

Case study:

CityUHK School of Law prepares tomorrow's lawyers with CoCounsel



香港城市大學
City University of Hong Kong

“Our motivation was not to replace traditional feedback, but to complement it. The “human in the loop” remained essential – the tool served as a capable assistant that helped students work more efficiently and think more strategically, while faculty maintained their crucial role in providing scrutiny and professional judgment.”

– Mr Ubaid Rehman, Director of the PCLL Programme, School of Law, Hong Kong's City University

Background

City University of Hong Kong's School of Law is one of only three institutions in Hong Kong authorised to deliver the Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL), the mandatory qualification for entry into legal practice. Under the leadership of Mr. Ubaid Rehman, PCLL Programme Director and practicing barrister, the school is committed to producing technically proficient, practice-ready lawyers equipped for a profession transformed by technology.

The challenge: Preparing practice-ready and tech-savvy lawyers

City University of Hong Kong's School of Law faced a challenge shared by legal educators worldwide: how to bridge the gap between knowing the law and applying it in real practice. Ubaid Rehman, PCLL Programme Director, recognised that traditional classroom instruction had inherent limitations. “Even with close supervision and feedback in small-group teaching, there are limits to how much practice and experimentation can fit into a typical class schedule,” he explains. Students needed more opportunities to explore different drafting approaches, generate ideas, and test strategies – the skills that are required in modern legal practice.

At the same time, the legal profession is changing faster than ever. Technology is reshaping everything from legal research, drafting to client communication and case management. The school's vision, therefore, extended beyond producing just academically strong lawyers. It also aims to develop tech-savvy professionals who could become AI and digitally literate. “They do not need to be coders or data scientists, but they do need to understand how technology is transforming the profession”, Rehman shares.

The challenge was clear: how could CityUHK School of Law provide students with more practical learning while simultaneously preparing them for a tech-driven profession, without compromising the PCLL's rigorous standards.



The solution: Integrating CoCounsel into legal training

After a thorough evaluation of available tools, CityUHK School of Law became the first law school in the Asia Pacific region to adopt CoCounsel, Thomson Reuters' AI-powered legal assistant. What set CoCounsel apart was its versatility and similarity with real legal workflows. Unlike other narrowly focused tools, CoCounsel mirrors the diverse tasks of a junior lawyer, offering capabilities in **legal research, document comparison, and drafting of letters, opinions, and witness statements.**

“What convinced us to adopt CoCounsel was its breadth of functionality and the way it encouraged us to think creatively about how AI could be used in legal training.”

– Mr Ubaid Rehman



The implementation

The School took a deliberate, phased approach to integrating CoCounsel into its legal training framework. Rather than overhauling the entire curriculum at once, they strategically piloted the tool within small-group learning and selected litigation-related subjects. The goal was to design exercises that simulated the daily analytical and drafting work of junior lawyers, moving students beyond purely theoretical study.

In small-group classes, students began experimenting with CoCounsel for practical training exercises in drafting, document comparison, and litigation strategy development.



new ways to assess skills. Several requested access for their own classes, particularly in subjects requiring drafting, and litigation-related work. This keeps coursework varied, dynamic, and engaging.

For students: With CoCounsel, graduates are gaining early practical exposure, building an informed understanding of AI's role. This ensures they enter the profession "conversant with these tools and aware of how they shape modern legal work" from day one.

For the institution: CoCounsel's adoption places CityUHK School of Law at the forefront of legal training innovation in the Asia Pacific region. Rehman views this pioneering status as "less as a badge of leadership and more as a responsibility". The value lies in starting early. By integrating AI now, the school is gaining a crucial head-start, proactively shaping its curriculum – moving the school closer to its vision to prepare future-ready lawyers.

Looking ahead

CityUHK School of Law plans to expand the use of CoCounsel across additional courses, including Law and Technology and Commercial Writing and Drafting, highlighting CoCounsel's importance as a starting point of a broader journey.

For institutions considering a similar path, Mr Ubaid Rehman advises:

"Start experimenting. Encourage your faculty to try the tools, even in small ways, and provide spaces for discussion about what works and what doesn't."

For CityUHK School of Law, this experimentation is already paying dividends, positioning the institution and its graduates for success in an evolving legal landscape.

"For instance, students could use CoCounsel to explore how witness statements might be structured or to generate questions for cross-examination. The tool provided structured starting points from which students could then exercise their own professional judgment and creativity."

- Mr Ubaid Rehman

Throughout this integration, the pedagogical principle remained clear: AI serves as a complement to traditional legal training, not a replacement. "Our motivation was not to replace traditional feedback, but to complement it," Rehman emphasises. The "human in the loop" remained essential, with faculty ensuring critical scrutiny and professional judgment.

Support from Thomson Reuters: The Thomson Reuters team's support proved instrumental in this early adoption phase. Their hands-on approach, including in-person training sessions for faculty members less comfortable with technology, demonstrated a commitment that went beyond providing software licenses. "On several occasions, when some colleagues who were less comfortable with technology needed extra guidance, the Thomson Reuters team arranged to meet with them individually," Rehman recalls, highlighting the personalised support that facilitated faculty buy-in.

The Results: Building confidence for a technology-driven future

Though still in its early stages, the integration of CoCounsel is already delivering clear value for CityUHK School of Law.

For faculty: Faculty members who tested CoCounsel found it practical and effective. CoCounsel proved valuable not only in teaching but also in lesson preparation, generating sample exercises, creating fact patterns, and suggesting

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