

Transcending Differences: HKU Law Students at the 59th Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition

How does legal education transform law students from reading endless case judgments to becoming versatile advocates in court? Making legal submissions in a fictional court setting, *i.e.* what law students call mooting, is the answer.



In February 2018, 5 PCLL (Postgraduate Certificate in Laws) students: Ko Lun Jason, Lee Chun Hin Brian, Sat Sakinah, So Tsz Ching Natalie, and Sum Hiu-Yan Michelle represented HKU and won the Hong Kong Regional Champion, together with the Best Memorial Prizes for both Applicant and Respondent, at the 59th Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.

Following the success in the regional rounds, the team represented Hong Kong in the Washington DC International rounds in April 2018, defeating Argentina, Pakistan, Indonesia and Armenia representatives. HKU ranked 11th out of 121 teams globally. In addition, Natalie So ranked first in the Top 100 Oralists worldwide.

Jessup is the world's largest advocacy competition for law students, with over 680 law schools from 100 countries participating. Teams compete against each other through the presentation of oral and written pleadings to address timely issues of public international law, in the context of a hypothetical legal dispute between

nations – for example, issues of international arbitration, law of the seas, nuclear disarmament, and use of force.

When asked about the reason of taking part in this competition alongside heavy PCLL studies, the team highlighted the precious opportunity that the international moot has offered: to exchange views with teams from other jurisdictions, whose legal systems are very different from ours.

The unique Jessup experience reflects how countries resolve their disputes before the International Court of Justice. In approaching the same legal issue, teams from different legal traditions might adopt vastly different styles of reasoning. For instance, whilst common law teams typically emphasize case precedents and legal principles, teams from civil law jurisdictions would rather focus on interpretation of statutes and conventions. One might see his own beliefs or assumptions being challenged as entirely irrelevant in another's analysis. It is this process of intense deliberation that has broadened law students' horizons and enhanced their intellectual rigour.



The HKU team wishes to express sincere gratitude to Professor Po Jen Yap, team coaches Ms Astina Au and Mr Peter Barnes, and every barrister who helped providing feedbacks in the practice sessions for their continuing support in this journey. The international moot has given the team members precious opportunities to polish their advocacy skills and has better prepared them for their legal careers ahead.

Student Journalist: Kwan Ching Man, Sally (Arts, Year 2)