



 **Howse Williams**

Financial Services Regulatory Practice

December 2022

Howse Williams is an independent Hong Kong law firm that combines the in-depth experience of its lawyers with a creative, forward-thinking, flexible approach to managing legal risk.

About Us

We are a full-service law firm. Our key practice areas are corporate, commercial and corporate finance; commercial and maritime dispute resolution; clinical negligence and healthcare; insurance, personal injury, and professional indemnity insurance; employment; family and matrimonial; property and building management; banking; fraud; distressed debt; financial services/ corporate regulatory and compliance. We currently have over 110 fee-earners.

Our Regulatory Practice

Our regulatory team advises on both contentious and non-contentious matters, and often in both capacities for the same clients. Our extensive experience across both spectrums enables us to work with clients on all of their legal regulatory and compliance needs.

Our clients include banks, brokers, listed companies, asset managers, financial advisors, start-ups, fintech companies, insurance companies and established international businesses. We also advise senior management such as directors, responsible and executive officers, chief executives and licensed individuals.

A distinguishing feature of our core regulatory team is that it is headed by tri-lingual Partners with significant in-house experience, in-depth advisory experience as well as substantial financial services litigation experience. We are also able to call on support from other lawyers throughout the firm when needed. In particular, the regulatory team regularly works with the firm's banking, litigation and employment practices.

Regulatory Investigations and Prosecutions

Our team has extensive experience representing clients (including company directors and officers) in regulatory investigations and prosecutions by the Securities and Futures Commission, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Privacy Commissioner, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Commercial Crimes Bureau and self-regulating bodies, as well as the ancillary / consequential civil proceedings such as injunctions or claims for damages.

We also run or assist clients in internal investigations, working closely with in-house legal & compliance and risk management departments. Where necessary, we appoint forensic accountants, computer experts and specialist investigators. We draft reports to regulators, advise on remedial action, negotiate settlements and handle issues with stakeholders holistically.

Here are some examples of our experience:

Data Protection and Cybercrime	Market Misconduct	Investigations by HKMA, SFC, HKEx, ICAC, CCB, IA	Financial crime: bribery or corruption, fraud	Digital assets, STOs & Cryptocurrencies
Bond issuer default, rights of investors	Search warrants and dawn raids			Exercise of powers under sections 52 and 59, Banking Ordinance
Investigations involving overseas laws: US Patriot Act, Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, UK Bribery Act, PRC State Secrets Law	Disclosure by listed companies of false and Misleading Information	Breach of insurance regulations	Anti-Money Laundering investigations	Breach of rules, codes and guidelines
	Corporate governance	Breaches of Hong Kong's Listing Rules	Mis-valuation of fund assets	Liability of sponsors and directors in IPOs
	Inaccurate financial statements	Unlicensed Activities	Mis-selling of financial products, including suitability	Liability of directors in listed companies
Shareholder disputes involving listed companies	Self-reports and remedial action	Breach of disclosure of interest laws	Failure/delay to disclose inside information	Conflicts of Interest

Advisory Services for Financial Institutions and Listed Companies

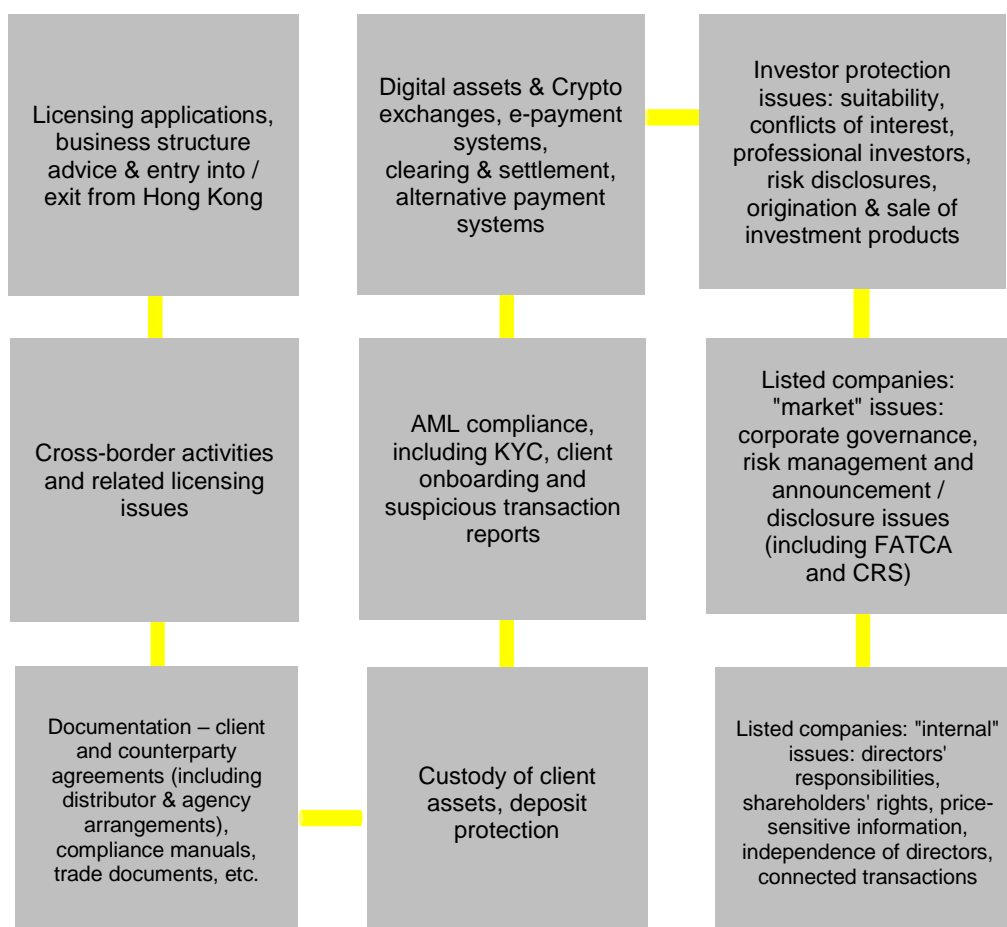
We regularly conduct regulatory gap analyses and carry out operational and compliance reviews so that our clients can successfully navigate through the numerous laws and regulations that apply to their businesses.

We work with clients on licensing and various regulatory applications, business structuring and business conduct issues. We help clients design internal controls and we draft documents such as service terms and conditions, client and third party agreements, compliance manuals, dawn raid procedures and so on.

We advise listed companies, and their directors, on their obligations under the Hong Kong Listing Rules and under Hong Kong's securities laws.

We assist clients to establish offices in Hong Kong and also to exit from Hong Kong, handling various issues such as the application for or relinquishment of regulatory licences, dealing with counterparties and auditors and handling employees.

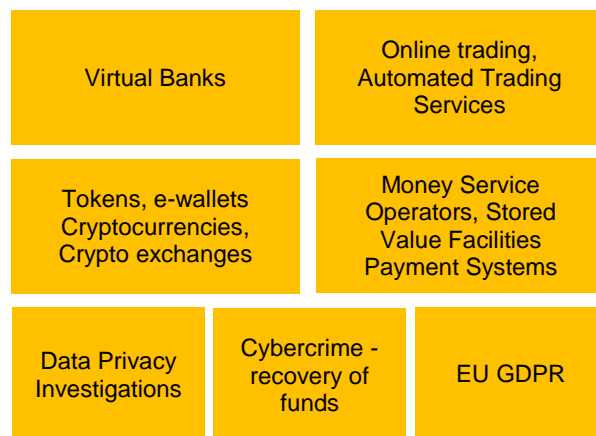
Here are some regulatory issues we have worked on:



Technology: Data Privacy, Cybercrime and Fintech

These are fast-growing areas of concern for clients and our work includes data privacy investigations, recovery of funds from cybercrime and regulatory investigations into tokens/cryptocurrencies/crypto exchanges.

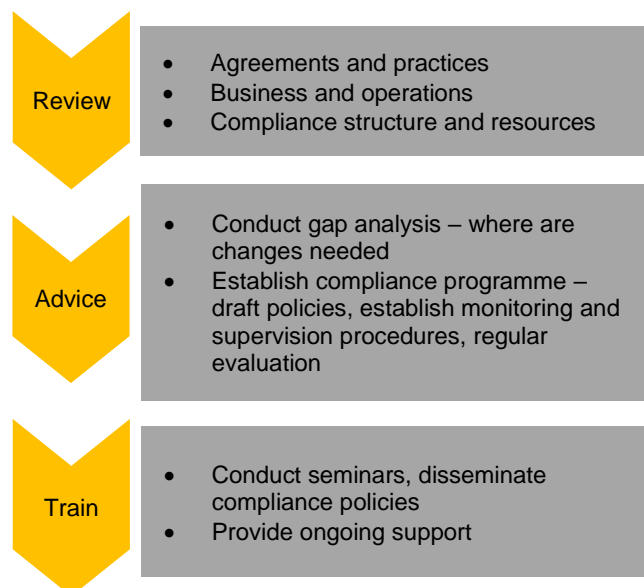
On the non-contentious side, we have assisted various international and local clients with their fintech initiatives, for example, cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology. Our clients include money service operators who work with cryptocurrencies and financial institutions who deal in or advise on digital assets.



Competition

We have considered competition law issues for numerous businesses in diverse industries, amongst others:

- Hong Kong businesses on the impact of the second conduct rule;
- a multinational engineering and electronics company on the impact of the first and second conduct rules and "do's and don't's";
- a business in the real estate industry on the impact of the first conduct rule;
- businesses in the entertainment/food industries on the first conduct rule (particularly vertical agreements); and
- represented Hong Kong employees of a business in the travel industry in interviews with an overseas competition regulator.



Head of Our Regulatory Practice



Jill Wong
Partner

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Awards

Who's Who Legal: Thought Leaders Global Elite 2023
and Global Banking Regulation Review (GBRR) 2023
Legal 500
IFLR 1000
External Counsel of the Year: Asian-Mena Survey
Finance Monthly Legal Awards: Antitrust and
Competition – Hong Kong
Lexology Client Choice: Hong Kong, Banking
Who's Who Legal: Banking
Asia Law Leading Lawyer
Finance Monthly Global Awards

Jill has extensive experience advising on banking and securities laws, data privacy, cybercrime and financial crime issues. She advises on both contentious (investigations, dawn raids, penalties, etc.) and non-contentious (business initiatives, licensing, client documents and disclosures, regulatory gap analysis) matters; and is eminently well-placed to advise clients from both perspectives.

She was Deputy General Counsel at the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and was in-house counsel at Credit Suisse. In addition, Jill has also worked in leading international law firms in Hong Kong. This combination of different legal roles allow her to provide constructive insights into the issues and challenges facing listed companies, financial institutions, their senior managers and professional advisers.

Jill has hands-on practical experience in liaising with regulators, advising on regulatory compliance and implementing changes to internal practices, conducting internal investigations and advising on corporate governance. Jill has represented clients, both institutions and individuals, in numerous regulatory investigations and disciplinary inquiries. In addition to the financial services regulators (SFC, HKMA, HKEX), she also deals with other authorities such as the police, ICAC, AFRC and Privacy Commissioner.

Jill is also active in advising clients on emerging regulatory issues such as ESG, virtual assets and NFTs.

Jill is one of the authors of "Securities and Futures Ordinance": Commentary and Annotations, published by Thomson Reuters (soon publishing its 5th edition) and the Multilaw Global Fintech Guide, available on LexisNexis. She speaks regularly at client events and industry conferences, such as the Hong Kong Securities and Investment Institute, The Law Society of Hong Kong and International Chamber of Commerce. She served on the Disciplinary Panel of the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants for several years. Jill is currently the Chairman of the British Chamber of Commerce's Financial Markets Committee in Hong Kong, a Fellow of The Hong Kong Chartered Governance Institute and appointed to one of the Institute's disciplinary bodies, the Investigation Group. She is also appointed as Chair-elect of the Banking & Finance Group of Multilaw, a global network of law firms. She is on the Editorial Board of LexisNexis's Practical Guidance series and issues the SFC Enforcement Tracker for the series. She is regularly identified as a leading lawyer in legal directories.

Who's Who Legal says:

"Jill Wong is highlighted for her leading expertise in navigating financial institutions through complicated regulatory challenges."

"The 'highly skilled' Jill Wong at Howse Williams provides 'clear and confident advice' thanks to her 'wealth of experience advising on banking and regulatory matters'."

Contentious Matters

Jill has advised on numerous contentious regulatory investigations and internal inquiries involving allegations of:

Financial crime

Breach of anti-money laundering, counter terrorist financing and sanctions laws, bribery/corruption, cybercrime, employee misconduct

Market misconduct

Provision of false or misleading information, breach of disclosure obligations, insider dealing

Inadequate management or supervision of business

Senior management, control functions such as Compliance and Internal Audit, corporate governance, directors' duties, internal controls

Breach of Hong Kong Listing Rules

Breaches of privacy legislation

Investigations, remedial action & dealing with stakeholders

Breaches of regulations, codes and guidelines

SFC code of conduct, Code of Banking Practice, "fit and proper" criteria, treatment of client assets, dubious arrangements

Unlicensed activities

Deficiencies in fund management

Internal conflicts, conflicts of interests, valuation of assets, inadequate disclosure of or content in fund documents

Non-contentious matters

Jill has advised on non-contentious regulatory matters across a variety of issues:

Licensing

Structuring issues, regulatory applications and ongoing obligations

Business conduct

Compliance with codes (such as the SFC Code of Conduct, professional investor framework, cross-border activities, disclosures of fees, conflicts of interest issues, etc.) and rules (such as financial resources, contract notes, client money, deposit insurance scheme, etc.), AML guidelines, Fund Manager Code of Conduct

Internal controls, policies and corporate governance

AML, conflicts of interests, Manager-in-Charge

Entry and exit from Hong Kong

Establishment of Hong Kong offices, voluntary relinquishment of licenses

Client and funds documentation

Drafting, review and updating

Data protection and outsourcing

PDPO, EU GDPR, sharing of information

Competition law

Cartel behavior, abuse of substantial market power

Technology

Retail/electronic payment systems, ICOs, e-wallets, stored value facilities, credit/charge cards, clearing and settlement systems, virtual banks

Strategic insights

Jill also advises clients on strategic matters, such as major regulatory changes and assisting them with business models, liaison with government or regulatory authorities.



William Wong
Partner

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Awards
Who's Who Legal:
Investigations
Legal 500 – Resolutions
Legal 500 – Regulatory
Lexis Nexis – 40 Under 40

William specialises in contentious regulatory work and financial services and commercial litigation. He represents both institutional and individual clients in investigations by regulatory authorities and law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong on matters including market misconduct, money-laundering, bribery and corruption, mis-selling, internal controls failure, fraud, employee whistleblowing and data breaches.

On the advisory side, leveraging his in-house experience William frequently provides counsel on a broad range of regulatory and compliance issues concerning financial institutions and listed companies, including new business initiatives (the drafting of client agreements), licensing issues and internal controls, as well as emerging trends such as the use of Tech and virtual assets.

As a litigator, William has over 15 years of experience in advising financial institutions, listed and private companies and family offices/high net worth individuals on high-stake commercial disputes, from pre-action strategy and settlement negotiations, interim injunctive relief, commencement of proceedings and trial, to enforcement of judgments and arbitration awards.

William has featured in leading legal directories since 2018, when he was ranked a "Next Generation Lawyer" for Disputes Resolution in Hong Kong by Legal 500. He was awarded "40 Under 40" by LexisNexis in 2022. Clients have consistently provided positive testimonials about William:

"William has been a standout: he is commercially astute, technically sound and extremely responsive." (Legal 500 Hong Kong 2022)

"William Wong is meticulous, professional, thoughtful and willing to listen and consider client needs." (Legal 500 Hong Kong 2022)

"William is highly praised for his top-notch litigation work representing clients on investigations relating to market misconduct and white-collar crime." (Who's Who Legal Investigations 2022)

"William is a seasoned professional with in-depth experience not just in law, but also possesses excellent compliance related skills and techniques to deal with regulators. He is also very competent in civil litigation. He is highly accessible and responsive." (Legal 500 Hong Kong 2021)

"William is a "very experienced and highly skilled litigation lawyer" whose "responsiveness and attitude is top class". (WWL Investigations 2021)

"William is "knowledgeable" and has an "ability to deliver succinct and appropriate advice". (Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2018)

Before joining Howse Williams in April 2022, William spent over seven years at Clifford Chance's dispute resolution and regulatory practices after working as a compliance manager and an in-house counsel at Merrill Lynch and Credit Suisse for four years. He trained with Simmons & Simmons in Kong Kong and London.

William is one of the authors of the Hong Kong chapter of The Practitioner's Guide to Global Investigation (3rd-6th editions) and Lissack and Horlick on Bribery and Corruption (3rd edition). He is a Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialist (CAMS).

He is fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese.

The below is a list of his selected experience:

- Advising multiple financial institutions and their senior employees on compliance with Banking Ordinance, Securities and Futures Ordinance (including circulars and Codes), HKMA SPMs/Circulars, AMLO, Listing Rules and Takeovers Code
- Advising major Chinese financial institutions on disputes arising from management of investments for an institutional investor, involving High Court proceedings
- Advising listed companies and their directors in MMT proceedings (concerning disclosure of false or misleading information and late disclosure of inside information)
- Advising financial institutions on SFC/HKMA investigations and High court litigation relating to a wide range of issues including mis-selling, sponsor work, publication of research reports, conducting unlicensed regulated activities, phone recording requirements, etc.
- Advising financial institutions on internal investigations of employee misconduct
- Advising financial institutions on financial crimes matters, including AML investigations, sanctions compliance, anti-bribery corruption issues, and NSL issues
- Advising a PRC bank on challenges by a minority shareholder against board resolutions and AGMs (through arbitration)
- Advising crypto exchanges on investigations by the SFC
- Advising the liquidators of the first liquidation of a crypto exchange in Hong Kong
- Advising in the first private action arising from competition law issues in Hong Kong
- Advising on employment/ER (harassment complaints, alleged wrongful termination), data privacy (investigations for breach of DPPs under PDPO) and cyber security (crisis management) issues
- Advising a leading insurance company on potential fraud in the distribution of an insurance-linked assurance scheme and associated regulatory and criminal investigations, customer complaints and litigation (including urgent applications for injunction)
- Advising a PRC-headquartered securities firm in successfully winding up a listed company for unpaid redemption proceeds
- Advising a leading European bank in a distressed minority investment in a financial institution in China

Our Core Regulatory Team



Vic Choi
Consultant

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Vic trained at Herbert Smith and subsequently worked in Clifford Chance's regulatory practice. Vic was previously HSBC's Head of Regulatory Compliance and Financial Crime Compliance in China, responsible for country regulatory and ethics compliance management and anti-financial crime controls. He was also General Counsel at a Hong Kong main board listed company.

Vic's key practice areas are advising MNCs on fraud, ethics, regulatory and HR issues and advising financial institutions on regulatory matters, in particular investigations and prosecutions brought by regulators.

Vic has also worked in the police force in Hong Kong; he was in the Commercial Crime Bureau focusing on major white-collar crime investigation and the Police Training School and he was also a Police Prosecutor. He held the rank of Detective Senior Inspector, before he left to start his legal career. Vic is on the board of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners - Hong Kong Chapter and is an independent non-executive director of a listed company.

Vic is fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese.



Keith Wong
Associate

Keith is an Associate in the Regulatory practice. Keith has experience in advising licensed institutions and persons on both contentious and non-contentious financial regulatory and compliance matters, including handling cases of alleged market misconduct and alleged breaches of the Securities and Futures Ordinance by the Securities and Futures Commission as well as other general regulatory and compliance matters. Keith also has experience in commercial litigation, acting for clients on matters such as shareholders' disputes, construction disputes and arbitration and company winding up matters.

Keith is fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese.



Maythavee Liu

Trainee Solicitor

Maythavee has experience in compliance matters, commercial and contractual litigation, as well as contentious and non-contentious regulatory issues. She has assisted financial institutions and listed companies with investigations and inquiries by regulators such as the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

She has previously worked in the art industry, including at an auction house in their Contemporary Art Department.

Maythavee is fluent in English and Mandarin.



Iris Chang

Trainee Solicitor

Iris has previously worked in the Securities and Futures Commission and has experience in cases involving market misconduct, fictitious transactions/acquisitions and winding up of SFC licensed entities. She is familiar with e-discovery techniques and court and tribunal procedures related to the SFC's exercise of their investigative and disciplinary powers.

Iris is fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese.



Kelvin Yeung

Paralegal

Prior to joining Howse Williams, Kelvin worked as a paralegal in a local law firm for over 7 years. He has extensive experience in assisting contentious and non-contentious matters for institutional and individual clients, ranging from white-collar crime cases to commercial litigation.

Kelvin is fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese.

Our Complementary Practices



Antony Yung (Banking)
Partner

Antony has experience in a broad range of banking and finance matters, including bilateral and syndicated lending, international trade finance, project finance, acquisition finance, ship finance, general cash management and liquidity products, asset and debt recovery, security enforcement actions and banking regulation.

He also specialises in a diverse range of trade finance matters, including supply chain finance programs, open account finance, letter of credit and bank guarantee disputes, export credit agency backed finance, structured trade finance, warehouse finance, prepayment and deferred payment finance, documentary credits refinance and credit risk portfolio management.



Desmond Lee (Litigation)
Partner

Desmond has a wide range of experience advising clients on contentious regulatory, fraud and corruption investigations by market regulators and law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong, as well as complex cross-border commercial disputes. Prior to joining Howse Williams, Desmond worked in leading international law firms and seconded to the regional litigation team of Citibank.

Desmond advised banks, securities firms and investors on a number of high profile regulatory and bribery investigations by financial services regulators and law enforcement agencies in Hong Kong and abroad. Desmond also regularly represents clients in dealing with investigations by other local agencies including the Financial Reporting Council, Hong Kong's Customs Department, ICAC and the Insurance Authority.

Separately, Desmond has extensive experience in commercial disputes. He acted for financial institutions, private equity firms, multinational corporations and high net worth clients in court and international arbitration relating to commercial/contractual dispute, investment/joint-venture disputes, distress assets / debt recovery, fraud, insolvency and restructuring, international trade disputes, shareholders disputes, and white-collar crimes.

Desmond is tri-qualified in Hong Kong, England & Wales and Victoria, Australia and speaks fluent English, Cantonese and Mandarin.



Michael Withington (Litigation)
Partner

Michael is experienced in a wide range of commercial litigation, including shareholder disputes involving both listed companies and high-profile private companies (many of which involve a cross-border element). He has also acted in litigation involving financial services institutions (including mis-selling claims and negligence claims), claims involving directors, and disputes over asset acquisitions.

A large part of Michael's practice at Howse Williams involves contentious employment matters (acting for both employers and employees), including claims over termination and remuneration, enforcement of post-termination restrictions, discrimination claims and partnership disputes. He advises employers and statutory bodies on internal investigations and disciplinary proceedings, and has represented a number of individuals in SFC investigations. He also has significant experience in conducting and defending judicial review proceedings.

Michael also has extensive insurance experience, particularly in relation to the defence of professional negligence claims and advising on coverage issues. He has been a panel solicitor for the Hong Kong Solicitors Professional Indemnity Scheme since 1998, and has represented both local and international law firms in connection with a broad range of claims.



Patricia Yeung (Employment)
Partner

Patricia has focused on employment law since qualifying as a solicitor in 2011, and her experience in employment matters is now widely recognised in Hong Kong. Patricia heads up HW's employment team, which consists of two partners (including Patricia) and three associates.

Patricia regularly advises employers and senior executives on both contentious and non-contentious employment matters. Her practice covers a wide range of work, including drafting employment contracts, handbooks and policies, terminations and advising upon the enforcement of post-termination restrictions and confidentiality obligations. She and her team frequently advise on the employment aspects of M&A deals and business transfers. Many of her clients operate in the financial services sector, and she frequently negotiates exit packages in relation to high-level employees of banks, brokerages and insurance companies. Patricia also advises upon the employment issues arising from discrimination and harassment, personal data related matters and immigration issues (including prosecutions). She also has experience in assisting employers and employees during the conduct of internal investigations and discrimination/harassment complaints.

Patricia has an in-depth knowledge of the Labour Tribunal, having assisted parties involved in Labour Tribunal proceedings for several years. She has also represented both plaintiffs and defendants in both District and High Court actions involving substantial claims for unpaid bonuses, enforcement of restrictive covenants and claims for injunctive relief in Hong Kong, including applications for injunctive relief.



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