

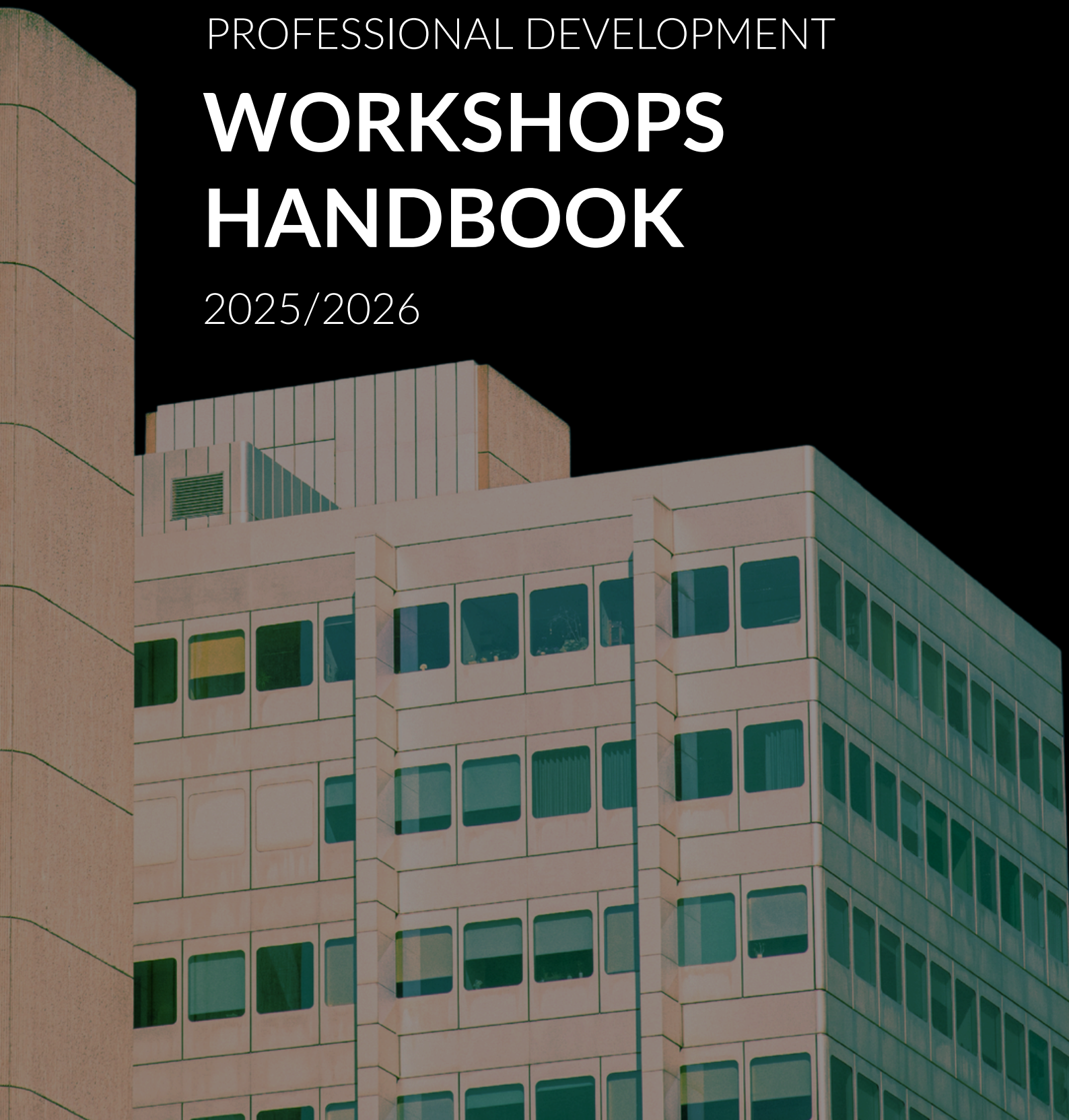


The European Law Students' Association

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOPS HANDBOOK

2025/2026



Foreword

This Handbook is written as a result of the codification of the portfolio of Professional Development projects in the International Council Meeting Decision Book, during the 87th International Council Meeting Malta. Following this codification and introduction of further PD projects, there was a need for concrete materials provided from ELSA International on how to conduct the established projects. This Handbook was therefore written as part of a series to try and close the gap between the projects mentioned in the Decision Book, and the events that have materials provided in the Officers' Portal.

This Handbook aims at defining Professional Development Workshops, their scope, as well as how a PD Officer should approach organising their first PD Workshop. It also aims to provide the PD Officer both inspiration on how to conduct the event, but also which topics the Workshops can be about. It is important to remember that while the Handbooks provide guidelines, it is up to the National and Local PD Officer to figure out how best to organise the event in their respective group.

If you have any questions regarding organising Professional Development Workshops after reading this Handbook, or questions about this Handbook itself, do not hesitate to contact the Vice President in charge of Professional Development of the International Board of ELSA for your term, at the email professionaldevelopment@elsa.org.

Best of luck with organising your event!

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2025/2026

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1. Introduction of the project

1.1 Definition

The Professional Development Workshops (PD Workshops) are workshops that allow law students and young legal professionals to **acquire skills that are beneficial for entering the job market or for succeeding in their legal careers**. The main aim of these workshops is to enhance the *practical and theoretical* skills of law students and young professionals. Accordingly, the workshops should consist of lectures as well as interactive learning opportunities. Each session should therefore include an element of learning and an element that allows the students and young professionals to test the knowledge and skills acquired during the event.

The definition of the workshops is deliberately broad, and provides the Professional Development Officer with considerable room for creativity when organising such an event. **A PD Workshop may cover anything from mock interviews to mental health in the workplace to public speaking skills**. They are therefore a versatile tool to complement the calendar of PD events throughout a board term. The open and simple scope also makes them an accessible type of event to arrange, complementing larger event cycles such as ELSA Traineeships, Fairs or Legal Clinics.

Professional Development Workshops are defined in the [*International Council Meeting Decision Book, Part 8, Chapter 4, Article 2*](#).

They are also mentioned in the [*Professional Development Handbook \(2023\), Chapter 5, page 14*](#).

Separation between PD Workshops and S&C Webinars/Seminars

In many ways Professional Development Workshops are similar to S&C Webinars/Seminars. They both have similar formats of single or multi session educational events, and both aim to increase the skills and knowledge of law students. The creative freedom in how to conduct the events also makes it difficult to know exactly where the distinction between the PD and the S&C key areas should go.

The main difference lies in the type of skills the event seeks to develop. If an event focuses on the academic knowledge of the students, such as deepening their understanding of a specific legal field, it belongs under S&C. If the event focuses on strengthening the students professional competencies and practical abilities relevant to their future careers, it qualifies as a Professional Development Workshop.

To express it with an example:

- A workshop on maritime law *would be an S&C seminar*
- A workshop on how to become a Maritime Law Specialised Lawyer *would be a Professional Development Workshop*

- A workshop on health law *would be an S&C seminar*
- A workshop on how to deal with mental health in the workplace *would be a Professional Development Workshop*

Though the areas are distinct, there will always be a grey zone between them, and some overlap can always be expected. Do not feel discouraged by this, but rather view it as a potential for cross-area collaboration.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the PD Workshops is to **prepare ELSA's members and the next generation of lawyers for the realities of professional life**. We achieve this by organising workshops that provide them with the skills necessary to succeed in their future careers, with a particular focus on skills not taught in general legal education. This sets them apart from lectures, which focus primarily on theoretical knowledge. By being formatted as workshops, these events offer participants the opportunity to turn theory into practice.

Through PD Workshops, we also complement ELSA's educational cycle by offering skills and career training and by ensuring that our members are **not only academically capable but also professionally prepared for the wider aspects of professional life**.

1.3 Benefits

The PD Workshops provide numerous benefits to law students and young professionals. **They equip participants with practical, transferable, and career-oriented skills, resulting in a diversified toolset to support both job applications and professional development**. These skills are typically not covered in traditional legal education or in the other key areas of ELSA (Academic Activities, Competitions, and Seminars & Conferences) although some overlap may occur.

The PD Workshops can assist our members by:

1. **Bridging the gap between student life and work life**, by preparing them through workshops on workplace expectations, soft skills, and employment strategies;
2. **Enhancing employability**, through concrete skills valued by employers, including such as networking and interview techniques; and,
3. **Supporting personal growth**, by addressing mental well-being, confidence in skills, understanding work–life balance, and helping future lawyers to thrive.

2. How to organise a Professional Development Workshop

The organisation of a Professional Development Workshop **can be broken down into a number of straightforward steps**. The essential steps required to host such a project are as follows:

1. Choosing a topic and timeframe
2. Finding the venue
3. Finding a speaker
4. Marketing the event
5. Conducting the event
6. Evaluation

2.1 Choosing the Topic & Timeframe

The first step in organising a PD Workshop is to **decide which topic you would like to address**. When selecting a topic, it is important to keep in mind the scope of the Professional Development Area, ensuring that the chosen theme remains true to the core purpose of Professional Development.

When choosing the topic, make sure you also **set a timeframe for the organising of the event**. The timeframe should be set in such a way that it is realistic for your team to complete, depending on its size and scope. Make an outline of everything that you need to get done, and set timelines for when they should be completed. This way, you can work from a clear schedule, and ensure that the organisation of the project goes smoothly. **You may also use the organisational sheet in the annex.**

Professional Development primarily concerns soft and hard skills aimed at preparing ELSA's members for professional life after their studies. While these skills may also be transferable and useful during student life, **the primary objective is to prepare for a career following graduation from law school.**

Furthermore, workshops do not need to be organised as standalone events; **they may also form part of a series of workshops or constitute one element of a larger event** (for example Career & Job Fairs, Lawyers@Work, or other PD and non-PD activities organised by your board or team).

Potential ways to structure your topics include:

1. A single workshop on a single topic;
2. Multiple sessions in one day covering different topics;
3. A workshop series (to cover related topics) extending over a longer period; or
4. Inclusion as part of a larger event (often determining which topics are relevant).

In **section 3** of this Handbook you will find a non-exhaustive list of potential subjects for a Professional Development Workshop, if you need inspiration for which subject to choose for your own Workshops!

2.2 Finding your venue or platform

When you have your topic, and timeframe, the next important step is to find the venue or the platform for the event. **This step is of equal importance to finding the speakers, in the sense that organising a PD Workshop is impossible without it.** When deciding on the format of your Workshop, there are a few different options that you may consider:

1. A physical workshop at a physical venue
2. A digital workshop at a digital platform
3. A hybrid workshop at a physical venue, streamed to a digital audience.

Different formats for Professional Development Workshops provide distinct advantages and disadvantages. **When deciding on the most suitable approach, organisers should carefully consider the purpose of the event, the needs of the participants, and the resources available.**

Physical Workshops

Organising a workshop in a physical setting usually results in a higher level of audience engagement, as participants are more focused and less distracted than in a virtual environment. A physical workshop also allows for richer interaction between participants, **fostering further networking and teamwork opportunities.**

Moreover, it can be combined with **social elements such as networking sessions after the workshop.** However, physical workshops often require more logistical planning, including securing an appropriate venue and managing attendance capacity. Accessibility may also be limited, as only members able to travel to the venue can participate.

Potential physical venues can include:

- Partner law firm's offices;
- University campus;
- ELSAs offices;
- Public spaces; or,
- Other suitable venues.

Digital Workshops

Hosting a workshop digitally enables you to **reach a wider audience**, including members who would not be able to attend in person due to geographical or time constraints. Through organising it digitally, you may also open it up to international participation from other National Groups. Digital workshops can **often be arranged with fewer resources**, as there is no need to

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secure a physical space or arrange extensive logistics. They are also flexible, allowing participants to join from different locations and, in some cases, enabling recordings for later use.

On the other hand, digital workshops **may experience lower levels of interaction**, with participants less likely to engage fully or to network with others. Technical issues such as **unstable internet connections** or **platform limitations** can also hinder the smooth running of the event.

Platforms used for digital workshops hosted by ELSA include:

- Google Meet
- Zoom
- Clickmeeting
- vFairs

For larger digital events exceeding 200 participants, you may contact the Vice President in charge of Seminars & Conferences of the International Board of ELSA for using the Clickmeeting platform for this purpose.

You can reach the VP S&C at seminarsconferences@elsa.org.

Hybrid Workshops

A hybrid model **combines elements of both physical and digital workshops**, allowing participants to engage directly while also providing access to an online audience. This format has the advantage of being inclusive, as it allows for both local and remote participation. Participants who attend physically can benefit from a more social and interactive environment, while digital participants gain access without the need to travel.

However, there is often a **dissonance between the two groups, with online attendees potentially feeling less engaged compared to those present in person**. Furthermore, hybrid events require more advanced planning and technical resources, as the organiser must manage both the physical and digital aspects simultaneously.

2.3 Finding the speakers and trainers

Perhaps the most important consideration when hosting a PD Workshop is identifying suitable speakers or trainers to deliver the event. Once you have decided on the topic and the timeframe, this is the next step in organising the project alongside finding and securing the venue. When selecting a speaker or trainer, **ensure that they possess sufficient expertise in the subject area to provide a high-quality workshop for your ELSA members**.

When hosting a PD Workshop, you may also consider to what extent it is possible for **ELSA to deliver part, or even the entirety, of the event internally**. Do not underestimate the skill sets of your board members, your team, or yourself. **As a Professional Development Officer, you**

will likely have experience with, for example, reviewing CVs and motivational letters through your involvement in ELSA Traineeships.

When searching for a speaker/trainer, consider;

- Which **partners** your National or Local Group has, and what their **legal** and **professional** areas of expertise are;
- Which **professors** or **legal professionals** are present at your university or in institutions with which you are familiar;
- Which **personal contacts** your board or team may have who could assist you; and
- Which **legal** and **professional courses** are offered in the region of your National or Local Group.

Another point to mention, is that once a relationship with professionals has been established, **it becomes much easier to approach them again for support in the future if their initial experience of working with you was positive.** Such connections may also develop into broader partnerships for your National or Local Group, depending on your approach.

When in need, you may also want to contact trainers from ELSA International's Trainer Pool. The Trainers' Overview can be found and requested through training.elsa.org.

If you have any questions regarding the International Trainers Pool, you can contact the Secretary General of ELSA International at secgen@elsa.org.

2.4 Marketing the event

Marketing our events is an essential element in ensuring the success of the Professional Development Workshops. It also provides a great opportunity for cross-area collaboration with your Marketeer. Even the most carefully planned event will not achieve its purpose unless it is **communicated clearly and persuasively to potential participants.** Marketing should therefore begin as soon as the workshop details are confirmed and should be carried out consistently until the event takes place.

We recommend that the promotion of the event begins preferably around **a month before the Workshop is held,** but if time is constrained, then promoting the workshop closer to the event is better than no promotion at all.

When planning the promotion, **consider which channels of communication are most effective in reaching your target audience.** The tone of your promotion should remain professional, while also being engaging enough to spark interest. Partners who provide speakers or venues may be willing to assist with promotion, and universities are often open to sharing events that add value to their students' education. **Engaging with these stakeholders not only strengthens your network but also improves the visibility of your event.**

The most common promotion channels of ELSA are:

- Instagram;
- Facebook;
- Websites;
- Newsletters;
- Physical flyers;
- Mailing lists; and,
- University promotion channels.

It is advisable to highlight **both the topic of the workshop** and **the benefits that participants will gain from attending**. Clear and concise information on the time, place, and format of the workshop should be included in **all** marketing materials.

Remember to stay true to ELSA's corporate identity. If the PD Workshop(s) you are promoting are part of a larger event bound to any specific ELSA brand, make sure that the promotion is in accordance with the brand you are working with. ELSA's different brands you can find in the [ELSA Brand Book](#).

2.5 Conducting the Workshop.

When all the logistics are sorted, and the event is promoted, **then the last step is conducting the event itself**. Conducting the workshop requires both careful organisation in advance and flexibility on the day of the event. A well execution of the workshop should ensure that:

1. The participants **benefit** from the event;
2. The speakers or trainers have a **positive experience**; and
3. That your National or Local Group enhances its **reputation for professionalism**.

If your event succeeds in fulfilling these three subjective criterias, **then you can consider the event as having been organised in a good manner**.

To begin, it is important to arrive early to set up the venue or, in the case of a digital or hybrid workshop, to test the technical equipment and platforms. Ensure that all necessary materials, such as presentation slides, handouts, or interactive tools, are prepared and accessible. **Make sure to greet participants and speakers warmly, creating a welcoming environment that encourages active engagement.**

During the workshop, the role of the organiser is to facilitate smooth proceedings. This may involve introducing the speaker, explaining the structure of the session, and reminding participants of any housekeeping matters. **Time management is crucial**; make sure that the event runs according to schedule, while allowing sufficient time for questions, discussions, and

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practical exercises. For digital or hybrid workshops, monitoring the online chat and assisting remote participants is also an important responsibility.

Also be aware that as the organiser, your job is not always to be hands on on every issue. Remember you have a team, delegate the responsibilities, and **always keep a birds eye view of how the event is progressing.**

Your main tasks during the event will be:

- ☐ Preparing the venue or the platform
- ☐ Checking all technical aspects of the event
- ☐ Preparing the necessary materials
- ☐ Greet participants and speakers
- ☐ Ensure active engagement throughout the event
- ☐ Time management for the proceedings

Make sure to build in an interactive element, as Professional Development Workshops are intended not only to provide knowledge but also to allow participants to practise new skills. Activities such as *group discussions*, *role plays*, or *case studies* help bridge the gap between theory and practice and bring up the quality of the workshop.

Finally, the conclusion of the workshop should provide a sense of closure. **Summarise the key points covered, thank the speaker and participants, and, where appropriate, provide information about upcoming events or opportunities to stay involved.** To assist with promotion of future events, encourage the participants to follow the social media and news channels used by your National or Local Group.

2.6 Feedback & Follow-Up

After the event, it is important that you **evaluate how the PD Workshop went**. Try to do a *hot washup*, meaning evaluation while the memory of the event is still fresh. Preferably sitting down to discuss it just after the event took place. It is equally important that you focus on what went well with the event, as well as what can be improved for the future.

More concrete feedback can also be gathered by sending out **feedback forms to the participants** either at the end of the event, or after it was hosted. This way, you can access the experience of the participants as well as your own experience when evaluating how successful the event was hosted.

Remember to send out **thank you notes to the speakers or trainers, and the team and board members that assisted you in hosting the project**. When sending the notes, it is also possible for you to attach **feedback forms or request feedback from the organising side of the**

event. This is also an opportunity to reach out for further collaboration with the speakers or trainers if you believe that the situation allows for it.

After the event is done, and you have reviewed the feedback and opinions from your team, then there is one last step remaining; **making the information GDPR compliant**. Make sure to go through all the data that you have collected for the event, and anonymise/pseudo-anonymise the information to the extent necessary.

If you have reached this step, congratulations on hosting a Professional Development Workshop!

3. Examples of potential Professional Development Workshop Subjects

3.1 About the topics

The following is a list of potential Professional Development subjects. It is important to note that **this list is not exhaustive**. As long as a subject falls within the scope of Professional Development, and aims to prepare members and students for professional life and the working environment, it may form the basis of a Professional Development Workshop.

It is also important to bear in mind that a Professional Development Workshop should include a practical component, as outlined above. Therefore, when conducting a PD Workshop, always **aim to provide both theoretical and practical knowledge** within the topic you have chosen for the event.

3.2 List over suggested topics

Career Readiness

These topics focus on the skills required during the job hunting phase just after graduation. Whether this is writing good materials for applying for jobs like CV and Motivational Letters, or practical sessions on how to behave during a Job Interview.

- ☐ CV & Motivational Letter Drafting
- ☐ How to Succeed in Legal Job Interviews
- ☐ Personal Profiling and LinkedIn
- ☐ Social Media and How to Stand Out
- ☐ Different types of CVs - Which to use When
- ☐ Networking Strategies for Legal Professionals
- ☐ Legal English Courses (legal english writing, english emails)
- ☐ Professional Emails and Business Correspondence

Soft Skills for Legal Professionals

These suggested themes focus on how to make your life during your career easier, whether this is effective time management, or how to deal with your workplace environment. While not being the professional skills themselves, they compliment the other skills you require as a legal professional.

- ☐ Effective Time Management as a Lawyer
- ☐ Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace
- ☐ Public Speaking and Confidence Building
- ☐ Teamwork and Collaboration in Stress Environments
- ☐ Leadership Skills as a Young Legal Professional
- ☐ Cross-Cultural Communication in International Workplaces

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- ☐ Feedback and Constructive Criticism
- ☐ Conflict Resolution in Workplace Environments
- ☐ Legal Rhetoric and Legal Communication

Workplace Skills

Workplace Skills are topics focused on skills you will require during your time as a legal professional, such as managing projects, how to start your legal professional career or the experiences you will have throughout the early steps of your journey.

- ☐ Project Management Skills
- ☐ How to Approach your First Month as a Legal Professional
- ☐ Professional Etiquette in Legal Environments
- ☐ Mentor - Mentee Relationships in Legal Workplaces
- ☐ Client Relations for Young Lawyers

Personal Growth

Finally, these topics focus on personal growth as a legal professional, being skills that allow you to train yourself to perform better in the workplace, and giving you real transferable skills to other jobs within or outside of the legal profession.

- ☐ Digital Literacy and Tech Skills
- ☐ AI Prompt Engineering and Literacy
- ☐ Personal Branding and Career Storytelling
- ☐ How to Adapt to Uncertain Job Markets
- ☐ Work-Life Balance Strategies
- ☐ Transferable Skills for Careers Inside and Outside Law
- ☐ Financial Literacy for Law Students and Young Professionals
- ☐ Personal Finance Management

4. Annexes

You may find the following documents issued by ELSA International as annexes to this handbook:

Annex I

Organising Sheet for organising PD Workshops

[PD Workshop Organising Sheet](#)

Annex II

Checklist for organising PD Workshops

[PD Workshop Checklist](#)

5. Database

ELSA International will also provide a database for sharing topics for Professional Development Workshops. The purpose of this Database is to give the PDers a platform to share their experiences with Professional Development Workshops and the format they chose to conduct the Workshops in, so that we can both learn from, but also inspire each other.

[The Database can be found here.](#)