

People, Standards and AI: Strengthening Hong Kong's Financial Backbone

Keynote remarks at the Hong Kong Securities and Investment Institute Chairman's Cocktail

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Chairman

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Good evening, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a real pleasure to be with you this evening, in the Year of the Horse, to celebrate all that the Hong Kong Securities and Investment Institute (HKSI) has achieved for our financial markets over many years.

Tonight, I want to underline a point that is sometimes taken for granted: HKSI is far more than just a training provider; it is an essential part of Hong Kong's regulatory backbone. Under the Securities and Futures Commission's (SFC) licensing framework, HKSI administers the Licensing Examination for Securities and Futures Intermediaries, a qualification we recognise as meeting the competence requirements for all types of regulated activities. In practice, passing your examinations is the gateway to an SFC licence – and it is the gateway to serving the investing public fairly and responsibly.

Guardian of professional competence and public trust

This gives HKSI a dual mandate: professional and public. When HKSI designs a syllabus, sets an exam or runs a course, you are doing more than just passing on knowledge. You are helping to define who is fit and proper, and who is competent to serve in Hong Kong's markets.

That role has never been more important, as finance and technology evolve at speed. Artificial intelligence (AI) is already transforming how we operate, manage risk, and engage with clients. Just yesterday, the SFC, together with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the Insurance Authority and the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, launched the expanded GenA.I. Sandbox++. This initiative gives firms a safe and supported environment to test and refine AI applications responsibly. By bringing regulators, firms and technology partners together, we aim to accelerate responsible AI adoption – not innovation for its own sake, but innovation with safeguards, with accountability, and with people at its centre.

AI can deliver huge gains in efficiency and insight, but it also brings risks: bias, opaque “black box” decisions, and operational vulnerabilities. In this landscape, rules on paper are not enough. We need capable, ethical professionals who understand both the letter and the spirit of regulation, and who can exercise sound judgment when using powerful new tools.

Note: This is the text of the speech as drafted, which may differ from the delivered version.



This is where HKSI truly shines. Your licensing examinations, continuing professional training, and specialist programmes turn rules into habits, and standards into everyday conduct.

Fostering competence, judgment and talent pool

Looking ahead, I want to emphasise three priorities I hope to see HKSI pursue.

First, keep raising the bar on competence. As new products and risks emerge – from complex derivatives to sustainable finance and digital assets, often driven by AI – your examinations and training must stay current, rigorous and practical.

Second, nurture judgment, not just knowledge. A multiple-choice exam tests what someone knows. But it cannot measure how they will act in front of a client, or under pressure. Your courses, forums and ethics training can help practitioners embed good conduct, manage conflicts, ensure suitability, and treat customers fairly so that “doing the right thing” is not a slogan, but a reflex. In an era where Generative AI is reshaping advice and execution, human judgment and integrity will matter more than ever.

Third, broaden and strengthen our talent pipeline. Hong Kong’s competitiveness depends on attracting and developing the next generation of financial professionals – from our universities, from mid-career changers, and across the region. The fact that your qualifications are recognised beyond Hong Kong, and delivered with partners in neighbouring markets, means you are doing more than training individuals. You are anchoring regional talent to Hong Kong’s standards and to our success story.

Closing: people as the core of financial centre

The SFC will continue to be a close and committed partner on this journey. We work with HKSI because we see you as a vital bridge between regulation and practice, between policy and people. When HKSI succeeds in delivering high-quality, future-ready training, especially in emerging areas like AI governance and digital finance, everyone wins. Firms gain capable talent, clients gain service quality, investors gain confidence, and Hong Kong strengthens its standing as a trusted, well-regulated international financial centre.

Laws, rules and new technologies are important, but in the end, it is people – with the right skills, values and mindset – who keep our markets fair, orderly and vibrant. HKSI holds a unique role in nurturing these people through their professional journey.

Thank you for nearly three decades of dedicated service. I look forward to continuing to work together with HKSI to grow the next generation of outstanding professionals for Hong Kong.

Thank you very much, and I wish you all a wonderful evening.