

Young Scholar Forum: Strengthening Legal Standards for Workforce Rights in China's Airline Industry

Date: June 25, 2026

Time: 5:30pm – 6:30pm (Online via Zoom)

Organizer: School of Law Research Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL)

The CCCL Young Scholars Forum themed “Strengthening Legal Standards for Workforce Rights in China's Airline Industry” was successfully held as scheduled. Moderated by Prof. Martin Lai (Assistant Professor, CityUHK), the session featured a core research presentation delivered by Ms. Wu Xiaoqing (PhD student, East China University of Political Science and Law), with targeted academic commentary provided by Mr. Qiu Yizhang (PhD student, CityUHK). Opening the event, Prof. Martin Lai briefly introduced the positioning of the Young Scholars Forum and extended a warm welcome to the two core panellists and all participating audience members.

Centring on the institutional shortcomings of current regulatory framework for aviation labour, Ms. Wu Xiaoqing unpacked a prominent structural conflict within China's airline legal system. She pointed out that existing aviation administrative rules overwhelmingly prioritise flight safety and technical norms, which creates systemic obstacles to pilots' core labour entitlements, including the right to resign and occupational health and safety guarantees. In practice, lengthy or open-ended mandatory service terms, steep liquidated damages for job turnover, and cumbersome technical file transfer procedures severely restrict pilots' legitimate career mobility. After analysing widespread judicial divergences in aviation labour cases across provincial courts nationwide, she found that regional economic levels and judges' divergent legal understandings are the core causes. To address this, Ms. Wu put forward a legislative proposal: enact a standalone Air Transport Labour Law of China (ATLLC). The dedicated statute would rationalise service period clauses, standardise transparent damage assessment criteria, streamline technical record handover procedures, and set up special labour supervision teams under the Civil Aviation Administration of China to strengthen enforcement of employee rights.

Mr. Qiu Yizhang offered in-depth feedback after the presentation. He underscored the inseparable interlinkages between aviation regulatory law and general labour law, and highlighted the striking inconsistency of judicial rulings on similar aviation labour disputes in different regions. He raised follow-up questions on distinguishing routine regulatory training costs from special competency training expenses in compensation disputes, urging Ms. Wu to deepen relevant comparative analysis in subsequent research. During audience exchanges, participants also discussed whether judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's

Court could serve as an alternative remedy for fragmented provincial judgments. Ms. Wu responded that unified specialised aviation labour legislation would deliver more consistent regulatory outcomes than scattered judicial guiding documents, given regional economic gaps and inconsistent statutory interpretations by judges.

To advance her research project, Ms. Wu noted her follow-up research agenda. She plans to conduct deeper comparative research on cross-provincial judicial discrepancies and draw clearer dividing lines between two types of training-related expenditures in aviation-related liquidated damage cases. The forum concluded with constructive academic exchanges, offering fresh legislative perspectives to balance aviation safety governance and the legitimate labour rights of airline practitioners.

CCCL will keep hosting such thematic young scholar dialogues to link like-minded researchers and advance in-depth studies on transport labour regulation and other comparative legal fields.



Ms. Wu Xiaoping

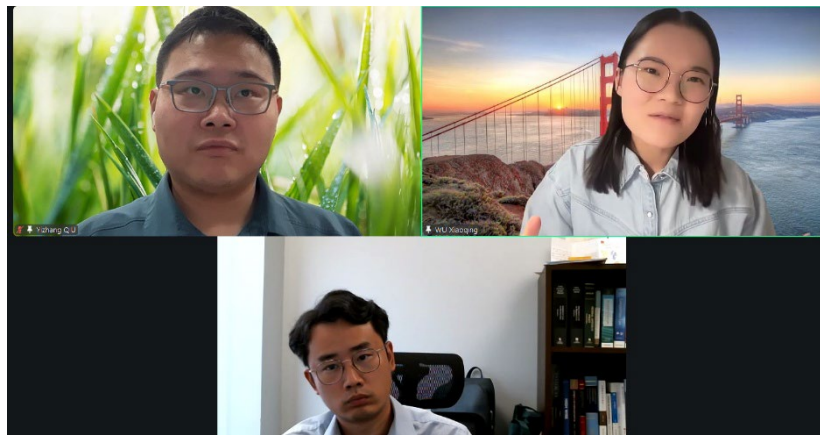


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Mr. Qiu Yizhang



Mr. Qiu Yizhang, Ms. Wu Xiaoqing and Prof. Martin Lai