

A FUTURE-READY LEGAL PROFESSION

From Symposium Insights to a Five-Workstream Roadmap

Contents

I. Executive Summary	3
II. Background	6
Origins of the Reform Effort: The Ethics and Professional Standards Committee	6
III. The Legal Profession Symposium 2025: A Three-Day Synthesis	7
IV. From Conversations to Structure: Post-Symposium Synthesis	13
V. The Five Workstreams	15
A. Workstream 1: Sharpening Business and Leadership Skills	15
B. Workstream 2: Bridging Legal Education and Industry	19
C. Workstream 3: Internationalisation and Improving Competitiveness	22
D. Workstream 4: Harnessing AI Safely and Effectively	25
E. Workstream 5: Promoting Sustainability and Wellbeing for a Resilient Profession	28
VI. Implementation and Governance	33
A. The Future of the Legal Profession Committee	33
B. The Living Case Study: A Long-Term Learning Architecture	34
C. Future Lawyers Network	35
D. Research-Informed and Evidence-Based Development	35
VII. Looking Ahead: The Path to a Sustainable, Values-Based, Future-Ready Profession	36
Annexes	38
A. The Three Ethics and Professional Standards Committee Pillars: Ethos, Learning, and the Profession	38
B. Welcome Address by Justice Valerie Thean at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025	38
C. Opening Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025	38
D. Summary of Keynote Address by Professor David B. Wilkins	39
E. Closing Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025	40
F. Reports of Focus Group Discussions	40
G. Pre-Symposium Survey Report	41
Members of the Legal Profession Symposium 2025 Organising Committee and the Future of the Legal Profession Committee and Secretariat	41

I. Executive Summary

1. The legal profession is navigating a period of profound change. Heightened commercial pressures, intensifying global competition, the rapid emergence of generative AI, and persistent concerns about the sustainability of private practice have converged to create what was described at Legal Profession Symposium 2025 (“LPS 2025” or “Symposium”) as a “perfect long storm” of systemic challenges¹. These pressures intersect with longstanding structural issues, including inconsistent leadership development, uneven mentorships, gaps in practice-readiness among new entrants, and attrition driven by excessive workload, burnout, and unclear career pathways.

2. LPS 2025², together with a Singapore Academy of Law (“SAL”) survey and Focus Group Discussions³ (“FGDs”) engaged hundreds of practitioners across various PQE levels and firm sizes. These engagements surfaced consistent concerns relating to workplace culture, the business of law, training and development, global competitiveness, and the emerging impact of AI. At LPS 2025, junior and senior lawyers, in-house counsel, academics, and the judiciary came together to discuss four strategic questions:

- how young lawyers are trained;
- how Singapore lawyers can remain globally competitive;
- how AI can be responsibly integrated into lawyering; and
- how institutions can be redesigned to support sustainable legal careers.



3. From these conversations, it was clear that the profession’s challenges are multi-causal, interconnected, and resistant to isolated interventions. Participants described deficits in mentorship, the difficult transition from law school to practice, misaligned incentives, structural wellbeing concerns, anxiety over the impact of AI on junior training, and cultural barriers to internationalisation. The discussions reinforced the need for coordinated systemic reforms and long-term capability building.

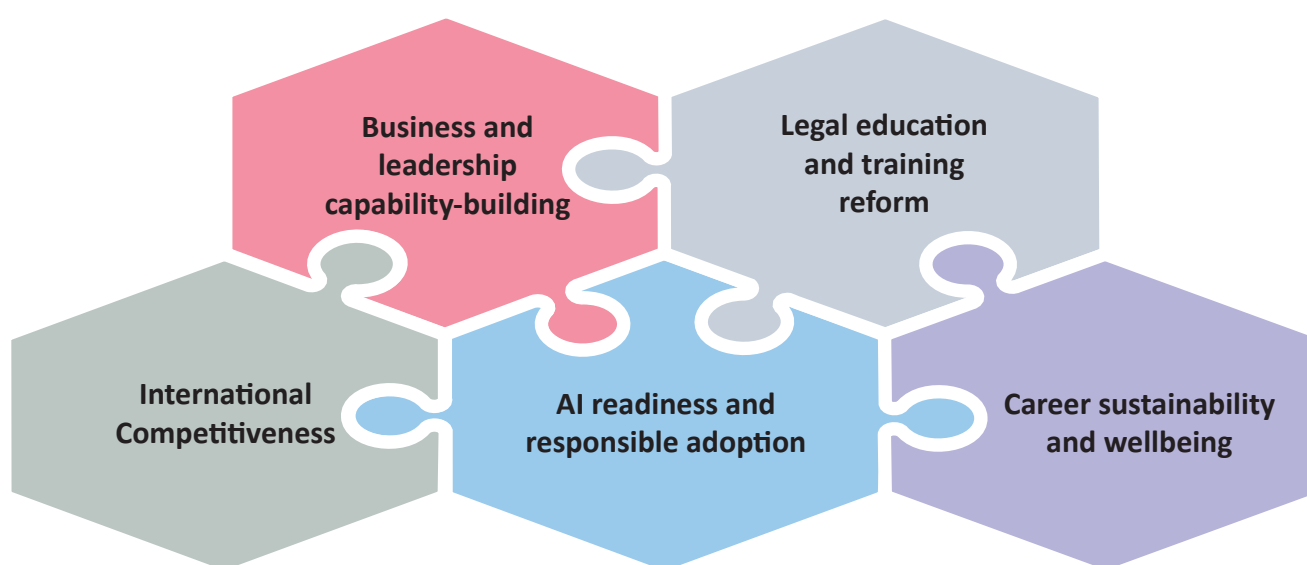
¹ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon’s Opening Address at LPS 2025, at para 26.

² See EPSC Final Report.

³ See Annex F for FGDs that were conducted on 23 April 2025 for culture; 7 May 2025 for the business of law; and 8 May 2025 for technology.

4. In response, SAL, in partnership with the judiciary and ecosystem stakeholders, undertook a process of synthesis and strategic alignment following the Symposium. From the EPSC’s issue identification, FGDs⁴, and the three days of structured LPS 2025 conversations, five interlocking domains emerged as requiring sustained and coordinated attention:

- i. business and leadership capability-building,
- ii. legal education and training reform,
- iii. international competitiveness,
- iv. AI readiness and responsible adoption, and
- v. career sustainability and wellbeing.



5. To translate these domains into an actionable reform agenda, together with Ministry of Law (“MinLaw”), SAL established the Future of the Legal Profession Committee (“FLPC”) to coordinate with institutional stakeholders on a community-led effort to address issues across all five domains. The FLPC’s Terms of Reference emphasises strengthening member relations and building communities of practice, developing strategies for a sustainable and values-driven profession, and fostering applied research on the sustainability of the legal sector.

6. Thus, five Workstreams emerged to form the roadmap for the profession’s next phase of development:

- i. Workstream 1: Sharpening Business and Leadership Skills
- ii. Workstream 2: Bridging Legal Education and Industry
- iii. Workstream 3: Enhancing Internationalisation and Improving Competitiveness
- iv. Workstream 4: Harnessing AI Safely and Effectively
- v. Workstream 5: Promoting Sustainability and Wellbeing for a Resilient Profession

⁴ See Annex F.



7. These Workstreams provide a framework for sustained change, aligning real-world practitioner experience with strategic institutional improvements.

8. *Towards a Future-Ready Legal Profession* sets out the rationale, structure, and implementation roadmap for these Workstreams, articulating the proposed delivery pathways for the next few years, and the FLPC's role in the same.

II. Background

Origins of the Reform Effort: The Ethics and Professional Standards Committee

9. In January 2023, during his Opening of Legal Year response, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon announced the establishment of the Ethics & Professional Standards Committee (“EPSC”) to “develop a strategy to reinforce the moral centre and values of the profession.”⁵

10. Throughout 2023 and early 2024, the EPSC conducted extensive consultations with more than 500 lawyers across the profession, including private practitioners, in-house counsel, law school faculty, and legal and judicial service officers of all levels of seniority. In the interactions, lawyers consistently raised concerns about workplace culture, the business sustainability of legal practice, the adequacy of law school curriculum for producing industry-ready graduates, the uneven adoption of technology (including AI), and the need for good supervision and mentorship of young lawyers. These issues reflected a profession at an inflection point, where many long-standing assumptions about career pathways, training models, culture, and the nature of legal work were being tested by new realities. These concerns were summarised in the EPSC’s January 2025 Report, which made recommendations along three strands: Ethos, Learning, and Profession.

11. The Report also highlighted the need for a renewed, profession-wide conversation to engender and sustain meaningful change into the long term.

⁵ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon: Response delivered at the Opening of The Legal Year 2025 at para 8.

III. The Legal Profession Symposium 2025 — A Three-Day Synthesis



A: Diagnosing the State of the Profession

Objective

12. Day 1 of the Legal Profession Symposium was designed to establish a shared diagnosis of the challenges facing the legal profession. The emphasis was on surfacing lived experiences across career stages, testing assumptions about sustainability and professional values, and framing these challenges as systemic rather than individual in nature. It was preceded by focus group discussions and a survey that set the ground for discussion on the day.

Participants

13. The day brought together a broad cross-section of the profession, including nominated junior lawyers, early- and mid-career supervisors, senior practitioners from private practice and in-house roles, members of the judiciary, academics, and institutional stakeholders. This diversity of perspectives was deliberate, ensuring that discussions reflected experiences across different practice settings and stages of professional development.



Highlights

14. Key elements that shaped discussion during Day 1 included:

- A shared framing of the sustainability of legal practice as a central concern for the profession, with particular attention to workload intensity, attrition among junior lawyers, and leadership capacity within firms.
- Reflections on the profession's evolving context, including commercial pressures, changing career expectations, globalisation, and the increasing complexity of legal work.
- Open discussion of gaps between espoused professional values and lived experience, particularly in relation to mentorship, supervision, and psychological safety.
- Consideration of mental wellbeing as an outcome of workplace structures and practices, rather than solely a matter of individual coping or resilience.
- Early exploration of generative AI as both a potential enabler of sustainability and a source of uncertainty around training, professional judgment, and accountability.

Key Insights Drawn

15. Taken together, these discussions led to a common understanding that the challenges facing the profession are complex, interconnected, and systemic in nature. Participants consistently resisted explanations that attributed dissatisfaction or attrition to personal weakness or generational attitudes. Instead, attention was directed towards how legal work is organised, supervised, and valued across different practice settings.

16. Day 1 also clarified that sustainability cannot be addressed through isolated or incremental interventions. The issues raised cut across culture, leadership, training, and institutional design, pointing towards the need for coordinated responses across firms, institutions, and the wider legal ecosystem. This shared diagnosis provided a foundation for the Symposium to move beyond problem identification towards deeper strategic inquiry and leadership reflection in the days that followed.





B: From Diagnosis to Strategic Questions

Objective

17. Day 2 of the Legal Profession Symposium shifted the focus from diagnosing challenges to exploring possible directions for response. Building on the shared understanding established on Day 1, participants were invited to consider how the profession might address these challenges through coordinated and forward-looking action. The day was structured around four strategic questions intended to surface priorities, tensions, and areas requiring deeper attention.



Participants

18. Participants included nominated junior lawyers, early- and mid-career supervisors, senior practitioners, and other members of the profession from a range of practice settings. This mix allowed perspectives from different career stages to be considered alongside one another and enabled ideas to be tested across generational and organisational boundaries.



Highlights

19. Key themes and discussions during Day 2 included:

- Structured workshops organised around four strategic questions addressing training and development, global competitiveness, technology and AI, and institutional design and wellbeing.
- Broad agreement that the challenges identified on Day 1 were interconnected, with potential responses in one area often affecting others.
- Recognition that existing approaches to legal education and early-career development may not fully align with the realities of contemporary practice.
- Extensive discussion of how AI and new technologies could reshape legal work, alongside concerns about training quality, ethical responsibility, and uneven readiness across firms and career stages.
- Consideration of how responsibility for change might be shared across firms, institutions, and individuals, rather than resting on any single actor.

Key Insights Drawn

20. Day 2 underscored that the profession's challenges cannot be addressed through isolated initiatives or single-issue reforms. Participants consistently emphasised the need for integrated approaches that recognise the links between education, leadership, technology, competitiveness, and wellbeing.

21. The four strategic questions served as organising frames rather than definitive solutions. Through discussion and comparison of perspectives, participants began to identify a smaller number of recurring issue areas that cut across different concerns and career stages. These areas pointed towards the need for sustained attention, coordination, and experimentation beyond the Symposium itself.





C: Leadership Reflection and Institutional Responsibility

Objective

22. Day 3 of the Legal Profession Symposium focused on leadership reflection and the responsibilities of senior practitioners and institutions in shaping the future of the profession. Building on the issues and strategic questions surfaced over the first two days, the emphasis shifted towards examining leadership mindsets, institutional roles, and the conditions required for sustained change.

Participants

23. Participants on Day 3 included senior leaders from private practice and in-house roles, members of the judiciary, academics, and representatives from key legal institutions. The composition of the group allowed for candid reflection on leadership responsibility, influence, and the capacity of institutions to support profession-wide change.



Highlights

24. Key themes and discussions during Day 3 included:
- Reflection by senior practitioners on the experiences and concerns expressed by junior and mid-level lawyers during the earlier days of the Symposium.
 - Acknowledgement that leadership behaviour and organisational culture play a decisive role in shaping professional experience, development, and retention.
 - Discussion of the responsibilities of leaders to set clear expectations, model professional values, and create environments that support learning and sustainability.
 - Consideration of the role of institutions in convening dialogue, aligning efforts, and supporting coordinated responses across the profession.
 - Recognition that meaningful change requires sustained commitment and cannot rely solely on short-term initiatives or individual goodwill.

Key Insights Drawn

25. Day 3 reinforced that leadership is a critical lever for addressing the challenges facing the profession. Participants acknowledged that while structural pressures and external forces are significant, leadership choices within firms and institutions strongly influence how those pressures are experienced in practice.

26. There was broad agreement that institutional actors have an important role in setting shared expectations, providing guidance, and supporting collaboration across the ecosystem. At the same time, participants recognised that responsibility for change ultimately rests with individuals and organisations exercising leadership in their respective spheres.

27. By closing the Symposium with a focus on leadership responsibility and institutional coordination, Day 3 underscored the need to move beyond diagnosis and discussion towards sustained, collective action over time.



IV. From Conversations to Structure: Post-Symposium Synthesis

28. Following the Symposium in 2025, a clear pattern emerged across the discussions held over the three days. Issues raised by participants, though articulated in different contexts and from different perspectives, consistently clustered around a small number of systemic pressure points within the profession. These were not isolated concerns, but interconnected challenges that cut across career stages, practice settings, and institutional boundaries.

Five broad domains became particularly salient:

- leadership, business skills, and organisational capability;
- legal education and early professional formation;
- AI and technological transformation;
- global competitiveness and cross-border readiness; and
- sustainability, wellbeing, and workplace culture.



29. While these domains arose from different conversations, they were deeply interrelated. Gaps in leadership affected mentorship and wellbeing. Weak organisational systems complicated the responsible adoption of technology. Limited international exposure constrained competitiveness. Misalignment between education and practice intensified early-career strain and attrition.

30. When considered alongside the Ethics and Professional Standards Committee's three pillars—Ethos, Learning, and Profession—these domains provided a coherent structure for sustained, profession-wide work. Ethos anchored questions of values, culture, and purpose. Learning focused attention on training, skills, and the development of judgment. Profession highlighted institutions, governance, and the wider ecosystem in which legal work is carried out.

31. This synthesis formed the basis for identifying five Workstreams. Together, they translate the insights of the Symposium into a structured framework for coordinated action, supporting longer-term experimentation, institutional alignment, and shared responsibility across the legal profession.

“

While the task ahead might seem daunting, our profession's greatest strength has always been our remarkable ability to come together to unite in common purpose for the sake of our society and our greater good.

”

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon
Opening Address at Legal Profession Symposium 2025



V. The Five Workstreams



A. Workstream 1: Sharpening Business and Leadership Skills

From Technical Excellence to Leadership and Business Skills as Core Professional Capabilities



Problem Statement

32. Discussions at the LPS 2025 highlighted persistent gaps in business understanding and leadership capability across multiple stages of legal practice. Junior lawyers described limited visibility into how legal work is priced, resourced, and managed, often encountering firm economics only indirectly through billing targets or workload pressures. Mid-level lawyers spoke of being thrust into supervisory roles with little preparation for people management, delegation, or client stewardship. Senior practitioners, in turn, reflected candidly on having developed leadership and business skills largely through experience rather than structured learning.

33. These gaps have practical consequences. Where business considerations are opaque, lawyers may struggle to contextualise expectations or align professional judgment with commercial realities. Where supervisory and leadership responsibilities are assumed without preparation, teams may experience inconsistent communication, uneven workload allocation, and avoidable friction. Over time, these dynamics can affect professional development, workplace culture, and the sustainability of legal practice.



Why Intervention Is Needed

34. Participants consistently emphasised that these challenges stem from long-standing professional norms rather than individual shortcomings. Legal education and early professional formation have traditionally prioritised technical competence, with the expectation that leadership and business acumen will develop organically through seniority. In the current environment, that assumption is increasingly misaligned with reality.

35. Legal practice today is characterised by heightened client sophistication, tighter margins, and more complex organisational structures. Lawyers are expected not only to deliver high-quality legal advice, but also to manage teams, communicate expectations clearly, and exercise judgment in balancing quality, efficiency, and risk. Without more deliberate capability-building, the profession risks perpetuating a cycle in which leadership responsibilities are inherited rather than learned, and business decisions are experienced as arbitrary or inaccessible by those most affected by them.

36. Intervention under this Workstream is therefore aimed at strengthening foundational capabilities that support effective supervision, clearer communication, and more resilient professional environments.



Key Directions and Initiatives

37. Workstream 1 focuses on embedding business and leadership capability as core professional skills, rather than treating them as optional or late-career add-ons. It does not prescribe a single leadership model or business framework. Instead, it seeks to establish shared foundations and common reference points that can be adapted across different practice settings and experiences. One key direction is improving understanding of the business of law. Participants highlighted the value of earlier and clearer exposure to how legal work is priced, resourced, and evaluated, including the commercial and operational considerations that shape day-to-day decisions within firms. Such transparency was seen as important not to impose managerial responsibility prematurely, but to equip lawyers with the context necessary to understand expectations around workload, performance, and client service.

38. Another central focus is the deliberate development of leadership and supervisory capability, particularly for mid-level lawyers who often serve as the primary interface between senior leadership and junior teams. Symposium discussions emphasised the need to normalise leadership development earlier in a lawyer's career, with attention to practical capabilities such as delegation, feedback, communication, and managing competing priorities. These skills were widely understood as learnable and improvable, rather than innate traits that emerge automatically with seniority.

39. Initiatives under this Workstream are therefore orientated towards supporting supervisors and emerging leaders through structured learning opportunities, shared tools, and peer exchange. Examples include the Future Legal Talent Series, which convenes legal leaders and Learning & Development professionals for focused discussions and learning seminars centred on talent development and management topics; SAL's Executive Coaching Programme, a subsidised initiative pairing mid- to senior-level practitioners with certified executive coaches to support targeted leadership development beyond structured training programmes and the SAL Legal Leadership Playbook (2026 Edition), developed by SAL and endorsed by the Human Capital Leadership Institute ("HCLI"), a living document consolidating essential resources for legal professionals transitioning into leadership roles. The Playbook provides a curated toolkit covering core leadership competencies and practical frameworks for common leadership scenarios across different career stages. The emphasis is on reducing reliance on informal trial-and-error learning and fostering greater awareness of good leadership practices across teams, while recognising the diversity of firm sizes, practice areas, and business models.



Roles and Responsibilities Across the Ecosystem

40. Responsibility for strengthening business and leadership capability is shared across the legal ecosystem. Law firms play a central role by signalling that leadership is a skill to be developed deliberately, and by creating space for training, reflection, and feedback alongside client work. How firms recognise and value leadership behaviours alongside technical excellence was repeatedly identified as an important signal of priorities.

41. Senior practitioners influence this Workstream not only through formal roles, but through the behaviours they model daily. Clarity in instructions, consistency in decision-making, and openness about trade-offs help demystify leadership and build trust within teams. Mid-level lawyers occupy a particularly critical position, as they balance delivery responsibilities with supervisory demands. Clearer expectations and structured support can significantly affect their effectiveness and wellbeing.

42. Junior lawyers, while not expected to lead teams, benefit from greater visibility into how professional responsibilities evolve and how decisions are made within firms. Institutions such as SAL and law schools contribute by supporting leadership and business capability as legitimate dimensions of professional competence, and by convening conversations, resources, and shared frameworks that individual organisations may find difficult to develop independently.



Key Tensions and Trade-offs

43. Participants recognised that efforts to strengthen business and leadership skills must navigate real constraints. Time invested in leadership development can appear to compete with billable demands. Greater transparency around firm economics may surface difficult questions about resourcing and performance. There is also a balance to be struck between providing shared frameworks and respecting the diversity of practice contexts across the profession.

44. These tensions do not weaken the case for intervention. Rather, they underscore the importance of thoughtful design, realistic expectations, and clarity about purpose in implementing leadership and business capability initiatives. In this regard, the initiatives under this Workstream are designed to bridge the gap between conceptual training and practical application, by providing structured support, tools, and opportunities for reflection that enable lawyers to develop leadership capability in context, rather than through trial and error alone.



Desired Outcomes

45. Workstream 1 focuses on strengthening business and leadership capability across the profession.
46. Over time, desired outcomes would include:
- junior lawyers having clearer visibility into how legal work is resourced, evaluated, and managed;
 - mid-level lawyers feeling better prepared and supported in supervisory and people-management roles;
 - clearer and more consistent communication of expectations across teams;
 - good leadership behaviours being recognised and valued alongside technical excellence; and
 - stronger alignment between professional development, client service, and organisational sustainability.
47. Collectively, these outcomes would contribute to more transparent, adaptive, and resilient practice environments, equipping lawyers to lead teams, steward resources responsibly, and navigate the evolving demands of legal practice.



B. Workstream 2: Bridging Legal Education and Industry

From Sequential Training to Integrated Professional Formation



Problem Statement

48. Discussions at the Symposium revealed a persistent disconnect between legal education and the realities of professional practice. While law schools are widely recognised for building strong analytical foundations, and significant efforts have been made to strengthen professional formation—including the extension of the practice training period to 12 months following the recommendations of the Committee on the Professional Training of Lawyers (CPTL)—many participants observed that the transition from education to practice remains abrupt and disorienting. Junior lawyers described steep learning curves upon entering practice, particularly in relation to professional expectations, workplace norms, and the practical application of legal knowledge in complex, time-pressured environments.

49. Supervisors and senior practitioners echoed these concerns, noting that new lawyers often require significant on-the-job adjustment before they can contribute confidently and sustainably. While reforms such as the longer practice training period have sought to strengthen the transition from education to practice, participants at the Symposium continued to observe gaps between educational preparation and the realities of modern legal practice, particularly as legal work becomes more interdisciplinary, commercially attuned, and technologically mediated. These observations point to a structural gap: the absence of regular, structured mechanisms through which the legal profession can communicate evolving expectations to law schools, and through which law schools can respond in a timely and informed manner.

50. Law schools typically conduct comprehensive curriculum reviews every five to six years and engage practitioners through advisory committees and other channels. However, participants observed that there may still be limited opportunities for more regular and structured feedback on emerging practice demands, skills gaps, and evolving professional expectations. In the absence of consistent feedback loops, insights from practice may not always be systematically gathered, synthesised, and translated into educational responses in a timely manner.



Why Intervention Is Needed

51. Participants emphasised that the transition from student to practitioner cannot be addressed solely within law schools or left entirely to employers. Professional formation is shaped by multiple institutions, each operating with different responsibilities, constraints, and perspectives.

52. Legal education has traditionally prioritised doctrinal mastery and analytical rigour, while professional settings often assume that practical, commercial, and interpersonal skills will be acquired informally through exposure and experience. In the absence of closer alignment, this division can leave new lawyers uncertain about expectations and supervisors frustrated by uneven preparedness.

53. Intervention under this Workstream is therefore aimed at strengthening the feedback loops between education and industry, not by diluting academic standards or imposing uniform training models, but by fostering greater coherence across the stages of professional formation. This complements ongoing efforts to strengthen legal education and professional formation, including the work of the Reform of Legal Education Committee, by supporting more regular and structured engagement between legal education providers, the profession, and other stakeholders.



Key Directions and Initiatives

54. Workstream 2 focuses on strengthening feedback loops between law schools, the profession, and institutions involved in vocational training, with a view to supporting a more responsive and practice-informed approach to legal education. This includes developing more structured and regular mechanisms for sharing insights on emerging practice demands, skills needs, and professional challenges.

55. The Workstream does not seek to prescribe curricular reform or dictate training arrangements, which are already addressed through existing processes such as internships, bar training, and practice training contracts. Instead, it aims to complement these by improving how feedback from practice is gathered, synthesised, and communicated, so as to better inform ongoing educational and training approaches while preserving academic independence.



Roles and Responsibilities Across the Ecosystem

56. Bridging legal education and industry requires coordinated effort across multiple stakeholders. Law schools play a central role in equipping students with analytical rigour and ethical grounding, while remaining attentive to evolving professional contexts. Employers contribute by articulating expectations clearly, providing structured onboarding and supervision, and recognising the formative nature of early practice.

57. Supervisors and mid-level lawyers influence this transition through the quality of guidance, feedback, and modelling they provide to junior colleagues. Junior lawyers themselves navigate this period of adjustment while developing professional identity and confidence.

58. Institutions such as SAL, the Courts, and relevant training bodies support this Workstream by convening dialogue, sharing insights, and facilitating alignment across stakeholders who may otherwise operate in parallel. Their role is not to collapse distinctions between education and practice, but to ensure that transitions between them are better supported and more coherent.



Key Tensions and Trade-offs

59. Participants recognised that closer alignment between education and industry involves navigating important tensions. Academic autonomy must be preserved even as relevance is enhanced. Employers face resource constraints in providing structured training while meeting client demands. There is also a balance to be struck between preparing lawyers for current practice and equipping them with adaptability for future change.

60. These tensions are addressed through the approach taken in this Workstream, which focuses on strengthening structured feedback loops between education and practice, rather than prescribing outcomes. By improving how insights on skills needs, professional expectations, and emerging challenges are gathered and shared on a regular basis, the Workstream seeks to support more responsive and iterative alignment over time, while respecting institutional roles and constraints.



Desired Outcomes

61. The aim of Workstream 2 is to support a smoother and more confident transition from education into practice, rather than any single programme or reform.

62. Over time, desired outcomes would include:

- junior lawyers reporting greater clarity about professional expectations upon entering practice;
- supervisors observing more consistent baseline preparedness among new hires;
- stronger dialogue and feedback among legal education providers, SILE, and the legal industry;
- reduced disorientation during early years of practice; and
- clearer continuity between educational values and professional norms.

63. Together, these developments would support a more coherent model of professional formation—one in which analytical rigour, ethical grounding, and practical capability develop in closer alignment across the early stages of a legal career.



C. Workstream 3: Internationalisation and Improving Competitiveness

From Domestic Orientation to International Readiness



Problem Statement

64. The Legal Profession Symposium highlighted growing awareness that Singapore's legal profession operates in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment. Liberalisation, cross-border transactions, international disputes, and regional expansion have reshaped the context in which lawyers practise. At the same time, participants observed that many firms and lawyers continue to operate with predominantly domestic reference points, particularly in mindset, risk appetite, and career planning.

65. Junior and mid-level lawyers noted uncertainty about how international exposure fits within long-term professional development, while senior practitioners reflected on the challenges of balancing local practice demands with outward-looking growth strategies. This gap is not one of technical capability alone. Rather, it reflects differences in orientation, confidence, and institutional readiness to engage with international work as a sustained dimension of practice.



Why Intervention Is Needed

66. Participants emphasised that international competitiveness cannot be reduced to the availability of overseas postings or cross-border matters. Instead, it depends on whether firms and lawyers cultivate the mindset, skills, and organisational readiness to seek out, evaluate, and pursue international opportunities when they arise.

67. In the absence of such readiness, opportunities created by liberalisation and regional growth may remain concentrated among a small number of firms or individuals. Others may remain cautious or inward-looking, not because of lack of ability, but because of unfamiliarity with international practice norms, perceived risk, or uncertainty about how international work aligns with career progression and firm strategy.

68. Intervention under this Workstream is therefore aimed at supporting a broader shift in orientation across the profession, complementing industry development efforts led by the Ministry of Law by strengthening professional readiness and confidence.



Key Directions and Initiatives

69. Workstream 3 focuses on fostering an international mindset and strengthening capabilities that support global engagement, rather than on creating or allocating specific international opportunities. It does not seek to direct firms' business strategies or determine where and how they should expand. Instead, it aims to support conditions that enable firms and lawyers to respond effectively to an increasingly international practice environment.

70. Key directions of travel include greater exposure to international practice norms, cross-border collaboration, and comparative perspectives on legal services. At the industry level, these efforts are being advanced in close collaboration with the Ministry of Law and other stakeholders, particularly in areas such as overseas market development and broader industry initiatives. In parallel, SAL is focused on member development initiatives, including strengthening exposure to international practice, comparative learning, and cross-border engagement. Participants highlighted the value of learning from peers and institutions with experience in international work, as well as the importance of understanding how regulatory, cultural, and commercial differences shape legal practice across jurisdictions.

71. Another focus is helping lawyers contextualise international experience within professional development, so that global exposure is understood not as a deviation from core practice, but as a complementary dimension of competence. This includes strengthening confidence in engaging with international clients, counterparties, and institutions, and reducing the perception that international work is relevant only to a narrow segment of the profession.

72. SAL's role under this Workstream is to support and complement broader industry development initiatives, including those led by the Ministry of Law, by convening dialogue, sharing insights, and facilitating capability-building across the profession.



Roles and Responsibilities Across the Ecosystem

73. Internationalisation and competitiveness are shaped by collective effort across the ecosystem. Law firms play a central role in articulating how international engagement fits within firm strategy and career development, and in supporting lawyers who take on cross-border work or roles.

74. Senior practitioners influence this Workstream by modelling openness to international perspectives and encouraging outward-looking approaches to practice. Mid-level lawyers often serve as key bridges in international matters, coordinating across jurisdictions and teams, and stand to benefit from clearer support and recognition for these roles. Junior lawyers gain from early exposure to comparative perspectives and international norms, even when practising primarily in domestic contexts.

75. Institutions such as the Ministry of Law lead industry development and market access efforts, while SAL supports this Workstream by strengthening professional readiness, facilitating learning, and promoting shared understanding of international practice expectations



Key Tensions and Trade-offs

76. Participants recognised that pursuing greater internationalisation involves navigating important trade-offs. Firms must balance investment in international capability with domestic practice demands. Lawyers may face uncertainty about how international exposure affects career progression. There is also a tension between encouraging openness to global work and respecting the diversity of firm sizes, practice areas, and strategic priorities.

77. These tensions are addressed through the design of this Workstream. Rather than prescribing uniform pathways or outcomes, Workstream 3 focuses on strengthening foundational capabilities, exposure, and mindset, enabling firms and lawyers to engage with international opportunities in ways that align with their respective contexts. By emphasising readiness over compulsion, and supporting voluntary participation through training, exposure, and shared learning, the Workstream seeks to balance outward-looking intent with practical constraints across the profession.



Desired Outcomes

78. Workstream 3 explores how the profession can deepen international capabilities and strengthen regional engagement.

79. Over time, desired outcomes would include:

- greater confidence among lawyers in engaging with international clients, counterparties, and institutions;
- clearer articulation within firms of how international work fits into professional development;
- wider diffusion of international perspectives beyond a small subset of firms or individuals;
- increased willingness to explore cross-border collaboration where appropriate; and
- stronger alignment between professional capability and Singapore's role as an international legal hub.

80. Collectively, these outcomes would help foster a profession that is internationally connected, commercially relevant, and well-positioned to contribute to Singapore's continued success as a regional and global legal hub.



D. Workstream 4: Harnessing AI Safely and Effectively

From Tool Adoption to Responsible Integration



Problem Statement

81. Discussions at the LPS 2025 underscored that artificial intelligence and related technologies are already reshaping legal work, even as understanding and adoption remain uneven across the profession. Some participants described active experimentation with generative AI and other digital tools, while others expressed hesitation or uncertainty about appropriate use. Junior lawyers often appeared more comfortable with technology than their supervisors, while senior practitioners raised concerns about reliability, confidentiality, and professional responsibility. For the purposes of this Workstream, “integration” refers to the responsible incorporation of AI as an assistive tool within legal workflows, where human judgement, professional responsibility, and accountability remain central to all legal outputs.

82. These differing levels of familiarity and confidence have created new sources of tension within teams. Participants noted uncertainty about what constitutes acceptable use of AI, how outputs should be reviewed, and how responsibility should be allocated when technology is involved. There was also concern that, if deployed without care, AI could unintentionally erode foundational training, distort incentives, or deepen generational and structural divides within the profession.



Why Intervention Is Needed

83. Participants were clear that AI adoption in legal practice cannot be left to ad hoc experimentation or individual discretion alone. Legal work is distinctive in that it requires professional judgment, ethical accountability, and trust, both from clients and the courts. Technologies that affect how legal advice is produced, reviewed, or delivered therefore raise questions that extend beyond efficiency or productivity.

84. Without shared guidance and collective reflection, firms and lawyers may adopt AI in ways that increase risk, obscure accountability, or undermine learning. Conversely, excessive caution or blanket prohibition may deprive the profession of opportunities to reduce drudgery, improve consistency, and free up time for higher-value work. Intervention under this Workstream is therefore aimed at supporting responsible integration, rather than either uncritical adoption or outright resistance.



Key Directions and Initiatives

85. Workstream 4 focuses on enabling the profession to engage with AI in a manner that is principled, informed, and aligned with professional values. It does not seek to mandate specific technologies or dictate firm-level adoption decisions. Instead, it aims to establish shared reference points for safe and effective use.

86. Key directions of travel include developing clearer understanding of where AI can appropriately support legal work, and where human judgment must remain central. Participants emphasised the importance of distinguishing between assistance and substitution, particularly in tasks that involve legal reasoning, client advice, or ethical judgment.

87. Another focus is supporting supervisors and senior lawyers in setting expectations around AI use, review, and accountability. As with other tools, the way AI is integrated into workflows and training has significant implications for junior lawyers' development. Ensuring that AI augments rather than replaces learning opportunities was a recurring concern.

88. Initiatives under this Workstream are therefore oriented towards guidance, capability-building, and shared learning. This includes creating spaces for dialogue about risks and benefits, promoting awareness of confidentiality and data protection considerations, and encouraging thoughtful experimentation within appropriate guardrails.



Roles and Responsibilities Across the Ecosystem

89. Responsibility for responsible AI integration is distributed across the ecosystem. Law firms play a central role in setting internal policies, expectations, and review practices, and in modelling how technology should be used in service of professional standards. Senior practitioners influence this Workstream through the judgments they exercise and the norms they establish around reliance on technology.

90. Supervisors and mid-level lawyers are critical in translating high-level guidance into day-to-day practice. They shape how junior lawyers learn to use tools responsibly and how outputs are reviewed and contextualised. Junior lawyers contribute by using technology conscientiously and by seeking guidance when boundaries are unclear.

91. Institutions such as SAL and the Courts contribute by articulating shared expectations, convening discussions on ethical and professional implications, and supporting collective understanding of emerging technologies. MinLaw supports industry-wide legal tech and AI adoption through its policies and programmes that promote safe and responsible use, ensure access to quality infrastructure and solutions, and foster a thriving legaltech ecosystem. Law schools also play an important role in equipping future lawyers with foundational understanding of technology, ethics, and evolving modes of legal practice. Their role is not to endorse specific tools, but to help the profession navigate change in a coherent and principled manner.



Key Tensions and Trade-offs

92. Participants recognised that responsible AI integration involves navigating several tensions. There is a balance between efficiency gains and the need to preserve training quality. Increased reliance on AI can improve speed and consistency, but may also obscure reasoning or reduce opportunities for skill development if not carefully managed.

93. There is also a tension between innovation and risk management. Overly restrictive approaches may stifle beneficial experimentation, while insufficient guardrails may expose firms and clients to harm. These tensions reinforce the need for ongoing reflection and adaptation, rather than fixed rules.



Desired Outcomes

94. Progress under Workstream 4 will not be measured by the pace or scale of AI adoption. While such measures may provide useful insights into patterns of use and emerging capability needs across the profession, they do not, in themselves, reflect whether AI is being used thoughtfully or responsibly. Instead, it will be reflected in how thoughtfully and responsibly technology is integrated into legal work in a principled, informed, and professionally accountable manner.

95. Over time, desired outcomes would include:

- Clearer and more consistent norms within firms around acceptable AI use and review;
- increased confidence among supervisors in guiding and overseeing technology-assisted work;
- stronger ability among junior lawyers to exercise sound judgement in the use of AI tools;
- reduced uncertainty around accountability and professional responsibility in AI-assisted work; and
- greater alignment between technological innovation and professional values.

96. Taken together, these developments would enable the profession to harness technological innovation while maintaining professional judgement, ethical accountability, and public trust.



E. Workstream 5: Promoting Sustainability and Wellbeing for a Resilient Profession

From Individual Resilience to Systemic Sustainability



Problem Statement

97. Across the Focus Group Discussions, the pre-Symposium survey, and the discussions over the three days of the Legal Profession Symposium, concerns about sustainability and wellbeing emerged consistently as a central challenge for the profession. Junior lawyers spoke candidly about anxiety, burnout, and uncertainty about remaining in practice. Mid-level lawyers described the strain of managing rising client expectations alongside growing supervisory responsibilities. Senior practitioners, in turn, acknowledged the difficulty of sustaining firms in an environment marked by intense competition, rising costs, and evolving client demands.

98. A recurring insight across these perspectives was that wellbeing challenges are not primarily the result of individual fragility or poor coping. Rather, they reflect how legal work is structured, allocated, supervised, and valued. Participants described work environments characterised by:

- unpredictability of timelines and workloads;
- unclear communication about urgency and expectations;
- limited psychological safety in asking questions or expressing difficulty;
- uneven access to mentorship and developmental feedback; and
- cultural norms that implicitly reward endurance over sustainability.

99. While intensity is inherent in legal practice, participants emphasised that the way intensity is managed often determines whether work is experienced as challenging and meaningful, or as overwhelming and unsustainable.



Why Intervention Is Needed

100. Discussions during the Symposium made clear that existing approaches to wellbeing, which often focus on individual resilience or isolated initiatives, are insufficient to address the underlying causes of strain. The conditions described by participants are systemic in nature and recur across firms, practice areas, and career stages. Left unaddressed, they risk continued attrition, disengagement, and erosion of professional capability over time.

101. Participants emphasised that sustainability cannot be achieved through ad hoc or short-term measures alone. Instead, it requires deliberate attention to leadership practices, organisational systems, and shared expectations across the profession. Addressing sustainability in this way is therefore not an optional or peripheral concern, but a necessary response to structural pressures that shape how legal work is experienced in practice.



Key Directions and Initiatives

102. Workstream 5 does not prescribe a single model of sustainable practice. Instead, it seeks to enable a range of approaches grounded in shared principles, while drawing on existing initiatives that have begun to articulate what sustainable legal work can look like in practice.

103. Two such reference points are the UK's Mindful Business Charter and the Sustainability Principles, which informed discussions throughout the Symposium. Together, they provide a common language and set of expectations around managing intensity, supporting professional development, and fostering healthier ways of working within the realities of legal practice.

104. In support of implementation, participants also referred to the practical tools developed under the Mindful Business Movement, including its 5-step guides. These guides were viewed not as prescriptive rules, but as accessible heuristics that help translate high-level sustainability principles into everyday decisions about communication, delegation, workload management, and supervision.

105. Key directions of travel identified under this Workstream include:

- clearer communication norms around urgency, timelines, and availability, so that expectations are explicit rather than inferred;
- more deliberate workload management that recognises cumulative strain, rather than repeatedly relying on a small number of consistently over-burdened individuals;
- leadership practices that visibly model sustainable behaviour, including boundary-setting and openness about trade-offs; and
- structures that protect mentoring, supervision, and developmental feedback, even during periods of high intensity.

106. Taken together, the Sustainability Principles, the Mindful Business Movement, and its associated guides help establish shared reference points that firms and organisations can adapt to their own contexts as they seek to build more sustainable environments for legal work.



Roles and Responsibilities Across the Ecosystem

107. A central insight of this Workstream is that responsibility for sustainability and wellbeing is distributed across the legal ecosystem. No single actor can address these issues in isolation, and progress depends on coordinated effort across the institutions and relationships that shape legal work.

108. Senior leadership within firms plays a pivotal role in setting culture and norms. Partners and practice heads influence how urgency is communicated, how mistakes are handled, and whether seeking support is viewed as a professional responsibility. Supervisors and mid-level leaders, often described as the “sandwich class”, occupy a particularly demanding position as they mediate between senior expectations and junior needs while managing heavy personal workloads. Supporting this group through clearer expectations, leadership development, and institutional backing is critical to sustaining healthy teams

109. Junior lawyers also have a role, within the constraints of hierarchy and power. This includes engaging constructively with supervision and seeking clarification where expectations are unclear, as part of their professional development. Where appropriate and supported, junior lawyers may also communicate capacity or constraints, particularly in environments where such dialogue is encouraged. Clearer signals about when it is appropriate to seek guidance or raise concerns can reduce anxiety and accelerate learning. At the same time, participants recognised that the ability of junior lawyers to do so is shaped by their environment. Clients, including in-house counsel, were recognised as an important but sometimes under-acknowledged influence on sustainability. Expectations around timelines, responsiveness, and resourcing materially shape work intensity within firms, and constructive dialogue in these areas was seen as an important lever for promoting more sustainable working relationships without compromising service quality.

110. Institutions such as SAL, the Courts, and law schools contribute by setting shared expectations, providing guidance, and convening conversations that individual organisations may find difficult to initiate alone. Initiatives such as the Sustainability Principles and the Mindful Business Movement help establish common reference points for what sustainable practice looks like in practice, not merely in aspiration.

111. Taken together, these roles underscore that wellbeing is not simply a Human Resources issue or a matter of individual coping, but a collective responsibility embedded in how the profession, and those it serves, organise and value legal work.



Key Tensions and Trade-offs

112. Participants were clear that sustainability in legal practice involves navigating real and unavoidable tensions. These include the tension between commercial responsiveness and human sustainability, between professional autonomy and organisational structure, and between short-term delivery and long-term development. These tensions do not admit easy resolution, but they must be managed deliberately. A sustainable profession does not eliminate pressure; it designs systems that allow pressure to be calibrated in ways that motivate performance without causing cumulative harm.

These tensions are addressed through the approach taken in this Workstream, which emphasises shared principles, leadership practices, and practical tools to guide decision-making in context. Initiatives such as the Sustainability Principles and the Mindful Business Movement provide common reference points and actionable frameworks to help firms and practitioners navigate trade-offs in areas such as delegation, communication, and workload management, while adapting to their specific operational realities.



Desired outcomes

113. Workstream 5 focuses on creating the conditions for more sustainable legal careers.

114. Over time, desired outcomes would include:

- junior lawyers experience demanding work as developmental rather than disorienting;
- supervisors feel supported rather than isolated in people-management roles;
- conversations about workload, capacity, and expectations are normalised and constructive;
- leadership decisions balance short-term delivery with long-term capability building; and
- wellbeing considerations are integrated into organisational and practice design rather than treated as afterthoughts.

115. Workstream 5 operates in close connection with the other Workstreams. Efforts to strengthen leadership and business capability, harness technology responsibly, bridge education and practice, and enhance international competitiveness are shaped by the profession's ability to sustain its people over time. By reframing wellbeing as a question of system design and collective responsibility, this Workstream reinforces a central message of the Symposium: a resilient legal profession depends not only on technical excellence, but on environments that enable lawyers to grow, contribute, and endure. The objective is not to eliminate the natural movement of talent across different career paths, but to reduce avoidable sources of strain that may otherwise contribute to disengagement or premature departure from legal practice.

“

The task ahead, is not to restore an earlier version of professional life, but to design systems, institutions, and leadership practices capable of sustaining excellence, integrity, and human commitment in a changing environment.

”

Professor David B. Wilkins
Keynote Address at Legal Profession Symposium 2025



VI. Implementation and Governance

A. The Future of the Legal Profession Committee

116. The Five Workstreams provide structure, but meaningful transformation requires a coordinating entity with the authority and mandate to sustain momentum over time. This role is held by the **Future of the Legal Profession Committee (FLPC)**, which provides coordinated oversight and alignment across the profession's long-term development efforts.

117. The FLPC's mandate is to ensure that the insights surfaced through the EPSC consultations, the FGDs, and the Symposium do not dissipate. Instead, they are translated into coherent, multi-year programmes of action. In doing so, the FLPC supports alignment across SAL, SG Courts, the law schools, MinLaw, AGC, and the profession at large.

118. The FLPC focuses on four principal modes of work:



Convening: Bringing together diverse stakeholders—judges, senior practitioners, regulators, law school leaders, firm managers, in-house counsel, and junior lawyers—to share perspectives and co-design initiatives. This includes ongoing and planned engagements such as roundtables, workshops, and symposium platforms that surface insights and inform the development of Workstream initiatives.



Capability-building: Developing guidance, training, and shared resources across the Workstreams, especially for firms without extensive infrastructure.



Experimentation: Identifying firms, institutions, or practice groups willing to pilot new ideas, from mentorship structures to AI workflows, and documenting their experiences..



Measurement and learning: Using data—both quantitative and narrative—to assess progress, identify gaps, and refine approaches over time, including through a combination of observable practice changes, stakeholder feedback, participation in Workstream initiatives, and insights captured through platforms such as the Living Case Study.

119. This governance structure is essential because none of the challenges surfaced at the Symposium can be resolved by any single institution acting alone. Leadership gaps intersect with training gaps; AI readiness intersects with wellbeing; global competitiveness intersects with firm culture. The FLPC helps maintain coherence across these interconnected domains.

120. Although it does not implement every initiative directly, the FLPC ensures the profession moves forward with intentionality rather than fragmentation. It provides a focal point for coordination, accountability, and strategic continuity—especially important as reforms unfold over many years.

B. The Living Case Study: A Long-Term Learning Architecture

122. The **Living Case Study** (“LCS”) is the profession’s long-term learning engine. While the Symposium created a moment of collective reflection, the LCS is designed to continue the conversation—how firms experiment with new practices, what works, what does not, and how the profession evolves over time.

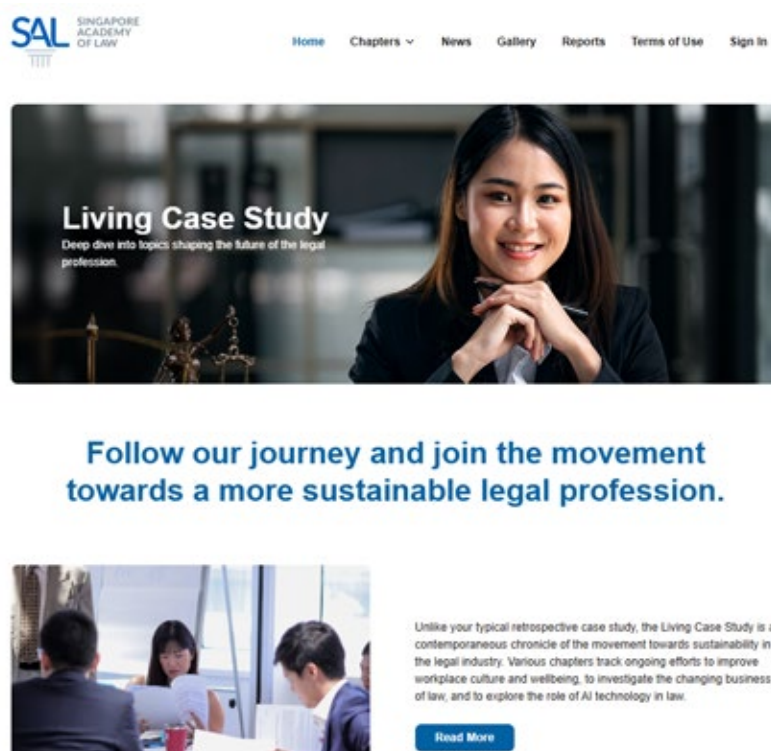
The LCS records and synthesises:

- examples of innovation in mentorship, culture, AI integration, and training;
- lived experiences from firms piloting new practices;
- evidence of change, whether quantitative (e.g., retention data) or qualitative (e.g., interviews); and
- the development of new norms and expectations across the ecosystem.

122. It serves as a repository of the profession’s ongoing transformation—not a static document, but a dynamic narrative that evolves with each iteration of the Symposium.

The value of the LCS lies in its ability to anchor institutional memory. Legal practice is fast-moving, and without a mechanism for capturing and sharing insights, progress risks being lost or repeated inefficiently. The LCS ensures that lessons from one firm or cohort can benefit the entire system. It also provides a structured way to identify common trends and recurring obstacles, allowing the FLPC to adjust strategy and support where needed.

If the Workstreams define what the profession aims to achieve, the Living Case Study documents how it gets there.



C. The Future Lawyers Network

123. The **Future Lawyers Network** (“FLN”) was initiated to engage law students from the National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU), and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) in activities that engage the law students in meaningful ways and can deepen their understanding of the legal profession and its core values.

124. The primary objectives of FLN were threefold: firstly, to foster an understanding among law students of the values and rule of law imperatives that undergird the legal industry; secondly, to inspire law students with the lived reality of ethics through exposure to leading legal professionals; and thirdly, to build camaraderie among law students from different law schools.

125. In the lead up to LPS 2025, law students participated in two main activities. First, they assisted as scribes in FGDs held on April 23, May 7 and May 8, and gained first-hand exposure to substantive legal dialogues. Second, law students contributed to the first day of LPS 2025 on July 29, by performing similar scribe roles. Approximately 20 students supported the first day of LPS 2025, while a handful assisted on the second day, helping to document the discussions for future reference. The initiative successfully combined experiential learning with community building, enriching participants' understanding of legal practice and strengthening their connection to the wider legal ecosystem.

D. Close relationship with academia to inform and catalyse the approach

126. As the FLP Workstreams are a pioneering endeavour for Singapore’s legal community and involve exploring non-conventional, uncharted territory for solutions, design of interventions is necessarily empirical in nature and warrant close collaboration with academia for a research and data-driven approach to inform programme development and outcome analysis, in addition to international benchmarking. To this end, an empirical study on coaching techniques to support career sustainability in law has begun in partnership with local academia and a more strategic research collaboration is in the pipeline. This engagement with academia also supports iterative learning across the Workstreams, ensuring that emerging insights inform refinement of initiatives over time.

VII. Looking Ahead: The Path to a Sustainable, Values-Based, Future-Ready Profession

127. LPS 2025 revealed a profession grappling with profound change. AI, globalisation, shifting expectations of work, and the intensification of legal practice have created both challenges and opportunities. Beneath these forces lies a shared desire for a profession that remains true to its mission while adapting to new realities.

128. Across three days of conversation, lawyers at every PQE level expressed deeply human concerns: the desire for meaningful mentorship, for clarity amidst complexity, for humane leadership, for well-designed training, and for organisations that support growth rather than strain. They also expressed aspiration: for global engagement, for responsible technological innovation, and for a future in which the Singapore legal profession leads confidently on the regional and global stage.

129. The Five Workstreams bring structure to these aspirations. They are not rigid project plans, nor do they seek to prescribe uniform solutions. Instead, they:

- create shared focus areas across the ecosystem,
- support experimentation and diversity of approaches,
- provide scaffolding for institutions to collaborate,
- articulate a long-term direction for the profession's evolution.

130. The Workstreams also align with the EPSC's strands of Ethos, Learning, and Profession. They reflect the understanding that:

- The **Ethos** of the profession—its values, culture, and purpose—must be strengthened in an era of rapid change.
- **Learning** about lawyering requires new forms of training, technology literacy, and professional judgement.
- The **Profession** as an institution must adapt its governance, pathways, and identity to remain resilient and globally competitive.

131. Yet transformation requires not only clarity of direction, but continuity of effort. The FLPC ensures that the Workstreams are guided and coordinated. The Living Case Study ensures that learning is captured, shared, and built upon. SAL, SG Courts, law schools, senior leaders, younger lawyers, and institutional partners all have roles to play.

If the profession continues to work in this collaborative manner—with openness, humility, and resolve—it can move towards a future where lawyers can thrive personally, professionally, and institutionally.

132. A Future-Ready Legal Profession represents the beginning of that journey. It captures where the profession stands today, the concerns it must address, and the structures it has created to move forward. What happens next will depend on sustained commitment, steadfast leadership, and the willingness of institutions and individuals alike to build a sustainable, values-based, and future-ready profession together.



“ Our work will not end today, of course. Changing norms, building new paradigms, these require time, meaningful conversation and thoughtful action. ”

Justice Valerie Thean
Opening Address at Legal
Profession Symposium 2025

Annexes

- A. The Three Ethics and Professional Standards Committee Pillars:
Ethos, Learning, and the Profession
- B. Welcome Address by Justice Valerie Thean at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025
- C. Opening Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025
- D. Summary of Keynote Address by Professor David B. Wilkins
- E. Closing Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025
- F. Reports of Focus Group Discussions
- G. Pre-Symposium Survey Report

Annex A

The Three Ethics and Professional Standards Committee Pillars: Ethos, Learning, and the Profession

Ethos

Ethos refers to the core values that animate the profession: integrity, justice, respect, responsibility, and the sense of mission inherent in legal work. Lawyers occupy a unique position in society. They are both defenders of the rule of law and participants in adversarial processes. As emphasised in Justice Valerie Thean's opening address at the LPS 2025, legal practice carries an inherent moral tension, lawyers can become either guardians of justice or, if not careful, instruments that obscure or distort it. This duality demands intentionality, humility, and ethical reflexivity.

Learning

Learning captures the skills, habits, and practical judgement required to serve clients effectively. While Singapore's legal education system is strong, the EPSC found persistent concerns about the transition from law school to practice. Many junior lawyers described a steep learning curve, uncertainty about expectations, and inconsistent mentorship. Partners and senior associates acknowledged the difficulty of balancing a sustainable business with the need to train and nurture junior lawyers. The craft of law, once transmitted through apprenticeship-like relationships, is now under pressure in an era of increased demands from users of legal services, complexity, time scarcity and technological change.

Profession

The profession encompasses the institutions, norms, and structures that support and regulate legal practice. Law firms play a particularly crucial role: they are the primary sites of junior training, the setting in which values are lived, and the crucibles in which professional identity is formed. However, firms vary widely in their cultures, resources, and approaches to training. The EPSC noted the need for more consistent leadership development, better management practices, and stronger alignment between institutional incentives and professional values.

These three pillars: Ethos, Learning, Profession, formed the conceptual foundation that guided both the Symposium and the eventual Five Workstreams.

Annex B

Welcome Address by Justice Valerie Thean at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025

Annex C

Opening Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025

Annex D

Summary of Keynote Address by Professor David B. Wilkins

(Legal Profession Symposium 2025, Day 1)

In his keynote address, Professor Wilkins situated the challenges facing the Singapore legal profession within a broader global context. Drawing on comparative research and international experience, he observed that many of the pressures discussed at the Symposium are not unique to Singapore, but reflect structural shifts affecting legal professions worldwide. These include intensifying competition, changing client expectations, technological disruption, and evolving career aspirations among younger lawyers. What distinguishes more resilient jurisdictions, he suggested, is not the absence of these pressures, but how professions organise themselves in response.

A central theme of the keynote was the need to move beyond individualised explanations for attrition, dissatisfaction, or uneven performance. Professor Wilkins cautioned against framing these issues as matters of personal resilience, generational attitude, or isolated workplace dysfunction. Instead, he emphasised that professional outcomes are shaped by systems: how work is structured, how responsibility is distributed, how people are trained and supervised, and how institutions align incentives with stated values. Sustainable change, therefore, requires attention to organisational design and collective norms, not only individual behaviour.

Professor Wilkins paid particular attention to the early and mid-career stages of legal practice. He noted that junior lawyers across jurisdictions often experience a sharp gap between formal training and the lived realities of practice, while mid-level lawyers are frequently expected to assume leadership and supervisory roles without corresponding preparation or support. This “compressed transition” creates strain not only for individuals, but for firms and institutions that rely on these cohorts to sustain quality, continuity, and culture. Addressing this challenge, he argued, requires more intentional approaches to leadership development, mentoring, and feedback, rather than reliance on informal apprenticeship alone.

Technology, especially generative AI, featured prominently in the keynote. Professor Wilkins highlighted that AI should not be understood simply as a productivity tool, but as a force that reshapes how judgment, accountability, and learning operate within professional systems. He warned that unreflective adoption risks hollowing out training opportunities or obscuring responsibility, while excessive caution may entrench inefficiencies and widen gaps between firms and individuals. The key challenge, in his view, lies in integrating technology in ways that support professional judgment, preserve trust, and enhance rather than replace human capability.

Throughout the address, Professor Wilkins returned to the idea that no single actor can resolve the profession’s challenges alone. Law firms, courts, regulators, educators, and professional bodies each hold partial responsibility and limited leverage in isolation. Meaningful progress depends on coordination across the ecosystem, shared understanding of problems, and alignment around long-term goals. This includes creating spaces for experimentation, learning from failure, and revisiting entrenched norms that may no longer serve the profession’s purpose.

Professor Wilkins concluded by encouraging participants to see the Symposium not as an endpoint, but as part of an ongoing process of collective sense-making and adaptation. The task ahead, he suggested, is not to restore an earlier version of professional life, but to design systems, institutions, and leadership practices capable of sustaining excellence, integrity, and human commitment in a changing environment. This requires courage to question assumptions, humility to learn across roles and generations, and commitment to shared responsibility for the profession’s future.

Annex E

Closing Address by the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Legal Profession Symposium 2025

Annex F

Summary of FGD Report

SAL conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with lawyers across various PQE levels and practice settings in early 2025. These FGDs sought to deepen understanding of the profession's lived reality in light of the EPSC's recommendations, and to inform the design of the Symposium.

Participants were remarkably candid. The FGDs revealed three interconnected domains of concern:

(a) Workplace Culture

Lawyers described increasing difficulty in maintaining healthy boundaries, particularly in high-intensity practice areas. Many spoke of unrealistic timelines, unclear instructions, last-minute changes, and communication practices that amplified stress. Intergenerational misunderstandings around work styles, communication, expectations, and feedback were common. Many noted deficits in psychological safety: juniors did not feel comfortable asking questions or expressing concerns.

(b) Business of Law and Sustainability

The FGDs highlighted structural pressures arising from global fee competition, client expectations, and recruitment challenges. Retention of junior lawyers emerged as a major concern, with firms struggling to balance commercial realities with developmental needs. Juniors also found attractive alternatives to private practice. There was a strong sense that the business model of private practice was under strain, and that sustainability would require innovation, leadership capability, and new approaches to career development.

(c) Technology and AI

Technology adoption was uneven. Some firms were experimenting actively with AI and digital tools, while others lagged or were afraid to venture into the unknown. Many participants expressed interest in using AI to reduce repetitive tasks, but also raised concerns about confidentiality, quality control, and erosion of junior training. The FGDs made clear that AI readiness varied not only between firms but between levels within firms. Juniors were often more comfortable with technology than their supervisors.

These FGDs directly informed the design of the 2025 Symposium and set the stage for its thematic focus on sustainability, culture, leadership, training, competitiveness, and technology.

Annex G

Summary of Pre-Symposium Survey Report

Following the Focus Group Discussions and prior to the Legal Profession Symposium, SAL conducted a profession-wide survey of younger lawyers to assess whether the perspectives surfaced during the FGDs reflected broader sector sentiment.

The survey findings strongly corroborated the qualitative insights gathered through the FGDs. Across domains of workplace culture, leadership and mentorship, career sustainability, technological readiness, and institutional support, responses revealed patterns consistent with the lived experiences described in the discussion groups. In particular, respondents expressed widespread concern about the adequacy of supervision and professional development, the impact of communication norms on stress and wellbeing, uncertainty regarding long-term retention in private practice, uneven preparedness for technological change, and limited confidence or opportunity to pursue cross-border professional exposure.

Rather than introducing new problem statements, the survey validated at scale the themes emerging from the FGDs, reinforcing the conclusion that the challenges facing the profession are systemic in nature and require sustained, profession-wide responses.

Members of the Legal Profession Symposium 2025 Organising Committee and the Future of the Legal Profession Committee and Secretariat

Legal Profession Symposium 2025 Organising Committee

Chair

Justice Valerie Thean

Judge, Supreme Court of Singapore

Members

[Members listed in alphabetical order of names.]

Mr Alvin Chen

Executive Director and Chief Legal Officer,
Law Society of Singapore

Ms Angelina Hing

Director, Integro Law Chambers LLC

Mr Diana Ngiam

Deputy Director, Ministry of Home Affairs Singapore

Mr Gregory Tan

Joint Head, Legal & Regulatory, Temasek Holdings

Mr Hui Choon Kuen

Chief Prosecutor, Crime Division,
Attorney General's Chambers of Singapore;

Mr Kenneth Lim Tao Chung

Partner, Allen and Gledhill LLP

Mr Raeza Ibrahim

Director, TSMP Law Corporation

Mr Teo Weng Kie

Managing Director, Securus Legal LLC

Future of the Legal Profession Committee (FLPC)

Co-Chairs

Justice Hri Kumar Nair
DAG Valerie Thean, SC
PS Luke Goh

Justice of the Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Singapore
Deputy Attorney-General, Attorney-General's Chambers
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Law

Members

Ms Charlene Chang
Ms Daphne Hong
Professor Tan Cheng Han SC

Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Law
Solicitor-General, Attorney-General's Chambers
President, Law Society of Singapore;
Chief Strategy Officer of NUS Law;

Mr Daniel Choo

Senior Consultant, WongPartnership LLP
President, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association;
General Counsel (APAC), Bruker

Mr Jimmy Yim SC

Convener, Senior Counsel Forum;
Chairman, Drew & Napier LLC

Ms Cheng Pei Feng

Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court

[Remaining members listed in alphabetical order of names.]

Mr Chou Sean Yu

Managing Partner, WongPartnership LLP

Mr Gregory Tan

Joint Head, Legal & Regulatory, Temasek Holdings

Mr Jerry Koh

Managing Partner, Allen and Gledhill LLP

Mr Kenneth Lim Tao Chung

Partner, Allen and Gledhill LLP

Mr Kenneth Wang

Senior Associate, Allen & Gledhill LLP

Associate Professor Lau Kwan Ho

Yong Pung How School of Law,

Singapore Management University

Mr Ng Kim Beng

Managing Partner, Rajah and Tann Singapore LLP

Ms Sandy Foo

Head, Corporate & Transactional Group,
Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP

Secretariat

Mr Yeong Zee Kin

Chief Executive, Singapore Academy of Law

Mr Paul Neo

Assistant Chief Executive, Singapore Academy of Law

Ms Teh Y-Lyn

Acting Deputy Director (SPEAR), Singapore Academy of Law

Mr K Gopalan

Assistant Director (SPEAR), Singapore Academy of Law

Ms Rheann Teo

Manager (SPEAR), Singapore Academy of Law

Mr David Tan

Manager (SPEAR), Singapore Academy of Law

Ms Jessie Tan

Group Director (Legal Industry), Ministry of Law

Mr William Kwek

2Director (LITD), Ministry of Law

Mr Lim Joo Hong

Director (LTTO), Ministry of Law

Ms Zuraidah Mahat

Deputy Director (LITD), Ministry of Law

Ms Tesia Chen

Senior Assistant Director (LITD), Ministry of Law

Mr Roy Yuen

Senior Assistant Director (LTTO), Ministry of Law