

JUDICIAL EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE: THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This article examines the evolution of judicial education in Singapore on the occasion of the Singapore Judicial College's ("SJC") 10th Anniversary. It offers insights into Singapore's approach to judicial education and its potential implications for judiciaries worldwide. It begins by contextualising Singapore's experience within the international judicial education landscape, including the global trend from a decentralised approach to the current centralised and professionalised structure. The authors then explore key developments and milestones throughout the SJC's first decade, highlighting its transformative impact on judicial training in Singapore, the region and beyond. Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world fraught with challenges for judiciaries worldwide, the article proposes nine strategic focus areas for the SJC's future development, thus contributing to the broader discourse on the advancement of judicial education in strengthening judiciaries.

KWEK Mean Luck¹

Judge, Supreme Court of Singapore; Chair, Board of Governors, Singapore Judicial College.

Natalie SKEAD

Dean, Singapore Judicial College; Professor of Law, The University of Western Australia.

Justin YEO

District Judge, State Courts of Singapore; Executive Director, Singapore Judicial College.

YEO Mui Lin

Senior Assistant Director, Institute of Judicial Studies, Singapore Judicial College.

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I. Introduction

1 2025 marks ten years since the establishment of the Singapore Judicial College (“SJC”) and with it, the advent of formalised and structured judicial education in Singapore. The establishment of the SJC reflected one of the early priorities of the Chief Justice of Singapore Sundaresh Menon “to institutionalise and pull together the various judicial education programs that had been developed over time”.²

2 At the official launch of the SJC on 5 January 2015, Menon CJ noted that:³

Our judges have been at the very core of Singapore’s legal development and they must continue to lead us forward in changing times. It is, therefore, imperative not only that the right people are appointed but also that they are provided with ample opportunities for continuing education and development.

3 The SJC’s 10th Anniversary is a timely opportunity for reflection on its transformative impact on judicial education in Singapore and beyond. This milestone provides an occasion to consider how the SJC has revolutionised the nature, scope and focus of judicial education in Singapore. It also serves as a launchpad to envision the future and what is required to support the Singapore Judiciary in its pursuit of judicial excellence in realising its vision of being “A Trusted Judiciary · Ready for Tomorrow”.

4 This article examines in Part II the international judicial education landscape, providing specific examples across common law and civil legal traditions. This overview serves as a backdrop for understanding Singapore’s approach towards judicial education. Part III then traces the evolution of judicial education in Singapore both pre- and post-establishment of the SJC, a journey that reflects how Singapore has developed its unique model by drawing on and contributing to international best practices. Part IV focuses on the future, highlighting the pervasive challenges facing judiciaries worldwide and how the SJC seeks to address these challenges through judicial education.

2 Tan Boon Heng, “Judicial Education: The Singapore Brand” (2015) 4 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 35–36.

3 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon”, speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2015 (5 January 2015).

II. International judicial education landscape

5 The concept of formally training judges in a dedicated institution emerged in civil law jurisdictions such as Japan, France and the Netherlands in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴ Since then, judicial education has flourished, with the number of such institutes proliferating worldwide. This growth is perhaps best reflected in the establishment of the International Organization for Judicial Training (“IOJT”) in 2002.

6 The IOJT was set up “to promote the rule of law by supporting the work of judicial education institutions around the world”.⁵ The IOJT seeks to achieve this by hosting and facilitating international and regional events and knowledge exchanges, so creating a community of judicial educators that provides “opportunities for judges and judicial educators to discuss strategies for establishing and developing training centers, designing effective curricula, developing faculty capacity, and improving teaching methodology”.⁶ The IOJT is a volunteer, not-for-profit organisation with over 140 institutional members from 89 civil law and common law countries.⁷ Twenty-four countries participated in the first international forum convened to establish the IOJT in Tel Aviv, Israel in March 2002.⁸ The eleventh and most recent conference was held in November 2024 in Seoul, South Korea⁹ and boasted over 230 attendees from 52 countries.¹⁰

4 “The Legal Training and Research Institute of Japan” *Supreme Court of Japan* <https://www.courts.go.jp/english/institute_01/institute/index.html> (accessed 1 April 2025); “History” *Ecole Nationale de La Magistrature* <<https://www.enm.justice.fr/en/history>> (accessed 1 April 2025); “Netherlands: Training and Study Centre for the Judiciary” *European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)* <<https://ejtn.eu/office/netherlands-training-and-study-centre-for-the-judiciary/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

5 “About IOJT” *International Organization for Judicial Training* <<https://www.iojt.org/about-us>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

6 “About IOJT” *International Organization for Judicial Training* <<https://www.iojt.org/about-us>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

7 “Members” *International Organization for Judicial Training* <<https://www.iojt.org/members>> (accessed 1 April 2025). See also Livingstone Armytage, *Educating Judges: Towards Improving Practice – A Survey of Global Practice* (Brill Nijhoff, 2015); and Chief Justice Robert French, “Judicial Education – A Global Phenomenon” (26 October 2009) <<https://www.hcourt.gov.au/assets/publications/speeches/current-justices/frenchcj/frenchcj26oct09.pdf>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

8 “Past Conferences” *International Organization for Judicial Training* <<https://www.iojt.org/conferences>> (accessed 1 April 2025). Download “the background of IOJT”.

9 The 2024 IOJT Conference was organised around the theme “Judicial Education at a Crossroads: Preparing for the Future of the Judiciary, Embracing Human Rights, Technology and Effective Pedagogy”.

10 “Newsletter 2024” *Judicial Research and Training Institute, Korea* <<https://jrta.scourt.go.kr>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

7 While a detailed and comprehensive history of judicial education in foreign jurisdictions is beyond the scope of this article, the discussion that follows provides a brief overview of the development of judicial education in several civil and common law jurisdictions. These are: France, the US, Canada, Australia, the People's Republic of China ("China") and New Zealand.¹¹

A. *France*

8 France's judicial education institute, École Nationale de la Magistrature ("ENM"), was established in 1958. Being a civil law jurisdiction, judicial education in France is mandatory for candidates aspiring to judicial appointment. The ENM's structured programme for judicial candidates lasts over 31 months.¹² An innovation in ENM's judicial training is allied services placements with organisations such as law enforcement agencies (eg, prisons and the police force), banks and industry. These placements assist candidates to better understand the broader context in which the courts operate and the intersection between law, society and commerce.¹³

9 ENM also provides continuing judicial education and a voluntary leadership and management training programme for sitting judges wanting to be considered for senior judicial appointment.¹⁴

10 At an international level, ENM offers a suite of in-person and online courses specifically developed for foreign judges as well as support and Train-the-Trainer programmes for international judicial educators.¹⁵

B. *The US*

11 The National Judicial College ("NJC US") is a non-partisan, non-profit institution established in 1964 and "the only educational institution in the United States that teaches courtroom skills to judges of

11 The jurisdictions are arranged in chronological order, ie, the years in which each jurisdiction established its first judicial education institute.

12 Livingstone Armytage, "Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform" (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 19, fn 2.

13 Jeremy Cooper, "EC Study of the Best Practice in the Training of Judges and Prosecutors in EU Member States" (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 62.

14 Jeremy Cooper, "EC Study of the Best Practice in the Training of Judges and Prosecutors in EU Member States" (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 54.

15 "International – Support for Training Institutes" *Ecole Nationale de La Magistrature* <<https://www.enm.justice.fr/en/linternational/missions-du-departement-international>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

all types from all over the country, Indian country and abroad”.¹⁶ Although the Federal Judicial Center (“FJC”) was established in 1967 to provide federal judges with continuing judicial education (among other services), by 1986 the provision of judicial education in the US was largely state-based, with all states providing some form of judicial education, much of which was mandatory.¹⁷ Armytage notes that judicial education in the US is two-pronged: orientation programmes for newly appointed judges and continuing judicial education.¹⁸

12 Despite the emergence of state-based judicial education providers, the NJC US offers an average of 100 in-person programmes annually attended by more than 8,000 judges across the various states in the US and from more than 150 countries.¹⁹ Online judicial education dominates with “more than 10,000 judicial officers ... accessing 30 to 50 web events each year”.²⁰

C. Canada

13 The Canadian Judicial Council (“CJC”) conducted its first judicial education programmes in 1972.²¹ This was followed by the establishment of the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice in 1974, and subsequently the National Judicial Institute (“NJI”) in 1988.²² The CJC, “vested with the collective authority of all Chief Justices and Associate Chief Justices across Canada”, continues to perform “an oversight and guidance role”,²³ with the NJI operating as “an independent, judge-led organization that provides dynamic and relevant educational programs and resources to Canada’s 2,600-strong judiciary”.²⁴

16 “More about the NJC” *The National Judicial College* <<https://www.judges.org/about/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

17 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 21–22. The average number of training-leave days for education and training is five per year.

18 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 22.

19 “History” *The National Judicial College* <<https://www.judges.org/about/njc-history/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

20 “History” *The National Judicial College* <<https://www.judges.org/about/njc-history/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

21 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 24.

22 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 24.

23 “Professional Development Policies and Guidelines 2018 (NEW)” *Canadian Judicial Council* <https://cjc-ccm.ca/en/resources-centre/publications?f%5B0%5D=publication_category%3A14> (accessed 1 April 2025).

24 “Who We Are” *National Judicial Institute Institut National De La Magistrature* <<https://www.nji-inm.ca/index.cfm?langSwitch=en>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

14 Although judicial training in Canada is largely voluntary, the CJC requires recently-appointed federal judges to complete the “New Judges Program and Judging in Your Five Years”²⁵ within the first five years of their appointment.

15 Judicial training through the NJI is judge-led,²⁶ with programme development undertaken by a team comprising academics, judges and NJI administrative staff.²⁷ Programme focus depends on the level of interest from provincial and federal courts,²⁸ the needs of the courts,²⁹ and domestic and international developments in the law. Like the US, given the size and geographical spread of judiciaries across Canada, online judicial education programmes feature strongly in the NJI’s suite of education offerings.

D. Australia

16 Judicial education in Australia can be traced back to the formation of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (“AIJA”) in 1975, and a subsequent call from Justice Michael Kirby in 1983 to introduce formalised judicial education to assist newly appointed judges transitioning to the Bench and to keep judges abreast of changes in the law and judicial practice.³⁰ However, it was only with the establishment of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales (“JC NSW”) in 1986 and the formation of the AIJA Secretariat in 1987 that a permanent infrastructure was established to oversee judicial education, with both bodies conducting a “range of judicial conferences and workshops for judges and judicial administrators on a national and state basis, respectively”.³¹

25 “Professional Development Policies and Guidelines 2018 (NEW)” *Canadian Judicial Council* <https://cjc-ccm.ca/en/resources-centre/publications?f%5B0%5D=publication_category%3A14> (accessed 1 April 2025).

26 T Brettel Dawson, “Crafting Judge-led Judicial Education: Partnering with Educators” (2015) 4 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 107.

27 Thomas Crabtree, Joseph W Bovard & Magdalene Serwin, “Online Programming at the National Judicial Institute” (2015) 4 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 23.

28 Thomas Crabtree, Joseph W Bovard & Magdalene Serwin, “Online Programming at the National Judicial Institute” (2015) 4 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 25.

29 Thomas Crabtree, Joseph W Bovard & Magdalene Serwin, “Online Programming at the National Judicial Institute” (2015) 4 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 27.

30 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 25.

31 Livingstone Armytage, “Leadership for Judicial Educators: Vision for Reform” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 25.

17 The JC NSW is somewhat unique in that it serves as both the state's judicial complaints body and its judicial education provider.³² The JC NSW's view is that "examining complaints" about judges allows it "to monitor patterns in the nature and scope" of such complaints that can then be addressed through education.³³ The tethering of complaints to education has led to "specific education programmes on topics such as effective courtroom communication, domestic violence, sexual assault cases and cultural awareness".³⁴

18 In the 1990s, there were calls to establish a body to provide judicial education for the whole Australian judiciary.³⁵ In response, the National Judicial College of Australia ("NJCA") was established in 2002.³⁶ A second state-based judicial education provider, the Judicial College of Victoria, was also established in 2002.³⁷

19 The 2006 *National Standard for Professional Development for Australian Judicial Officers* requires Australian judges to spend at least five days per calendar year in self-directed or structured professional development aggregated over a three-year period.³⁸

E. China

20 The key institution charged with the education and training of judges in China is the National Judges College of the People's Republic of China ("NJC China"). Founded in 1997, its new campus officially opened

32 James Allsop, "Continuing Judicial Education: The Australian Experience" in *Handbook for Judicial Officers* <https://www.judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/judicial_officers/continuing_judicial_education.html#ftn.id-1.4.5.2.6.7.1> (accessed 1 April 2025).

33 James Allsop, "Continuing Judicial Education: The Australian Experience" in *Handbook for Judicial Officers* <https://www.judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/judicial_officers/continuing_judicial_education.html#ftn.id-1.4.5.2.6.7.1> (accessed 1 April 2025).

34 James Allsop, "Continuing Judicial Education: The Australian Experience" in *Handbook for Judicial Officers* <https://www.judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/judicial_officers/continuing_judicial_education.html#ftn.id-1.4.5.2.6.7.1> (accessed 1 April 2025).

35 "About Us" *National Judicial College of Australia* <<https://www.njca.com.au/about-us/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

36 "About Us" *National Judicial College of Australia* <<https://www.njca.com.au/about-us/>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

37 "About Us" *Judicial College of Victoria* <<https://judicialcollege.vic.edu.au/about-us>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

38 James Allsop, "Continuing Judicial Education: The Australian Experience" in *Handbook for Judicial Officers* <https://www.judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/judicial_officers/continuing_judicial_education.html#ftn.id-1.4.5.2.6.7.1> (accessed 1 April 2025).

in September 2015 and accommodates more than 1,000 judge learners.³⁹ Since its establishment, NJC China has conducted 1,000 training courses, delivered at the Masters and Doctoral levels, for over 100,000 judges.⁴⁰

21 The format and content of training offered by the NJC China is demand-driven: whether the issues or topics that are taught are “in-demand” by “the organisation, the post, and the people”;⁴¹ whether the focus of the teaching is “in-demand” by the judges (in this regard, prior to attending a training course, each judge is required to submit three questions, three difficult cases and three professional experiences);⁴² and whether the teaching approaches are “in-demand” by the Supreme People’s Court of the People’s Republic of China and the NJC China (and its branches).⁴³

F. *New Zealand*

22 In recognition of the importance of the Judiciary reflecting the diversity of the people it serves,⁴⁴ the judicial committee of the Te Awa Tuia Tangata⁴⁵ encourages the appointment of judges “from diverse backgrounds” and who have “followed non-traditional career paths”.⁴⁶ Against the backdrop of a diverse Bench, judicial education in New Zealand has developed beyond substantive law, extending to “fields as broad as mental health and cognitive and linguistic science” which often impact judicial work.⁴⁷

39 Li Xiaomin, “China’s Judges’ Education and Training Reform: Practice and Future Innovation” (2018) 6 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 77.

40 Li Xiaomin, “China’s Judges’ Education and Training Reform: Practice and Future Innovation” (2018) 6 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 77.

41 Li Xiaomin, “China’s Judges’ Education and Training Reform: Practice and Future Innovation” (2018) 6 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 78.

42 Li Xiaomin, “China’s Judges’ Education and Training Reform: Practice and Future Innovation” (2018) 6 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 79.

43 Li Xiaomin, “China’s Judges’ Education and Training Reform: Practice and Future Innovation” (2018) 6 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 79.

44 Chief Justice Helen Winklemann *et al*, “Continuity, Challenge and Change” in *Challenge and Change: Judging in Aotearoa New Zealand* (John Burrows & Jeremy Finn eds) (Lexis Nexis NZ Limited, 2022) at p 371.

45 This is translated as “the man-made river” based on Google Translate from Māori to English.

46 Chief Justice Helen Winklemann *et al*, “Continuity, Challenge and Change” in *Challenge and Change: Judging in Aotearoa New Zealand* (John Burrows & Jeremy Finn eds) (Lexis Nexis NZ Limited, 2022) at p 373.

47 Chief Justice Helen Winklemann *et al*, “Continuity, Challenge and Change” in *Challenge and Change: Judging in Aotearoa New Zealand* (John Burrows & Jeremy Finn eds) (Lexis Nexis NZ Limited, 2022) at p 374.

23 Judicial education in New Zealand is largely co-ordinated by the Institute of Judicial Studies or Te Kura Kaiwhakawā (“Te Kura”) – a non-legislative body established in 1998.⁴⁸ Te Kura provides education programmes and seminars for judges ranging from induction and orientation programmes for newly appointed judges to regular updates on core areas of law (evidence, criminal procedure and family law) and specialised programmes (such as training to deal with self-represented persons, judicial settlement conferences and courses about eliminating unconscious bias, and developing understanding of “te reo Māori^[49] and tikanga^[50] principles” [references added]).⁵¹

III. Judicial education in Singapore

24 The examination of judicial education practices across six diverse jurisdictions provides valuable context for understanding Singapore’s own journey in this field. It highlights common trends, such as the move towards formalised and structured judicial education, the emphasis on both initial and continuing education for judges, and the increasing recognition of the importance of judicial education in maintaining a competent and adaptable Judiciary. This international perspective also underscores the variety of approaches taken by different countries, influenced by their unique legal traditions, institutional structures and societal needs. Against this backdrop, one can better appreciate the development of judicial education in Singapore, its distinctive features, and how the SJC has drawn inspiration from international best practices while crafting an approach tailored to its specific needs and vision for its Judiciary.

A. Early years

25 Prior to the introduction of formalised structured judicial education in Singapore in 2015, the training of judicial officers (“JOs”) was decentralised and managed by the individual courts.⁵² Internal

48 Jan-Marie Doogue & Colin Doherty, “The International Framework for Court Excellence: Gauging How Well Education and Training are Delivered to the Judiciary” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 142.

49 This is translated as “native language” based on Google Translate from Māori to English.

50 This is translated as “method” based on Google Translate from Māori to English.

51 Jan-Marie Doogue & Colin Doherty, “The International Framework for Court Excellence: Gauging How Well Education and Training are Delivered to the Judiciary” (2015) 3 *Judicial Education and Training* 1 at 142–143.

52 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon”, speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2015 (5 January 2015) at para 48.

training primarily took the form of monthly Saturday morning recent case updates and seminars on specific topics, primarily organised by the training committees of the Supreme Court and the then-Subordinate Courts. JOs supplemented their training by attending seminars organised by the Singapore Academy of Law. These seminars were also mostly held on Saturday mornings, as Saturday was officially a working half-day until 2004.⁵³

B. *Establishing the SJC*

26 Work to centralise and formalise judicial training through the establishment of the SJC commenced in 2014. Menon CJ formally launched the SJC at the Opening of the Legal Year on 5 January 2015, heralding it as a critical mechanism for strengthening the Judiciary and ensuring leadership in legal development through education and development. Then-Registrar (and subsequently Judicial Commissioner) of the Supreme Court Foo Chee Hock and then-District Judge Tan Boon Heng were announced as the inaugural Dean and Executive Director of the SJC respectively, with overall oversight and strategic direction from a Board of Governors helmed at the time by Justice Andrew Phang as Chairperson and Justice Quentin Loh as Deputy Chairperson.⁵⁴ To facilitate co-ordination of judicial education among the three courts (*ie*, the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts; collectively, the “tri-courts”), each court appointed a Judicial Education Liaison Officer.

27 In its first iteration, the SJC had three pillars of operation: (a) a Local Wing; (b) an International Wing; and (c) an Empirical Judicial Research (“EJR”) laboratory. Inspired by the work of established judicial education institutes in other common law jurisdictions, especially the NJI and the UK’s Judicial College, the Local Wing provided judicial education and continuing professional development in a wide range of focus areas as reflected in Image 1 below:

53 Lee Hsien Loong, “National Day Rally 2004” <<https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/National-Day-Rally-2004>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

54 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon”, speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2015 (5 January 2015) at paras 49–50 and 53.

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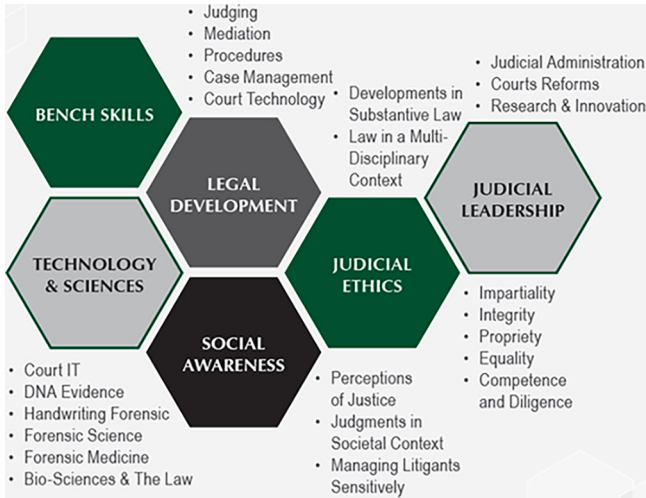


Image 1: Local Wing areas of education

28 The aim of the International Wing was to provide judges and aspiring judges in the region and beyond with a suite of judicial training opportunities to hone their adjudicatory and non-adjudicatory skills. This international focus recognised that “nation-wide or local educational efforts may benefit from the addition of a transnational dimension”⁵⁵ not only by ensuring that judges are better equipped to deal with the complexities created by the increased globalisation of legal issues coming before the courts, but also by improving judicial education practices worldwide through the knowledge exchange of best practices with international counterparts.

29 From its inception, “a very special and unique dimension” of the SJC was the establishment of “an empirical judicial research laboratory with the aim of serving as a test bed for innovation in judicial studies, practices and policies”.⁵⁶ As the first of its kind in Asia, the EJR laboratory was intended to push the frontier for local judicial research to incorporate rigorous empirical research methods, with the research findings and recommendations expected to have impact and instil best practices not only in Singapore, but potentially other parts of the region.

55 Maartje De Visser, “Disseminating Ideas and Influence through Transnational Education” in *Informality and Courts: Comparative Perspectives* (Björn Dressel, Raul Sanchez-Urribarri & Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg eds) (Edinburgh University Press, 2025) at ch 15.

56 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon”, speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2015 (5 January 2015) at para 52.

C. *Ten years of judicial education and research under the SJC*

(1) *2015–2017: Establishment*

30 The immediate objective of the SJC was to bring all the judicial training conducted by the Singapore courts “under the auspices of the College”.⁵⁷ Its vision was “[t]o achieve excellence in judicial education and research” and its mission “[t]o provide and inspire continuing judicial learning and research to enhance the competency and professionalism of judges”.⁵⁸ In its first three years, the SJC delivered an annual average of more than 40 judicial training programmes for local judges and JOs.⁵⁹ Between 2015 and 2017, “more than 3000 judicial training places [were] taken up”.⁶⁰ The programmes were of varying duration⁶¹ and covered a wide range of topics across all focus areas.

31 Developments in the SJC’s International Wing were especially pleasing. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (“MFA”) Technical Cooperation Directorate (“TCD”) under the Singapore Cooperation Programme (“SCP”), the SJC successfully conducted a wide selection of programmes both in and outside Singapore to many foreign judges and government officials performing legal and justice-related functions. These international programmes included multi-day courses on case management, judicial leadership and dispute resolution. Besides the courses delivered under the auspices of the SCP, the SJC also delivered a suite of multi-day training programmes to meet specific needs of foreign judiciaries on topics such as judgecraft, judicial ethics, mediation and technology in case management. Three years after its establishment, the SJC boasted an international alumni of close to 1,000 judges and officials from 67 countries.

57 “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2015: Unlocking A New Beginning” at p 3 <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

58 See “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2015: Unlocking A New Beginning” at p 6, “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2016: Making our Mark” at p 6 and “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2017: Keeping the Pace” at p 6.

59 “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2015: Unlocking A New Beginning” at p 19 <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

60 “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2017: Keeping the Pace” at p 4 <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

61 The programmes under the Local Wing varied in duration and included one-hour-long talks in the evening, lunchtime talks, two to three-day-long workshops and the annual four-day-long Judiciary-Wide Induction Programme for newly appointed judges and judicial officers, typically held in the fourth quarter of each year.

32 With strong interest from the National University of Singapore (“NUS”) and the Singapore Management University (“SMU”), from 2015–2017 the SJC funded nine EJRP projects examining a variety of topical issues, resulting in three publications on judicial empathy, defamation and case citation of legal scholarship.⁶²

(2) **2018–2020: Consolidation**

33 In 2018, then-Judicial Commissioner Foo Chee Hock completed his three-year term on the Supreme Court Bench and assumed full-time leadership of the SJC.⁶³ District Judge Paul Quan was appointed as the SJC’s second Executive Director. Drawing on valuable insights from large-scale Asian judicial education institutes, *eg*, the NJC China and the Republic of Korea’s Judicial Research and Training Institute, the SJC focused on developing its curriculum as a common law jurisdiction in the region, while embracing its Asian identity and perspective. The ensuing three years was a period of consolidation, during which the SJC undertook a curriculum review and established its core foundational curriculum. A working committee was appointed in March 2020 to develop a framework that would inform future competency-based curriculum development.

34 The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the resultant heightened social distancing measures implemented to reduce viral spread required the SJC to adapt its operations and mode of delivery rapidly. Singapore announced its first partial lockdown (known as a “circuit breaker”) on 3 April 2020, with the measures coming into force from 7 April 2020.⁶⁴ From that date, the SJC delivered all its programmes online. Despite (or perhaps because of) the uncertainty, the SJC

62 “Singapore Judicial College Annual Report 2017: Keeping the Pace” at p 38 <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 1 April 2025). The three publications are as follows: (a) Cheah Wui Ling & Goh Yi-han, “An Empirical Study on the Singapore Court of Appeal’s Citation of Academic Works: Reflections on the Relationship between Singapore’s Judiciary and Academia” (2017) 29 SAclJ 75; (b) Gary Chan Kok Yew, *Tort of Defamation before the Singapore Courts 1965–2015: A Comparative and Empirical Study* (Academy Publishing, 2016); and (c) Gary Low, “Emphatic Plea for the Empathic Judge” (2018) 30 SAclJ 97.

63 “Judicial Commissioner Foo Chee Hock Completes Term on the Bench and Assumes Full-time Leadership of Singapore Judicial College” *SG Courts* (21 March 2018) <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/judicial-commissioner-foo-chee-hock-completes-term-on-the-bench-and-assumes-full-time-leadership-of-singapore-judicial-college>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

64 “PM Lee Hsien Loong on the COVID-19 Situation in Singapore on 3 April 2020” *Prime Minister’s Office Singapore* (3 April 2020) <<https://www.pmo.gov.sg/>> (cont’d on the next page)

embraced the opportunity to experiment with a range of exciting and cutting-edge teaching technologies and innovative and engaging online pedagogies, such as immersive and collaborative tools of video and audio conferencing platforms, third-party interactive audience engagement platforms, as well as platforms inspired by open broadcaster software.⁶⁵ This period of technology-led innovation would, in time, help position the SJC as a global leader in judicial education and technology.⁶⁶

35 As a result of the SJC's commitment to high-quality innovative pedagogy, local and international engagement with the SJC's programmes remained high. 119 programmes were delivered to over 3,800 local participants from 2018–2020.

36 Internationally, while the implementation of COVID-related travel restrictions to and from Singapore since early April 2020⁶⁷ had a significant impact on the conduct of the SJC's international programmes in 2020, the SJC delivered 37 international programmes to 807 participants from 2018–2020.⁶⁸ In addition, the SJC participated in online conferences

Newsroom/PM-Lee-Hsien-Loong-on-the-COVID19-situation-in-Singapore-on-3-April-2020> (accessed 1 April 2025).

65 See, eg, the online delivery of “Eliminating Backlog: The Singapore Story”, a module which is part of a core programme on case management delivered by the Singapore Judicial College (“SJC”): <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/singapore-judicial-college_singaporejudicialcollege-judicialtraining-activity-6832868607438020608-nqCC?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop> (accessed 1 April 2025), and the introductory module to an SJC core programme on courtroom communication: <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/singapore-judicial-college_courtroom-communication-introduction-activity-6855879361648844800-ef5r?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop> (accessed 1 April 2025).

66 See, eg, “Delivering Justice in a Covid-World” (7 December 2021) from 2:06:38–2:23:53 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ldv5f7Ab2qY>> (accessed 1 April 2025) (an online presentation by the Singapore Judicial College (“SJC”) delivered at the 2021 Judicial Research and Training Institute of the Supreme Court of Korea International Conference); “Justice in the New Digital Era: Digitalization of the Courts and its Challenges” (24 September 2022) from 3:13:58–3:28:31 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78lwA4M8_9U> (accessed 1 April 2025) (an online presentation delivered by the SJC at the 9th International Judicial Conference of the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan); and panel discussion on “Future Judicial Changes Driven by AI and the Judiciary” (29 November 2023) from 2:00:31–2:16:22 (a presentation delivered by the SJC at the 2023 Judicial Research and Training Institute of the Supreme Court of Korea International Conference) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80SQyQbiggl>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

67 Selina Lum & Dominic Low, “Courts to Hear Only Essential and Urgent Matters During ‘Circuit Breaker’ Period” *The Straits Times* (6 April 2020) <<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/courts-to-hear-only-essential-and-urgent-matters-during-circuit-breaker>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

68 Singapore Judicial College, “2020 Programmes” <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

and knowledge exchanges with its partners in the Republic of Korea, China and the US.

37 A critical development in the SJC's internationalisation strategy was the introduction in 2020 of the Master of Laws in Judicial Studies ("LLM (JS)"). The LLM (JS) was a collaboration between the SJC and the SMU Yong Pung How School of Law, and was the "first [programme] of its kind in the region"⁶⁹ aimed at equipping serving judges and judicial aspirants for a successful and rewarding career as part of a trusted Judiciary in Singapore or internationally. In its inaugural offering, eight candidates enrolled in the LLM (JS) comprising four candidates from Singapore, two from Indonesia, one from Mongolia and one from Nepal.

38 An important area of international outreach during the SJC's consolidation period took the form of paving the way for the expansion of the SJC's partnerships with international judicial education counterparts, with the SJC signing its first Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with the US National Center for State Courts in 2020.

39 Under its EJR scheme, the SJC awarded an additional eight grants, and six articles were published covering a broad range of topics, including schemes of arrangement, international divorce, international commercial litigation, the role of empathy in judging and the impact of the quality of advocacy on the outcome of litigation.⁷⁰

(3) 2021–2024: Growth

40 With the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021–2024 saw significant growth and transformation in all areas of the SJC's work. The

69 "Judicial Studies Track: Message from the Chief Justice" *Singapore Management University* <<https://law.smu.edu.sg/llm/curriculum/judicial-studies-track>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

70 The six publications are as follows: (a) Simon Chesterman, "Do Better Lawyers Win More Often? Measures of Advocate Quality and their Impact in Singapore's Supreme Court" (2020) 15(2) *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 250; (b) Wan Wai Yee, Casey Watters & Gerard McCormack, "Schemes of Arrangement in Singapore: Empirical and Comparative Analyses" (2020) 94(3) *American Bankruptcy Law Journal* 463; (c) Joyce Low, Lee Meng Chung & Cha Yoo Jin, "International Divorces in Singapore: A Study of Trends from Cases Filed in the Family Courts" [2019] SAL Prac 31; (d) Adeline Chong & Yip Man, "Singapore as a Centre for International Commercial Litigation: Party Autonomy to the Fore" (2019) 15(1) *Journal of Private International Law* 97; (e) Gary Low, "Empathetic Plea for the Empathetic Judge" (2018) 30 *SAC LJ* 97; and (f) Dorcas Quek Anderson, Eunice Chua & Ngo Tra My, "How Should the Courts Know Whether a Dispute is Ready and Suitable for Mediation? An Empirical Analysis of the Singapore Courts' Referral of Civil Disputes to Mediation" (2018) 23 *Harvard Negotiation Law Review* 265.

restructuring of the Singapore Legal Service (“SLS”) into a reconstituted SLS and a dedicated Singapore Judicial Service (“SJS”) on 14 January 2022 meant that the work of the SJC assumed even greater importance. At the time, Menon CJ noted the need for the SJC to “deepen ... its capacity to deliver competency-based training to sharpen the abilities of [Judicial Service Officers] both in core legal skills and in adjacent areas such as statistics, forensic science, and innovation” and “think ... seriously about what it is that judges should be trained for, with a view to developing an agenda for reform that will keep our justice system fair and effective”.⁷¹

41 Upon the restructuring of the SLS, Menon CJ initiated a fundamental strategic review of the SJC. This was undertaken by the SJC Cluster of the Judicial Service Implementation Committee (“SJC Cluster”). Under the co-chairpersonship of Justice Philip Jeyaretnam and then-Judicial Commissioner Kwek Mean Luck, the SJC Cluster made 18 recommendations covering five focus areas: (a) enhancing training programs; (b) strengthening the quality of instruction; (c) enabling JOs to take ownership of their learning and development; (d) working with the tri-courts and the Judicial Service Commission; and (e) strengthening the SJC’s capabilities.

42 The changes to the SJC’s leadership, organisational structure, educational strategy and priorities, international engagement and research activities that ensued were largely informed by the work and recommendations of the SJC Cluster, as well as the work of the Judicial Competency Framework (“JCF”) Working Committee and JCF Implementation Team in 2021, and a team led by the then-Executive Director Paul Quan tasked with undertaking a scoping exercise of SJC’s activities and operations in 2023.⁷²

43 Several changes to the SJC’s leadership were implemented in 2023 and 2024. From January 2023, Justice Kwek Mean Luck was appointed the Chairperson of the Board of Governors, with Justice Philip Jeyaretnam joining Justice See Kee Oon as co-Deputy Chairpersons. Professor Natalie Skead, who had served as consultant for the scoping exercise, was appointed SJC Dean with effect from January 2024.

71 “Singapore Judicial Commission Annual Report 2022” at p 3 <https://www.jsc.gov.sg/files/ar/judicial%20service%20commission_annual%20report%202022.pdf> (accessed 1 April 2025).

72 The Judicial Competency Framework (“JCF”) Working Committee and JCF Implementation Team led the development and implementation of the JCF in 2021. The 2023 scoping exercise had two broad objectives: first, to identify any gaps in the JCF and the recommendations of the SJC Cluster; and second, to propose a strategic plan for the SJC to achieve its vision of becoming an institute for higher judicial learning.

Executive Director District Judge Justin Yeo and Deputy Executive Director District Judge Paul Chan took office in June 2024, having served in various SJC leadership positions since 2023. During this period, the SJC's manpower expanded from six to 22 officers, with particular focus on increasing professionalisation and onboarding education and systems professionals in recognition of the “need for specialists with expertise in legal education, pedagogy and curriculum, research and leadership to work hand-in-hand with the Judiciary in designing, developing and delivering an evidence-based, effective and innovative judicial education curriculum”⁷³

44 With a new leadership team and increased manpower, the SJC was reconstituted in March 2024 to comprise the Institute of Judicial Excellence (the education arm that develops and delivers tailored and robust training programmes) and the Institute of Judicial Studies (the research arm responsible for undertaking, leading and facilitating rigorous multi-method research on issues relevant to the Judiciary and judicial education).⁷⁴

45 On the education front, the SJC significantly expanded its array of tailored learning experiences for JOs at different stages of their judicial careers,⁷⁵ keeping in mind that the career of a Singapore judge may span 40 years comprising three phases (*ie*, Phase 1 (early-career, foundational years), Phase 2 (mid-career, intermediate years) and Phase 3 (senior, advanced years)).⁷⁶ In this regard, the SJC examined: (a) the structure and curricula of established civil law judge training colleges which focus on career-long development, such as the ENM and Japan's Legal Training and Research Institute; (b) the strong pedagogically-driven approach to curriculum planning of Canada's NJI; (c) and the skills-based, multi-disciplinary approaches and “Bench manual” culture of Australia. The SJC introduced learning pathways that extended beyond traditional structured instruction and included a wide range of structured and unstructured, synchronous and asynchronous, and formal and informal learning opportunities. In the four years from 2021–2024, the SJC delivered 210 local programmes to over 7,800 judge learners.

73 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 21.

74 “About Us” *SG Courts* <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/vision-mission>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

75 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, “Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon”, speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025 (13 January 2025) at para 37(c).

76 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 12.

46 In providing structured, systematic and scaffolded programming, the SJC “[embraced] the philosophy that a competency-based approach to judicial education facilitates self-directed, self-paced and effective learning”.⁷⁷ In this regard, the enhanced JCF implemented in late-2023 identified 14 judicial competencies that form the cornerstone of the SJC’s curriculum planning and development⁷⁸ and ensure that the SJC delivers a holistic “T-Shaped” curriculum that develops depth of competencies in key areas while building breadth in relevant allied and emerging areas. These competencies reflect the vision, mission and values of the Singapore Judiciary⁷⁹ and articulate what a JO in Singapore is expected to know, understand and be able to do at each stage of their career, encapsulating the functions of a judge as adjudicator, systems reformer, leader and learner.

47 Even as the COVID-19 pandemic eased, a sizeable proportion of the SJC’s training programmes in 2022 and 2023 remained online.⁸⁰ However, by 2024, most programmes were delivered either exclusively in-person, or in a hybrid (in-person and online) format.⁸¹ The use of generative artificial intelligence (“AI”) and other innovative pedagogies

77 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at pp 12–13.

78 These 14 competencies reflect the vision, mission and values of the Singapore Judiciary and articulate what a judge in Singapore is expected to know, understand and be able to do at each stage of their career. They are: (a) judicial and legal ethics; (b) values-based judging; (c) resilience, wellbeing and self-management; (d) socio-legal and public policy perspectives; (e) decision-making; (f) communication; (g) leadership; (h) judicial temperament; (i) learning and adaptation; (j) collaboration; (k) reform and innovation; (l) competence in related fields; (m) dispute resolution; and (n) legal knowledge, research and analysis.

79 The Singapore Judiciary’s vision is to be “A Trusted Judiciary · Ready for Tomorrow” and its values are fairness, accessibility, integrity and respect. Each court has a distinct mission:

(a) Supreme Court: “Accessible justice that commands trust, respect and confidence.”

(b) State Courts: “Accessible justice through quality judgments, appropriate dispute resolution and innovative court services.”

(c) Family Justice Courts: “Making justice accessible to families and youth through effective counselling, mediation and adjudication.”

80 In terms of numbers of programmes delivered via webinars compared to physical programmes, 30 out of 43 programmes (or 69%) and 35 out of 51 programmes (or 68%) were delivered online, respectively. This is contrasted with 18 out of 47 programmes (38%) and 16 out of 50 (or 32%) programmes delivered online in 2020 and 2021. See in this regard the SJC Year in Review reports for 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 at <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/annual-reports>> (accessed 8 April 2025).

81 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at pp 16–17.

and instructional methods began to feature strongly in the SJC's curriculum design from 2023.⁸²

48 To accommodate the increasing suite of programmes and demands for expert instruction, the SJC augmented its teaching capacity and expertise with the appointment of an inaugural SJC International Fellow (Justice Rosalie Silberman Abella),⁸³ two inaugural SJC Resident Fellows (Justices Andrew Phang and Judith Prakash),⁸⁴ SJC Senior Faculty⁸⁵ and Faculty,⁸⁶ and Subject Matter Advisory Panels.⁸⁷ Appointees were supported in their work by the SJC's expert in-house curriculum, pedagogy and innovation team. Many of these appointees also underwent training programmes conducted by external service providers to further enhance their ability to contribute effectively in their roles.

49 The SJC's international outreach intensified during this four-year growth period, with two new standout programmes: a Judicial Executive Programme ("JEP") and a Masterclass for Commercial Law Judges in Asia ("Masterclass"), delivered in 2022 and 2024 respectively.

50 The JEP was a three-week-long, signature judicial leadership programme with content grounded in best practices and perspectives of judicial excellence from the Singapore Judiciary, with modules showcasing areas of strategic strength and importance to Singapore.

82 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, "Judicial Education in a Brave New World" in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at pp 13–20. See also Justin Yeo, "Use of AI in Judicial Education: What Is & What If", published in the CJEI Report (Fall 2024) <<http://cjei.org/publications/CJEI%20Newsletter%20Fall%202024.pdf>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

83 Justice Abella is a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and presently visiting Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. See Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, "Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon", speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025 (13 January 2025) at para 37(c).

84 Justices Andrew Phang and Judith Prakash were former Justices of the Court of Appeal, and presently serve as Senior Judges of the Supreme Court. See Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, "Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon", speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025 (13 January 2025) at para 37(c).

85 As of 1 April 2025, this comprised nine Supreme Court Justices: <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/faculty>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

86 As of 1 April 2025, this comprised 14 JOs from the tri-courts: <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/faculty>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

87 The composition of the Panels is not publicly available. Each Panel is chaired by a Supreme Court Judge and has three to five members drawn from the Supreme Court Bench and the tri-courts.

The 2022 iteration of the JEP attracted 12 international participants representing nine countries.⁸⁸

51 The Masterclass was conducted in September 2024 in collaboration with the SJC's Indonesian counterparts who hosted the programme at their judicial training facility. This first-of-its-kind⁸⁹ four-day-long programme brought together 70 judges from 16 common and civil law jurisdictions in the Asia-Pacific region,⁹⁰ fostering cross-border judicial education and networking.⁹¹ It covered five topical issues in international commercial law: (a) technology and law; (b) arbitration; (c) cross-border insolvency; (d) shipping and maritime; and (e) intellectual property. The Masterclass was very well received by participants; indeed, the post-event survey revealed high scores of 3.7 on a 4-point Likert scale⁹² in relation to whether the objectives of delivering high-quality judicial education and providing opportunities for networking amongst participants had been achieved.

52 In addition to rapidly expanding its networks through additional MOUs signed with the judiciaries or judicial education institutes in China, France, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, India and Rwanda, the SJC actively engaged in a range of less formal international collaboration and partnerships. For instance, with a view to fostering the cross-pollination of ideas and the building of a vibrant judicial education community, the SJC convened judicial education roundtables and knowledge exchanges with leading judicial education institutes such as Australia's NJCA, New Zealand's Te Kura, France's ENM and China's NJC, and collaborated with Canada's NJI to deliver advanced-level programmes

88 Represented countries included Belize, Botswana, Brunei, Mongolia, Nauru, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Rwanda.

89 Menon CJ described the Masterclass as a "historic gathering" and commented, "I do not believe that such a venture, of judges coming from a variety of backgrounds and traditions, both common law and civil law, has a precedent": see Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, "The Changing Face of Commercial Law: New Frontiers in an Asian Century", keynote address at the Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia (9 September 2024) <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/news-and-resources/news/news-details/chief-justice-sundaresh-menon--keynote-address-delivered-at-the-masterclass-programme-for-commercial-judges-in-asia>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

90 These included Australia, Bahrain, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam.

91 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, "Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon", speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025 (13 January 2025) at para 20.

92 The four-point Likert scale contained the options "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree" and "Strongly Agree".

to the Singapore Judiciary.⁹³ The SJC also contributed towards judicial and legal education in the international sphere through representation on several international judicial and legal education bodies,⁹⁴ delivering presentations at judicial education conferences and fora,⁹⁵ and hosting foreign delegations interested to learn more about judicial education. These initiatives, in addition to the LLM (JS), JEP and Masterclass, have served to advance the SJC's global reputation and thought leadership in judicial education.

53 With a strong focus on growing the SJC's research activities and impact, an additional five EJRC grants were funded between 2021 and 2024, and two books and three articles were published.⁹⁶ Areas of EJRC research included the use of computational software to analyse judgments written by Supreme Court judges, prenuptial agreements, self-represented parties, judicial reliance on academic scholarship in decision-making and dispute settlement for ASEAN businesses. In addition to research undertaken pursuant to the EJRC grant scheme, members of the SJC

93 These related to judgment writing and a train-the-trainers session for the SJC's Senior Faculty, Faculty and Subject Matter Advisory Panels.

94 For example, at the time of publication, the immediate past Executive Director, District Judge Paul Quan, is on the Board of Executives of the International Organization for Judicial Training; Executive Director Justin Yeo sits on the Advisory Board and is a Fellow of the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute, and is an adjunct lecturer at the Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University, and Dean Natalie Skead is a Fellow and Director of the Australian Academy of Law, and Immediate Past Chair and Executive Member of the Australasian Law Academics Association.

95 For example, Dean Natalie Skead and Executive Director Justin Yeo presented a paper entitled "Judicial Education in a Brave New World" at the 11th IOJT Conference in Seoul, Korea in November 2024, and Executive Director Justin Yeo delivered a paper entitled "Use of AI in Judicial Education: What Is and What If" at the Inaugural Singapore-India Conference on Technology in India in April 2024.

96 These were: (a) Locknie Hsu, *Dispute Settlement for ASEAN Businesses under the Belt and Road Initiative: New Possibilities and Directions* (Edward Elgar, 2022); (b) Jaelyn L Neo & Helena Whalen-Bridge, *Litigants in Person: Principles and Practice in Civil and Family Cases in Singapore* (Academy Publishing, 2021); (c) Jerrold Tsin Howe Soh & Goh Yihan, "How and Why Do Judges Cite Academics? Evidence from the Singapore High Court" (2022) 17(1) *Asian Journal of Comparative Law* 134; (d) Dorcas Quek Anderson, Eunice Chua & Yilin Ning, "To Negotiate, Mediate or Litigate? Examining the Durability of Divorce Outcomes in the Singapore Family Courts" (2022) 60(3) *Family Court Review* 434; (e) Lim How Khang, "An Empirical Study of Judgments Written by Supreme Court Judges of Singapore" *SG Courts* <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/empirical-judicial-research>> (accessed 1 April 2025); and (f) Lim How Khang, "Pilot Survey of Legal Needs and Access to Justice in Singapore" *SG Courts* <<https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/singapore-judicial-college/empirical-judicial-research>> (accessed 1 April 2025).

engaged in research projects examining online courts, judicial well-being, competency-based judicial education and judicial education generally.⁹⁷

IV. Future of judicial education in Singapore

54 In a rapidly changing world, judiciaries face three formidable challenges. This is explored in greater detail elsewhere,⁹⁸ and a summary suffices for present purposes. First, escalating complexity stemming from the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge, emergence of novel legal issues, proliferation of cross-border disputes, increasing evidential intricacy and evolving litigant profiles. Second, an accelerating pace of change, marked by exponential technological advancements, swift obsolescence of knowledge and skills, and the imperative for rapid judicial responses to unprecedented legal domains. Third, a growing distrust in public institutions, exacerbated by socio-economic divisions and “truth decay”, which threatens to erode public confidence in the justice system and challenges the Judiciary’s fundamental role as the guardian of equality and arbiter of truth.

55 In the face of these challenges, the philosophy of the Learning Judge drives the SJC’s education strategy. The Learning Judge is motivated, self-directed and enabled to learn, even outside of the classroom, driven by a sense of duty to “continue to learn, educate and train himself in the pursuit of excellence and in the quest to fulfil his mission”.⁹⁹ Moving forward, the SJC is enhancing its support of Learning Judges through its systems (such as the JCF and learning management systems which facilitate each judge’s self-directed learning and professional development), instructional approaches and materials.

97 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025); Yeo Mui Lin, “The Online Court and Remote Hearings: Enhancing the Administration of and Access to Justice in Singapore” (2025) 37 SAcLJ 281; Carly Schrever *et al*, “Preliminary Findings from a Large-scale National Study Measuring Judicial Officers’ Psychological Reactions to their Work and Workplace” (2024) 36(6) *Judicial Officer’s Bulletin* <https://server.judcom.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/06_July-feature.pdf> (accessed 1 April 2025).

98 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at pp 2–8.

99 See Menon CJ’s 2016 address to ASEAN judges, as cited by Justice Aidan Xu @ Aedit Abdullah at the “Launch of Singapore Management University Master of Laws in Judicial Studies Programme” <<https://news.smu.edu.sg/sites/news.smu.edu.sg/files/newsroom-pdf/Aedit%20Abdullah%20J%27s%20opening%20remarks%20for%20SMU%20LLM%20JS%20launch.pdf>> (accessed 1 April 2025). See also Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 9.

56 At a more fundamental level, the Learning Judge philosophy requires the SJC to develop a deeper understanding of the competencies that foster self-learning, and the pedagogies that can effectively cultivate such competencies within the SJC's programmes. While this may be akin to seeking a Holy Grail, the SJC remains committed to this ongoing quest.

57 In pursuing this quest, the SJC has identified nine focus areas underpinned by the philosophy of the Learning Judge.

58 First, the SJC's delivery of quality adjudicative training. To this end, the SJC has adopted the "T-Shaped" education approach. T-shaped education "builds depth of competencies in key areas (vertical arm), while building breadth in relevant allied and emerging areas (horizontal arm), with the intention of developing in learners deep discipline expertise and analysis and the 'ability to connect ideas across disciplines'".¹⁰⁰ Pursuant to this pedagogical approach, the SJC will deepen training in core areas such as civil law, criminal law, family law and judicial craft, through its suite of "101", "201" and "301" programmes targeted respectively at the three judicial career phases mentioned above. In addition to coverage of traditional legal domains, the SJC will also be expanding its suite of programmes to go "Beyond the Law" and "Beyond the Classroom". On going "Beyond the Law", the SJC will continue its coverage of relevant allied and adjacent non-legal fields such as forensics, psychology, statistics and technology. The programmes will also address key social issues, providing judges with the necessary perspectives to appreciate contemporary societal challenges and the intricate interplay between law and society. Certain programmes will fuse elements of legal and adjacent field training; for instance, in the training of handling of sexual offence cases, the curriculum will cover both an understanding of legal principles as well as aspects of psychology and prevailing social media norms. Recognising that effective judicial learning extends beyond traditional classroom instruction, the SJC will also go "Beyond the Classroom" in building adjudicative capabilities. A prime example is the progressive introduction of mentorship and attachment programmes. Mentorship programmes pair experienced judges with newer appointees, thus facilitating knowledge transfer, personalised learning experiences and guidance tailored to individual needs and career stages. Attachment programmes allow judges to be immersed in foreign judiciaries for a period, offering a unique opportunity for cross-jurisdictional learning and exchange.

100 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, "Judicial Education in a Brave New World" in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 13, citing R Amani Smathers, "The 21st Century T-Shaped Lawyer" [December 2014/January 2015] *Connecticut Lawyer* 24.

59 Second, the SJC will enhance its systemic justice training, equipping judges to take on the equally important judicial role of ensuring systemic justice. Aspects to be covered include basic management skills, as well as leadership and organisational transformation skills. In addition to affording judges the opportunity to become involved in shaping systemic reforms both within and outside the Judiciary, the SJC is also embracing the “Beyond the Classroom” approach, by exploring attachments that provide judges with valuable hands-on experiences in driving systemic justice initiatives.

60 Third, the SJC will continue to adopt and implement innovative and effective pedagogies, suited to each competency in the JCF and aimed at enhancing learning by catering to different learning styles and preferences, noting that international studies suggest that judges prefer “experiential, interactive judicial education”.¹⁰¹ The SJC currently engages a wide range of interactive pedagogies, including, *eg*, role plays, simulations, fishbowls, conversation circles and mentoring.¹⁰² Increasingly, the SJC is also leveraging technology and specifically generative AI, to support learning through the use of AI-generated text-based and visual teaching aids in the delivery of its programmes.¹⁰³ The SJC is exploring the expanded use of AI tools to provide immersive individualised learning experiences for judges.¹⁰⁴ This requires further developing and embedding a culture of innovation within the SJC, where staff and faculty are empowered, indeed encouraged, to experiment with new and innovative teaching methods. Crucially, this approach will be underpinned by robust evaluation mechanisms, enabling the SJC to receive feedback on and refine its educational innovations. With the SJC’s emphasis on judge-led training, the SJC will also continue to enhance its trainer development programmes, ensuring that judicial instructors are equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills and knowledge.

61 Fourth, the SJC will pursue research-driven training, with a view to establishing a robust foundation for evidence-based judicial education. To this end, the SJC will cultivate in-house research capabilities, focusing

101 T Brettel Dawson, “Judicial Education: Pedagogy for a Change” [2015] *Journal of Dispute Resolution* 175 at 189. See also Andrew Henderson, “Judicial Education and Judicial Learning Styles: Are Judges Different to Other Learners?” (2024) 98 *Australian Law Journal* 915 at 925.

102 For a discussion on these and other interactive pedagogies suited to higher and professional education contexts see W J McKeachie, *Teaching Tips, Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 10th Ed, 1999).

103 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at pp 18–19.

104 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, “Judicial Education in a Brave New World” in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 19.

on areas that are relevant to its training programmes. This approach aims to enrich the depth and relevance of substantive course content, ensuring that the SJC's brand of judicial education is grounded in strong scholarship and empirical insights. This will help establish a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement, where training feedback and outcomes are systematically analysed to inform future research direction and priorities, thus creating a dynamic and responsive judicial education system.

62 Fifth, the SJC will build structured deep learning through the LLM (JS) programme. The SJC recognises that there are practical constraints for judges to balance training with ongoing professional responsibilities, such as mindshare limitations and fatigue. At the same time, the SJC acknowledges the need for in-depth learning and reflection in the face of the three formidable challenges outlined above. The SJC will therefore work with the SMU Yong Pung How School of Law to revise its LLM (JS) programme, drawing together quality adjudicative training and systemic justice training, using innovative and effective pedagogies and research-driven training, to provide a more flexible and specialised programme for deep learning.

63 Sixth, the SJC will prioritise learning about learning. As the SJC undertakes the work in the other eight focus areas, its effectiveness hinges on its ability to learn from what has been done and to continually improve on it. This approach will be implemented through periodic reviews of programmes and pedagogies, robust feedback loops at the individual and institutional levels, and opportunities to learn from the perspectives of external stakeholders and partners.

64 Seventh, the SJC will strategically leverage technology in programme delivery and enhancing the overall learning experience. In relation to the former, the SJC has successfully delivered a full-length substantive lecture to a live international audience through a photorealistic, AI-powered digital avatar, and is exploring how such technology can be further leveraged for developing learning resources. In relation to the latter, the SJC is exploring broader applications of generative AI and other technology to enhance its learning management systems, empowering judges to pursue self-directed learning to design their own individualised learning pathways.

65 Eighth, the SJC aims to serve as a crucible for One Judiciary, fostering unity and collaboration within Singapore's judicial system by

unifying the tri-courts with a common vision and core values.¹⁰⁵ The SJC's diverse programmes create opportunities for judges and JOs from the tri-courts to convene, reflect on common challenges and forge a cohesive local judicial learning community. By extending selected programmes to court administrators, the SJC is well placed to serve as a crucible where judicial staff and court administrators can collaboratively explore ideas, share experiences and advance the Judiciary's vision.

66 Ninth, the SJC is committed to fostering an international community of judicial education, recognising the immense value of regional and global collaboration in judicial education.¹⁰⁶ The SJC sees an international community of judicial education as comprising two separate but overlapping components: a community of judicial educators and a community of learning judges. On the former, the SJC has benefitted tremendously from the perspectives and support of its partners in the international judicial education community. Despite the differences across jurisdictions, the SJC has found that there is a common core set of challenges that confronts judicial educators all around the world. Through collaborative efforts, the SJC not only enriches its own programmes but also contributes significantly to the global advancement of judicial education. On the second community, a diverse cohort of Learning Judges from a range of common law and civil law jurisdictions offers a vibrant and rich learning experience for local and international participants as they can share their own, and learn from others', judicial perspectives, knowledge, practices and experiences.

V. Conclusion

67 The establishment of the SJC in 2015 marked a significant milestone in the evolution of judicial education in Singapore. Over the past decade, the SJC has transformed from a fledgling institution into a dynamic and innovative centre of excellence in judicial education, locally and internationally. As the SJC enters its second decade, it faces a rapidly changing world that presents challenges and opportunities for the Judiciary. The SJC's vision for the future, encompassing nine key focus areas, demonstrates its commitment to nurturing Learning Judges who are fit for service and purpose, and building a Judiciary that is responsive to current demands and proactively prepared for future developments. As the SJC continues to evolve and innovate, it is well-positioned to

105 Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Supreme Court of Singapore, "Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon", speech delivered at the Opening of the Legal Year 2025 (13 January 2025) at para 17.

106 Natalie Skead & Justin Yeo, "Judicial Education in a Brave New World" in *The Law Teacher* (forthcoming, 2025) at p 23.

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contribute significantly to the global advancement of judicial education and, by extension, to strengthening judiciaries worldwide.

68 The first decade of the SJC has laid a strong foundation for the future of judicial education in Singapore. As it moves forward, the SJC's commitment to excellence, innovation and continuous improvement promises to play a crucial role in realising the Singapore Judiciary's vision of being "A Trusted Judiciary · Ready for Tomorrow".
