

PRESS RELEASE

04 Mar 2002

Legal Writing Programme

The Faculty of Law, NUS will launch a comprehensive US-style Legal Writing Programme, Asia's first, in academic year 2002-2003. The programme will be designed to systematically equip law students with analytical, research, writing and communication skills to help them excel in the competitive international market for legal services. It is headed by lawyer, playwright, champion debater and TV host, Eleanor Wong.

The Programme

The Legal Writing Programme is the centrepiece of a major revision of the law school's core curriculum.

Leading American law schools have long recognized that clinical instruction in core lawyering skills forms the foundation for the study and practice of law. As a result, most American law schools have well-established legal writing programmes. The NUS programme will be based on the American model but will be customized to take account of the Singapore legal environment, and regional legal and business cultures. While various components of legal writing have previously been taught in NUS and other regional law schools, typically as optional courses, the new NUS programme is the first comprehensive programme to be established by an Asian law school.

Taught over two years as compulsory modules for first and second year law students, the programme will utilize hands-on practice and realistic scenario-based learning as principal teaching methodologies. The first-year modules will concentrate on foundational skills such as legal analysis and research, business and legal writing, and presentation and persuasion. In the second year modules, case studies raising multiple factual and legal issues will introduce students to the complexities of real-world advocacy and transaction structuring. Students will be challenged to exercise creativity, to take initiative, to think across subjects, and generally to focus on problem-solving.

Over time, the Legal Writing Programme also intends to develop and expand the Law School's suite of optional advanced clinical courses in areas such as negotiation skills, drafting of complex legal documents and trial practice.

The Team

Former DPP and international finance lawyer Eleanor Wong returns to legal circles as Director of the Legal Writing Programme after a stint in the media industry where she specialized in communications consultancy and training for top executives, and also helped run her company -- a leading local production outfit. Associate Professor Wong brings to the position her breadth of legal experience, which spans litigation and transactional work, in both the local and international contexts. As a playwright, sometime TV host and accomplished debater, she also brings to the job her mastery of communication techniques across a wide range of media. No stranger to teaching, Eleanor was part of a team that pioneered a course for NUS in the mid-90s, teaching transactional lawyering skills with an emphasis on the practice of international business law.

Also on the team is Consultant Professor Molly Warner Lien. Most recently Director of the highly-

regarded Legal Writing Programme at Chicago-Kent Law School, Professor Lien was served as a consultant to NUS in 2001. In that capacity she spent several weeks in Singapore and prepared a comprehensive report and proposal on the teaching of legal skills. Many of her recommendations form the basis of the curriculum reform.

The programme will be working with practitioners to conduct the second-year case study modules, giving the students the opportunity to interact with and learn from practising lawyers.

The first-year modules will be taught by "full-time part-time" legal writing instructors. "It's exciting to see the interest these positions have received from instructors who combine legal knowledge and training with a passion for clinical instruction." says Associate Professor Wong. She adds, "The objective is to help each student with his or her unique issues. So, although instructors need not be at the Law School five days a week, they will be available to students for consultation and will have a fair amount of detailed grading to do, since it is a legal writing programme!"

The launch of the Legal Writing Programme and the other changes to the core curriculum are timely, in light of the government's aim to promote Singapore as a regional hub for legal services as well as a regional center for innovation and leadership in legal education

More Information

Brief biodata of Associate Professor Wong and Professor Lien are attached. Also attached are course descriptions for the [Legal Writing Programme](#) modules.

For more information, please contact:

Associate Professor Eleanor Wong
Faculty of Law
Tel:(65) 6874-3587/E-mail: wongswyn@singnet.com.sg

Ms Khoo Bee Hoon
Administrative Officer
Corporate Communications/Media
Tel: (65) 6874-1526/email: uprbh@nus.edu.sg

1. Legal Writing

The objective of this course is to develop written and oral communication skills, research skills and analytical skills in first year law students. The objective of the writing and oral communication exercises is to teach students to focus on clarity of thinking, effectiveness of organization, and precision of expression. Research exercises and assignments will focus on developing a familiarity with legal research tools. During the second semester students will be required to apply and further develop these skills in the context of a hypothetical case or 'moot' problem. They will also be taught how to do persuasive writing, or memorials, and how to present oral arguments.

2. Introduction To Trial Advocacy

The objectives of this course are to: (a) provide students with a vehicle to continue to improve their oral communication skills; (b) introduce students to basic trial techniques and skills, including the basics of presentations in Court, modes of address, examination in chief and cross examination and submissions on facts; and (c) introduce students to witness preparation for trial. It will complement the appellate advocacy skills covered in the first year moots in the second semester of Legal Writing. Topics covered are:- overview of a trial, opening statements, examination in chief, cross examination, re-examination, closing submissions, addressing the Court and witness preparation. This course will give students an opportunity to interact with and learn from practicing litigation lawyers, and thereby give them a taste of the "real world" litigation practice.

3. Legal Case Studies

This problem-oriented course will be centered on a complex commercial transaction that raises issues in several subject areas, some of which the student will not have studied. It is designed to teach students how to: (a) analyse complex hypothetical problems containing multiple legal issues from different areas of the law; (b) analyse and research issues in areas of law they have not studied; and (c) understand how the legal issues are linked to the transactional goals of the parties. It would require students to bring together all of the legal skills they have learned in Legal Writing in Semesters 1 and 2 as well as some of the legal principles they have learned in their core substantive law subjects. It will also expose students to transactional documentation (drafting and review), client service skills and a basic understanding of business.

Molly Lien graduated from Emory University School of Law in 1978. She served as a judicial clerk for one year, and practiced law in Atlanta and Chicago for 6 years. Since 1985 she has been a legal writing and research instructor, first with the University of Chicago Law School, and then with Chicago-Kent Law School in the Chicago Institute of Technology.

Molly Lien was the Director of the Legal Writing Programme at Chicago-Kent Law School from 1993 to 2001. As director she hired, trained, counseled and supervised a legal writing staff of 15 full-time and 26 adjunct faculty. She also prepared and administered annual budgets for the legal writing and international moot court programmes, and prepared curricular materials and course syllabi for all legal writing and research courses.

Molly Lien has a national reputation in legal writing circles in the United States, and has served as an officer of the Association of Legal Writing Directors. She is known as both an outstanding director and teacher, and was voted the Teacher of the Year in 2000 by the Student Bar Association at her law school.

Molly Lien has been retained by NUS as Visiting Consultant to the Law Faculty in connection with the establishment and launch of its Legal Writing Programme.
February 2002

Eleanor Wong graduated from the National University of Singapore Law School in 1985. She was a Deputy Public Prosecutor assigned to the Commercial Affairs Department for several years, where she also headed the department's Legal Section.

Eleanor Wong obtained a Masters in Law (Corporate) from New York University in 1990. She then joined the New York office of Coudert Brothers, where her experience included work in international arbitration, international banking and mergers and acquisitions.

Returning to Singapore in 1992, Eleanor specialized in regional institutional and corporate finance transactions for the Singapore office of Coudert Brothers. In 1996, she helped launch the Singapore branch of Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, where she headed the office regional Institutional Finance Practice.

In 2000, Eleanor joined the management team of local production company, The Right Angle, handling portfolios ranging from business development to operations and corporate affairs, technology ventures, and communications training and consultancy over a period of two years. In February 2002, Eleanor took on the challenge of establishing and launching the Legal Writing Programme for the Faculty of Law at The National University of Singapore.

Eleanor is also a published playwright, whose work has been produced in Singapore and regionally. She was host of the current affairs talkshow, After Hours, which aired on TV Works in 2001, and has been associated with televised debates in Singapore, both as a debater and a moderator. Eleanor is active in civil society and is currently a member of the Remaking Singapore committee.
February 2002
