Faculty of Law launches Singapore's first clinical legal education programme

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NUS' Faculty of Law and Singapore's Legal Aid Bureau (LAB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 6 October 2010, thus establishing the nation's first clinical legal education programme.

The signing of the MOU by Dean of NUS' Faculty of Law Prof Tan Cheng Han and
Director of LAB Mr Tan Puay Boon was witnessed by Guest-of-Honour Assoc Prof Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs; and Vice Provost (Academic Personnel) of NUS Prof Lai Choy Heng.

Assoc Prof Ho shared about the importance of CLE in his address to the faculty members and more than 80 law students who attended the event. "You will have the privilege of interacting with clients who truly need your help. This means that you, even as a law student, will have the chance to make a positive difference in someone's life," said Assoc Prof Ho.

The programme is a collaborative effort between the Law faculty and LAB, based on the shared view that CLE could bring manifold benefits to law students and to the community at large.

To date, 15 CLE programme students have completed the programme. Under it, law students in their third or fourth year can choose to do an elective course called the Law Clinic where they will work with clinical instructors on "live" files involving clients from LAB. NUS' Law School's Assoc Prof Lim Lei Theng, who has been appointed an Assistant Director of LAB, will take on cases from LAB. Students will assist her in everything from taking statements from clients to preparing affidavits, doing research and assisting in preparation for Court.

"One of the benefits of CLE is that it facilitates the contextualisation of the law; students see how the law operates in society and this deepens their understanding of the law and legal institutions. At the same time, CLE will help to inculcate values that the law school believes are important for our graduates to have," says Prof Tan Cheng Han, an active
legal practitioner who combines both academia and legal practice.

"Under this programme, aspiring lawyers will get to see 'the law in action', and also help the less privileged at the same time. I hope this inspires them to become the pro bono lawyers of the future," says Mr Tan Puay Boon.

*By Faculty of Law, NUS*