

ASEAN Judicial Dialogue WEBINAR
Judicial Education and Training in the Time of Pandemic: Challenges and Lessons

Working Group on Judicial Education and Training (WG-JET)
Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ)

Country: Singapore

The paper presented to the Webinar needs to address the issues below:

- 1) Please provide explanation on bodies that formally responsible for judicial training and education to the court (Ministry of Justice, other ministry, Supreme Court, Judicial Council, and so forth). Please elaborate if possible the organizational structure and its function in implementing judicial education and training program.

The Singapore Judicial College (SJC) caters to the learning and development needs of judges and judicial officers. It is established under the Supreme Court of Singapore. The main focus of its work is to support Singapore judges with quality judicial education, inspire life-long learning on the bench and nurture *learning judges*. The SJC also shares the experiences of the Singapore Judiciary with the world through offering customised training, engaging in capacity-building, as well as lending consultancy and technical assistance services in pedagogy and specific areas of expertise associated with the Singapore Judiciary.

The SJC reports directly to the Chief Justice (also President of the Court of Appeal). The SJC also reports to its Board of Governors chaired by the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal with the President of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) and the Judge in charge of the High Court (General Division) as deputy chairs. The Governors are the Presiding Judges of the State Courts and Family Justice Courts, a Judge of the High Court, an International Judge of the SICC, the Dean of SJC, the Executive Director of SJC, as well as members of local and international academia.

The SJC is headed by the Dean, who is a former Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court and Senior Counsel. He is assisted by the Executive Director, who is a District Judge.

- 2) Please provide information on judicial education training and program provided for judges and staff in your judiciary.

Seven identified focus areas currently guide SJC's training curriculum: bench skills, court leadership, judicial ethics, legal development, personal development and resilience, social awareness, technology and sciences.

A new Judiciary Competency Framework has been developed in 2021. Upon its implementation, SJC's training curriculum will be guided by the competencies and associated knowledge, skills and attributes prescribed by this framework that judges are required to have according to the stages of their judicial careers.

- 3) Please provide explanation of themes and methods of training prioritized by your judiciary, especially during the pandemic.

Training in case management and case disposition were prioritised during the pandemic:

Case Management: Active case management to deal with cases that have accumulated during the circuit-breaker period; bench skills to manage remote hearings/trials and online mediation

Case disposition: Greater use of *ex-tempore* and oral judgments to render speedy decisions fit for purpose in the context of delivering justice that is “good enough” (as opposed to “perfect” justice)

As only essential cases were heard during the circuit-breaker period, there was a surge in demand for training during this time. The SJC was responsive to this need and pivoted swiftly to online delivery of *all* its programmes via the Zoom platform, having had prior experience with delivering training via video-conferencing facilities and piloting with training over Skype.

- 4) Please provide explanation on the experiences of your judiciary in implementing judicial training and program in the time of pandemic. Please elaborate on the changes that you incorporated and the effects to the implementation of judicial education and training in your judiciary.

The SJC recognised very early in the day that it cannot simply port over its existing programmes to an online environment and expect to reach its audience. The pedagogy for all programmes were painstakingly reviewed and some completely overhauled to ensure effective delivery of online instruction that *connects, interacts* and *engages* the audience. The online instruction that was consequently developed was very well-received by our judges, especially evening webinars, from the evaluations SJC conducted for its core programmes (participants were specifically asked to evaluate the effectiveness of delivering instruction via Zoom) and the JCF survey it ran to seek feedback on the mode of delivering training.

- 5) Please provide ideas or innovations that your judiciary is currently implemented or will be implemented in the future in conducting training during pandemic and beyond.

The SJC is currently exploring *blended learning*, where judges undertake a combination of asynchronous self-learning, focus discussions in online classes, as well as in-person clinics and practice classes. In this connection, SJC is also exploring *flipped learning* where participants will complete asynchronous online modules before they attend SJC core programmes. This allows for self-learning at their own pace/time and for them to focus on in-depth discussions in class subsequently.

- 6) Please provide explanation of what are the lessons learned of conducting judicial education in the time of pandemic and beyond.

Covid-19 has accelerated the adoption of remote training to the extent that it is unlikely that we can revert back to the status quo of delivering instruction in the physical classrooms; neither do we expect our constituents to be satisfied with such training. Moreover, as Covid-19 becomes endemic, there is increasing acceptance that we must adopt measures to prepare for life *with* Covid rather than life after Covid.

The SJC's signature pedagogy is guided by 3 mantras with specific modifications for training in a Covid world:

"Judges teaching Judges": Our Judge Faculty and judicial educators are kept abreast with the latest pedagogical techniques and tools to ensure that they are able to connect, interact and engage with participants online. SJC also guides its external faculty in their virtual presentations and in facilitating remote learning activities to inspire learning and understanding.

"In the context of judging": The SJC delivers practical training that future-proofs judges to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic and a future world living with Covid: see e.g. response to Q3 above. In short, SJC continues to deliver training that is highly relevant, that is it teaches things that judges can use in their work the very next day.

"Every Judge a Teacher": The SJC creates safe online spaces conducive for sharing and facilitates peer engagement and interaction in a virtual environment.

The paper is expected to be approximately 2500 words. The paper will be shared through the ASEAN Judiciaries Portal, as a means to document knowledge and lesson learns from ASEAN Judiciaries.