

MR ALEXANDER MAK (2): ADVICE ON ORAL ADVOCACY

What do you look for when assessing students' oral advocacy skills?

They must be confident in speaking. They keep what they are going to say short. Basically the key is, we'd say, be concise, that would be... emphasize the main points of your arguments try to convince before you can convince the judge or me as to what is the position you take. That's the main requirement.

What do you think is most challenging about learning oral advocacy?

Frankly speaking, I'm more confident in English oral advocacy because I was trained, as most of you and students, they were trained in English. But sometimes, nowadays in Hong Kong, a lot of litigations are conducted in Chinese. I think the challenges are, some of the terms, the legal jargon in Chinese, we don't have such information or we are not aware or don't understand some of the Chinese legal jargon.

I'm teaching legal research writing as well in HKU, so apart from doing just the traditional way of doing research, I require students to do research, if they can, in Chinese to make sure they get the overall, complete picture of the law.

What steps can students take to improve their oral advocacy skills?

It's a skill. You cannot acquire the skill overnight. It takes time.

If you want to improve skills, you have to merge yourself into the field. Try to expose yourself to, if you're serious about being a lawyer, you should expose yourself to more different court works where you can face what's happening in the real world.

For young students, during summer or winter, they have a chance to be a summer intern or winter intern. They have to know more barristers or solicitors as their mentors. I think they are very good sources of advice apart from teachers. Of course, we, as professors, are happy to discuss with any

students on homework or any problems they face in their studies. I think the more people you know in this profession the better.

What advice do you have for students who are learning oral advocacy in English?

I think preparation's the key. In oral advocacy, you're trying to convince the judge on your points, and making submissions, being well-prepared on the contents, the substance as well as you don't need very good English, I mean orally, to achieve the points, but you need to at least convey your idea clearly and concisely to the audience. Again, that's the key.