

# **Overseas Lawyers Qualification Examination**

## **HEAD V: PRINCIPLES OF COMMON LAW**

### **Standards, Syllabus, Materials and Assessment**

#### **STANDARDS**

The test paper for this Oral Head of the Examination is set at the standard expected of a newly qualified solicitor in Hong Kong who has completed a two year traineeship prior to admission.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate that:-

1. they have achieved a general understanding of the legal system of Hong Kong, its constitutional basis and the structure and operation of its courts;
2. they have achieved a general understanding of how the principles and rules of the common law and Equity have been received into and form part of the law of Hong Kong;
3. they are able to clarify the role of legislation compared to the common law;
4. they have considered the basic principles of the law of contract as modified by legislation;
5. they have considered the basic principles of the law of tort as modified by legislation and, in particular, the law of negligence; and
6. they have considered the concept of criminal liability with particular reference to offences involving dishonesty, theft, fraud and offences against the person.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of:-

1. how the common law principles, developed in England, now apply in Hong Kong;
2. the impact of the Basic Law which provides for the maintenance of the common law system and consideration of the precedents of other common law jurisdictions (not only England)
3. the basic structure and principles of the law of contract and the law of tort; and
4. the essential objectives, elements and principles of the criminal law.

## **SYLLABUS**

### **1. Background**

- The constitutional and law making structure of Hong Kong including the Basic Law and the Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap.383)
- English common law and equity as sources of Hong Kong law
- Superiority of legislation over the common law
- The doctrine of precedent and its application in Hong Kong
- The basic principles of statutory interpretation

### **2. Contract**

- Essential elements of a valid contract
- Formalities
- Vitiating factors
- Discharge
- Remedies for breach of contract

### **3. Tort**

- General characteristics of tortious duties and liabilities
- An outline of the range of tortious duties
- A specific examination of the torts of negligence, defamation occupiers' liability and economic torts
- Defences
- Remedies

### **4. Criminal Law**

- Function and sources of the criminal law
- Actus reus
- Mens rea
- The standard of proof
- General defences
- Specific examination of the law of homicide, theft and other offences of dishonesty
- Effect of the Bill of Rights Ordinance (Cap.383)

## MATERIALS

### **Ordinances**

- Basic Law of Hong Kong SAR
- Theft Ordinance (Cap.210)
- Offences against the Person Ordinance (Cap.212)
- Control of Exemption Clauses Ordinance (Cap.71)
- Law Amendment and Reform (Consolidation) Ordinance (Cap.23)
- Interpretation and General Clause Ordinance (Cap.1)
- Limitation Ordinance (Cap.347)
- Misrepresentation Ordinance (Cap.284)
- Sale of Goods Ordinance (Cap.26) (especially ss.14, 15, 16 and 17)
- Unconscionable Contracts Ordinance (Cap.458)
- Supply of Services (Implied Terms) Ordinance (Cap.457)
- Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Ordinance (Cap.623)
- Age of Majority Ordinance (Cap.410)
- Occupiers Liability Ordinance (Cap.314)
- Defamation Ordinance (Cap. 21)
- Homicide Ordinance (Cap. 339)

### **Text Books**

- *Wesley-Smith*: ‘An Introduction to the Hong Kong Legal System’, Oxford UP, (latest edition)
- *D.K. Srivastava, Anna Lui, Charu Sharma & Sara Tsui*: Law of Tort in Hong Kong, LexisNexis Hong Kong, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2014)
- *D.K. Srivastava* (General Editor): ‘Business Law in Hong Kong’, Sweet & Maxwell Asia, (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2020)
- *Michael Jackson*: ‘Criminal Law in Hong Kong’, Hong Kong University Press (latest edition)
- *Michael J. Fisher and Desmond G. Greenwood*: ‘Contract Law in Hong Kong’, HK University Press (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2024)
- *Rick Glofcheski*, Tort Law in Hong Kong (5<sup>th</sup> Edition 2023), Sweet and Maxwell
- *Stephen D. Mau*: ‘Hong Kong Legal Principles’, HK University Press (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2013)
- *Stefan H.C. Lo, Kevin Kwok-yin Cheng, Wing Hong Chui*, The Hong Kong Legal System, Cambridge University Press (2<sup>nd</sup> Revised edition, 2020)
- *Stephen Hall*, Ho and Hall’s Hong Kong Contract Law, LexisNexis (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2022)
- *Victor Ho Wai-kin*, Criminal Law in Hong Kong, Wolters Kluwer (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2019)

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## **ASSESSMENT**

The examination will test candidates' ability to demonstrate their understanding of the topics covered by the syllabus both conceptually and also in terms of their ability to communicate this understanding in the English language. The assessment of the candidates being examined in this subject will be by oral examination.

The period of the examination will be up to 2 hours during which time the candidate will be examined by a panel of nominated examiners which shall consist of not less than 2 and not more than 4 members.

Immediately prior to the examination, the candidate will be provided with a copy of an examination paper consisting of 8 questions of which he or she may nominate 4 to be examined upon. An English dictionary and a copy of a law dictionary (Mozley and Whiteley's law dictionary by J. E. Penner) shall also be provided. The candidate shall be permitted 45 minutes to consider questions and to choose the 4 to be examined upon. The candidate shall then be called before a panel of examiners. When called before the panel, the candidate should take the questions supplied upon which he or she is to be examined.

The candidates may consult notes that they have made on the questions supplied but they must not consult any other notes, books or other materials. The questions are the only documents that may be brought into the examination room and at the conclusion of the examination, candidates will be required to leave the questions supplied at the test venue as directed.

The assessment of each candidate shall be undertaken by the panel members by listening to and assessing the candidate's answers to the nominated questions appearing in the examination paper and also to any supplementary questions put by the individual panel members in the course of the examination.

At the end of the examination period, each examiner shall allocate a score based on their assessment of the candidate's performance in dealing with the examination questions and supplementary questions. The average of the scores allocated by panel members shall be the final mark allocated to the candidate concerned.

Each candidate's performance may be recorded on video tape for the purpose of later consideration and assessment if necessary.