



Joint Press release

Leading law schools in Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore join hands to form Research Alliance on Law and Sustainability to drive research and teaching in the Asia-Pacific region

Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore on 13 July 2023 (Thursday) – Singapore Management University (SMU) Yong Pung How School of Law (YPHSL); Sydney Law School, University of Sydney (USyd); and Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong (HKU), today announced the formation of the **Asia-Pacific Research Alliance on Law and Sustainability**, a first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region, with an aim to drive law-focused research and teaching initiatives on achieving sustainability for this part of the world.

The announcement was made at the inaugural [Law and Sustainability Conference](#) titled 'Law in a hyperconnected world – joining the dots for a sustainable future'. Organised by SMU YPHSL, with the support of Sydney Law School and HKU Law, this is the first of a three-part conference series and is a starting point for the Research Alliance to advance its agenda.

It is also the first event of the [SMU Sustainability Series 2023](#) (details in Annex 2). The Series comprises a curation of sustainability-focused events to be held between July and October 2023, through which the University will engage with stakeholders and partners to further the discourse on sustainability and to showcase the key milestones it has achieved, as charted out in its [Sustainability Blueprint](#).

The two-day conference, which was graced by Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh as its Guest-of-Honour, will showcase more than 50 speakers selected from nearly 100 paper submissions from Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kenya, South Africa, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom and Peru.

The opening day of the conference also featured a Keynote Address by Dr Lena Chan (Senior Director, International Biodiversity Conservation Division, National Parks Board, Singapore) who spoke on 'Weaving a Tale of Three BiodiverCities' and Singapore's role in the development of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Singapore City in Nature Index and of urban sustainability.

This was followed by a plenary where leaders of the three universities – SMU President, Professor Lily Kong; USyd's Associate Dean Education, Professor Nicole Graham; and HKU's Head of Department of Law, Professor Zhao Yun – discussed the critical role played by universities in sustainability education; as well as an industry panel featuring representatives from WongPartnership, Johnson Controls, Musim Mas Group and World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore, who gave their perspectives on sustainability and ESG in business, finance, legal practice and governance.

Asia-Pacific Research Alliance on Law and Sustainability

Following the two-day Conference, the Alliance will be producing in 2024 a Special Issue with some dozen papers to be published by *Review of European, Comparative and International Environmental*

Law, one of the top journals in the field. In 2024 and 2025, USyd and HKU will respectively play host to the remaining parts of this conference series.

Elaborating on the motivations behind the multi-university collaboration, Professor Lee Pey Woan, Dean of YPHSL, said, “Technological advancements and globalisation have made a profound impact on the movement and exchange of information, ideas, goods and people. This has led to a significant transformation of the Earth's natural systems, posing a severe threat to the ability of these systems to sustain life on Earth. Despite these pressing challenges, legal systems at both the international and domestic levels have remained entrenched in the generations during which they were formed. It is therefore crucial for scholars and policymakers to envision new legal and governance systems that recognise the interconnectedness of multiple sectors, anticipate the far-reaching effects of global environmental change, and address the unprecedented social and ecological disruptions we face today.”

Sustainability Law elective

Recognising that sustainability law goes beyond environmental law, and incorporates environmental, social and economic considerations to develop legal solutions for achieving harmony between human and nature, SMU YPHSL will introduce a new Sustainability Law elective for all law undergraduates in January 2024. The course will familiarise students with the environmental, economic and social dimensions and intersections for sustainability and various streams of law and policy. They will gain exposure to a range of current developments involving sustainability locally and globally, while reflecting on current laws and policies that address them. (Please see Annex 1)

On 15 July, the conference scholars, together with some first-year SMU law students, will participate in a tree planting programme in support of the Singapore 2030 Green Plan’s [OneMillionTrees movement](#). The tree planting activity will be a particularly meaningful restoration effort, as the 10 trees to be planted are specially selected native species which resemble the original Fort Canning Hill habitat that pre-dates the Javanese settlement. Updates on the trees will be provided to participants at the subsequent editions of the conference series in Australia and Hong Kong, in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

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For more information on the conference, pls visit: <https://site.smu.edu.sg/smu-sydney-hku-law-sustainability-conference#home>

Enclosures:

- Annex 1: About SMU’s new elective on Sustainability Law
- Annex 2: About SMU Sustainability Series 2023
- Note: event photos are available upon request.

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About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that address issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 12,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with six of its eight schools - Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing, Law and Social Sciences. Its seventh school, the SMU College of Integrative Studies, offers a bachelor's degree programme in deep, integrative interdisciplinary education. The College of Graduate Research Studies, SMU's eighth school, enhances integration and interdisciplinarity across the various SMU postgraduate research programmes that will enable students to gain a holistic learning experience and well-grounded approach to their research. SMU also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policy makers and academic institutions. www.smu.edu.sg

About SMU Yong Pung How School of Law

SMU's law school was renamed Yong Pung How School of Law (YPHSL) on 11 April 2021 to celebrate and honour the late Dr Yong Pung How, Singapore's former Chief Justice and SMU's third Chancellor.

The law school had proudly welcomed its first cohort of 116 students in August 2007. Taught by a dynamic faculty with postgraduate degrees from renowned universities, the School aims to nurture its students to become excellent lawyers who will contribute significantly to society. Trained with the ability to contextualise legal expertise and to think across disciplines and geographical borders coupled with SMU's interactive pedagogy, SMU's law graduates are confident, articulate and analytically agile.

The School offers a four-year full-time Bachelor of Laws programme, a five-year double-degree programme which combines law with Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing & Information Systems or Social Sciences, a three-year Juris Doctor programme, a Master of Laws programme, a PhD programme in Law, Commerce and Technology as well as continuing legal education. From Academic Year 2020-2021, the School also jointly offers a new Bachelor of Science (Computing & Law) with the SMU School of Computing and Information Systems. This new degree will produce IT and legal professionals who are adept at bridging technology and law.

Research at the SMU YPHSL has a strong focus in three main inter-related areas – Law and Technology, Transnational Commercial law in Asia, and Dispute Resolution. The School has also set up legal research centres focusing on A.I. and data governance, computational law, commercial law, and international dispute resolution. www.law.smu.edu.sg

About The University of Hong Kong

Founded in 1911, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) is the first and oldest institution of higher education in Hong Kong. For over a century, the University has dedicated itself to creating knowledge, providing education, and serving society. Today, HKU has an established worldwide reputation for being a research-led comprehensive University with ten Faculties and a strong commitment to intellectual freedom, liberty and diversity. HKU has a proud record of academic recognition in researches through honours and awards received from both local and international bodies. The University strives to attract and nurture outstanding scholars through excellence and

innovation in its research and knowledge exchange activities. Its research areas cover a wide range of issues with the aim of benefitting industries, businesses and the community. Regarded as Asia's Global University, HKU brings together experts from diverse disciplines, partnering with prestigious universities and research institutes around the world. It has thirty-eight academics named on the list of "Highly Cited Researchers 2022" from Clarivate, ranking 26th globally among all institutions.

HKU is in pursuit of teaching and learning excellence in a broad range of disciplines and professions. With the holistic design of the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, along with award-winning teaching and learning resources and support, students at the University can fully develop intellectual and personal strengths while gaining lifelong learning opportunities to contribute to the community. Regarded as Asia's Global University, HKU is a diverse community with over 36,000 students, including more than 16,000 students from nearly 100 countries and places around the world, and nearly 70% of its professoriate staff have joined the University from outside Hong Kong. The University also strives to enhance students' international exposure by offering overseas learning opportunities and connecting with more than 403 exchange partners in 47 countries. HKU has established a number of scholarships and awards to support students' aspirations. It will continue to cultivate outstanding leaders and bring together young talents from all walks of life. www.hku.hk

About HKU Faculty of Law

Established in 1969, Faculty of Law (then a Department of Law) at The University of Hong Kong (HKU) was Hong Kong's first law school, and its LLB and PCLL were the first local university qualifications to be recognized for admission to legal practice in Hong Kong. From the beginning the Faculty developed links with law schools throughout the common law world and in the Asia-Pacific region through staff and student exchanges and other collaborative projects. Always international in composition and outlook, the Faculty now consists of over 80 full-time academic staff from 15 jurisdictions around the world and has some 2,400 students. Over the years Faculty members have established Hong Kong law as a field of study during a time of fundamental political and social change and have contributed widely to the community. The Faculty is an internationally recognized centre of research in various areas of law, including public law, comparative Chinese law, commercial and financial law, intellectual property and IT law, international economic law and medical ethics and law. <https://www.law.hku.hk/>

About University of Sydney

The University of Sydney (USyd) is one of the world's leading, comprehensive research and teaching universities. We offer an exceptional range of disciplines – more than 400 areas of study – and our community includes more than 70,000 students, 8000 permanent and fixed-term staff and [350,000 alumni](#) in more than 170 countries. Leadership has always been at the core of our values. We were one of the first universities in the world to admit students solely on academic merit, and to open our doors to women on the same basis as men. Our aim is to make lives better not just by producing leaders of society, but through equipping our people with the qualities that allow them to serve all of our communities at every level.

In creating the first university in Australia in 1850, our founders recognised the power of education to inspire positive change. We hold that belief just as strongly today.

Currently ranked 19th in the global QS World University Rankings and 1st for sustainability in Australia, the University of Sydney is also consistently placed among the top universities in the world.

About University of Sydney Law School

The University of Sydney Law School is home to exceptional legal educators, world-renowned researchers and esteemed professional practitioners, making us one of the top law schools in the world. Our remarkable alumni reflect our reputation for innovation and leadership. Sydney Law School has a long history of providing the best, research-led legal education in Australia. Inaugurated in 1855, Sydney Law School was one of the first three disciplines at the University of Sydney, alongside Arts and Medicine. The Law School commenced its work in 1859, but this work in the main was examining rather than teaching.

Annex 1**About SMU's new elective on Sustainability Law**

Name of elective : Introduction to Sustainability Law
 Offered by : SMU Yong Pung How School of Law
 Offered from : Academic Year 2023/2024 Term 2 (i.e. January 2024)
 Academic coordinator : Associate Professor Liu Nengye and Associate Professor Michelle Lim
 Instructors : Stefanie Schacherer, Dan Puchniak, Aurelio Gurrea Martinez, Edward Ti, Alvin See, Nydia Remolina Leon, Kenny CHNG, Maartje De Visser, Vincent Ooi, Preston Wong

Course Description

In recent years, sustainability has become a popular buzzword in society. The need for sustainable development is quickly emerging as an area of focus among businesses, organisations, governments and the media. This course will introduce students to the fascinating environmental, economic and social dimensions and intersections for sustainability and various streams of law and policy. Students will gain exposure to a range of current developments involving sustainability locally and globally, while reflecting on current laws and policies that address them.

Course Methods

Over the course of weekly 3-hour seminars, students will explore the environmental, economic and social dimensions and intersections between sustainability and the different fields of law and policy through meaningful discussions, research and sharing of current real-life topics and developments. A field trip may be arranged to enrich students with their perspectives.

Syllabus Outline

Week	Topic	Instructor
1	Introduction/Framing Lecture - Sustainable development & sustainability - Overview of local and global sustainability efforts - System and future approaches	Michelle Lim & Liu Nengye
2	Global Sustainability Challenge and International Law	Liu Nengye
3	Sustainability and Environmental Law	Michelle Lim
4	Sustainability and Corporate Governance (1)	Dan Puchniak & Aurelio Gurrea Martinez
5	Sustainability and Corporate Governance (2)	Dan Puchniak & Aurelio Gurrea Martinez
6	Green Finance	Nydia Remolina Leon
7	Trade and Investment towards Sustainability	Stefanie Schacherer
8	Sustainability and Constitutional Law	Maartje De Visser
9	Judicial Review of Sustainability	Kenny CHNG
10	Green Buildings	Alvin See & Edward Ti
11	Green Tax	Vincent Ooi
12	Sustainability law in Singapore	Preston Wong
13	Course wrap-up - Legal vs policy approaches in sustainability - Applications in legal careers	Liu Nengye

Annex 2

About the SMU Sustainability Series 2023

<https://sustainability.smu.edu.sg/sustainability2023-series>

Since announcing its [Vision 2025](#), Singapore Management University has made meaningful impact through the University's three priority areas of particular economic and social relevance to our nation and region – Digital Transformation, Sustainable Living and Growth in Asia.

As part of its 'Sustainable Living' pillar, the University launched in September 2022 a [Sustainability Blueprint](#) that charts its actions forward in concerted ways across four key strategies – 1. Cultivate a Greener University; 2. Develop Change Agents thorough Sustainability Education; 3. Drive Impactful Research and 4. Foster Resilient Communities.

Through a series of carefully curated initiatives and events to be held from July to October 2023, SMU will engage with its stakeholders and partners to further the discourse on sustainability, as well as showcase some of the key milestones the University has achieved, as charted out in its Sustainability Blueprint.

13 July 2023

Law in a hyperconnected world – joining the dots for a sustainable future

Jointly organised by: SMU Yong Pung How School of Law; Sydney Law School, University of Sydney; and Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong

Guest-of Honour: Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore Ambassador-at-Large

Our planet faces social-ecological disruption at a scale with no parallels in human history. As societies, economies and the environment are inextricably linked, it makes no sense to regulate each of these systems in isolation. Various global reports, such as the United Nations' Environment Program's Making Peace with Nature, the Joint report on biodiversity and climate of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, all highlight the failure of governance systems to address interconnected global challenges in a holistic manner. The reports also highlight the perverse outcomes that result from the lack of integrated approaches.

With all of the above in mind, it is critical that new forms of laws and regulation, governance, societal organisation, communication, and the transfer of ideas and capital are taken into account when aiming to address sustainability. Laws at the international, transnational and domestic level are, however, currently ill-equipped to address the hyperconnected challenges of today, and do not sufficiently anticipate the emerging risks and opportunities of the future. It is to this gap that this Conference seeks to contribute.

24 August 2023

Beyond the Tipping point: Envisioning a hotter world and how technology will be a key to adaptation

Jointly organised by: SMU and Vertex Holdings

Despite the world's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, scientists predict that we will hit the 1.5°C tipping point in the 2030s, leading to an irreversible change in our climate system. What happens if we cross that tipping point? What implications would the devastating environmental changes have on the global economy, supply chains, cities, and societies? How can we leverage technology and innovation to bridge the gap today, in preparation for the worst-case scenario?

A partnership between SMU and global venture capital investment company Vertex Holdings, this thought leadership forum aims to leverage the knowledge and expertise of speakers from diverse backgrounds in a discourse on imagined futures, exploring scenarios where the world copes with living in a hotter and hostile world.

1 September 2023

Launch of SMU Master of Sustainability and Second Major in Sustainable Societies

Organised by: SMU

Guest-of-Honour: Mr Lim Tuang Liang, Government Chief Sustainability Officer

Inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Master of Sustainability (MST) and Sustainable Societies (SS) second major aim to inspire an appreciation and sense of urgency about the complexities, trade-offs, and synergies that sustainability presents for the people and the planet that we inhabit.

The MST is the first-of-its-kind programme that leverages the research and pedagogical strengths of SMU's School of Social Sciences and College of Integrative Studies to offer a postgraduate sustainability curriculum that is built on interdisciplinarity and problem-solving in the face of complex challenges. The programme will inculcate crucial skills in the areas of sustainability reporting, systems thinking and collaborative governance, in recognition of the evolving nature of sustainability roles across sectors. The SS second major has three main pillars – environment, society and the economy – which mirror the realities and challenges of sustainable development of today and the future. By emphasising problem-solving capabilities and interdisciplinarity rooted in the social sciences, this second major aims to develop in students the skillsets for future green jobs across industries and sectors.

11 to 14 September 2023

11th edition of the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition (LKYGBPC)

Organised by: SMU Institute of Innovation & Entrepreneurship

LKYGBPC, held once every two years, is one of the largest university-led start-up competitions in Asia with a mission to empower youths through innovation and entrepreneurship to create deep-tech solutions to solve urgent global challenges of the 21st century.

This year, the competition received 1,000 global submissions from 77 countries. Close to 90 per cent of the submissions incorporate sustainability solutions and reflect SMU's commitment to the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals. These entries leverage cutting-edge technology to drive environmental change. The strong interest illustrates that our next generation of entrepreneurs are actively contributing to environmental preservation by harnessing technology to minimise carbon footprint globally.

The LKYGBPC Blaze Week will also feature several sustainability-focused events:

- 11 Sep 2023 – As part of the Opening Ceremony, a book featuring selected past finalist startups which are involved in improving urban sustainability, will be launched.
- 13 Sep 2023
 - Changemakers Conversations – Built Environment Panel
Held off-site at Kajima Asia Pacific's Innovation Centre, the forum will delve into innovative approaches and practical solutions that go beyond mere carbon neutrality to create positive environmental outcomes in the context of the built environment. Panelists will explore strategies, technologies, and policies that can be implemented to achieve sustainable development goals and foster environmental stewardship.
 - Site Visit: On the same day, participants will also have the option of visiting the Sembcorp Solar Farm.

16 September 2023

Finals of SMU-Next Gen ESG Case Competition 2023

Organised by: SMU Institute of Innovation & Entrepreneurship and Next Gen Investors Endowment

Targeted at undergraduates in all local universities, this case competition will focus on the integration of environmental, social and government issues in investing. In conjunction with the competition, the SMU Sustainable Investment Club will be enlisting the help of industry practitioners to conduct workshops and provide participants with competition training and opportunities for networking.

The two workshops are:

- Workshop 1 – How to conduct ESG analysis in listed companies + How to incorporate ESG into valuation (29 July 2023)
- Workshop 2 –How to engage listed companies for investment stewardship (2 Sep 2023)

20 September 2023

SMU Sustainability Forum

Organised by: SMU

Guest-of-Honour: Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Sustainability and Environment

The SMU Sustainability Forum aims to bring sustainability stakeholders together and showcase the impact that the SMU Community is making in the realm of economic, social and environmental sustainability through the three pillars of Research, Education and Community Engagement. It will also serve as a platform and catalyst for knowledge exchange, idea empowerment, deep dialogues and fruitful partnerships among industry players, local non-profit and community organisations, researchers, educators and stakeholders in the sustainability space.

Parts of this forum are co-planned with student leaders who participated in the SMU Pathfinders Sustainability Changemaker programme in December 2022. The event will also feature student displays and student presentations of their sustainability projects or learning experiences.

9 to 13 October 2023

SMU Mental Health Week

Theme: Build an emotional compass – Navigate your journey to mental wellness

Organised by: SMU

During this week, there will be activities and events held campus-wide to raise awareness of mental well-being, a key to building resilient communities.

A Mental Health Fest will be held on-campus, comprising an interactive exhibition where participants can view informational material and engage in hands-on activities to develop emotional resilience, such as a feelings wheel (to promote emotional literacy), a conversation card game (to process emotions and reframe beliefs towards more constructive outcomes), an area to relax and practise relaxation techniques and mindfulness, as well as a space to write notes of appreciation and regulate emotions through colouring and play.

Other fringe activities include: Human Library (SMU alumni will be invited to share how they juggle career and personal wellbeing); Cafe Conversations (conversation starters will be placed in participating cafes in SMU to encourage patrons to engage in meaningful conversations); massage sessions by people with visual impairment; as well as talks and workshops on desk stretch, office pilates and sound bath therapy to encourage the SMU Community to take care of their wellbeing at work.

12 October 2023

3rd ROSA Annual Symposium on Successful Ageing - *Supporting active ageing in our communities*

Organised by: SMU Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA)

Guest-of-Honour: Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health

The Singapore Ministry of Health released the 2023 Action Plan for Successful Ageing in January 2023. The Action Plan, refreshed eight years after its first release in 2015, focuses on the central idea of empowering older adults to remain active, be it through caring, contributing, or staying connected, is a central idea.

Accordingly, the theme of this 3rd annual symposium will explore how we can better support older adults in Singapore to remain active in their later life, with being 'active' defined broadly and consisting of three key components: (1) Staying physically and mentally active – being able to stay healthy and to continue participating in regular activities; (2) Staying socially active – being able to stay integrated within and connected with their communities; and (3) Staying economically active - being able to continue to contribute to their communities.
