

NUS law students to provide pro bono service to arts sector

New elective gives seniors a chance to engage in clinical legal education in the sector

Jolene Ang

Law students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) will soon have more opportunities to put their legal education into practice while serving the community.

Last Friday, the NUS law faculty announced a five-year partnership with the Singapore Art Museum, National Gallery Singapore and the Singapore Tyler Print Institute to estab-

lish Arts in Clinical Legal Education (Article), a pro bono legal services programme.

To be managed by NUS Law's Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, it will provide more opportunities for students to engage in clinical legal education in the arts sector.

Under the programme, which kicked in immediately, students will be exposed to new areas of legal practice, from intellectual property to financing to personal property law.

It will mainly be open to third- and fourth-year students, who will have to apply for a place as part of an elective module.

Senior Minister of State for Law and Health Edwin Tong, an NUS

TWO-WAY BENEFITS

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PROFESSOR SIMON CHESTERMAN,
NUS law dean, on the new programme.

law alumnus, witnessed the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Lauding the programme as a new milestone, Mr Tong said: "This is an additional step for NUS Law towards innovations in legal teaching."

In 2010, NUS Law also signed an MOU with the Legal Aid Bureau as part of the faculty's clinical legal education programme.

Under that deal, clinical professors and NUS law students take on legal aid cases, giving legal aid applicants representation in the courts.

In return, the students get first-hand experience working on live legal cases, appearing in court with their professors, and drafting documents for court matters.

NUS law dean Simon Chesterman said the new programme shows how lawyers can contribute in other sectors.

"Pro bono work around the world typically focuses on criminal law and family law – in particular, cases that are on their way to court," said Professor Chesterman.

"This is entirely appropriate, as that is when the lack of legal advice and support can see real harm. But it is far from the only way in which lawyers can give back to society."

As for the new programme, Prof Chesterman added: "It will provide valuable experience to our students and, we hope, a valuable service to Singapore's arts sector."

Dr June Yap, director of curatorial, programmes and publications at the Singapore Art Museum, said the partnership has "many beneficial facets for the arts community".

"We are deeply grateful to NUS Law for its recognition of the significance of the arts sector in contributing to the betterment of our community – in championing human expression, and the reflection upon our lives and how we live together," she said.

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