to the extent possible, but cannot guarantee this in every case.

Enquiries

For any questions, please contact PILnet by reaching out to hkprobono@pilnet.org.