

## Proust Questionnaire

**Name:** Gerald Leong

**Age:** 36

**Hometown:** Singapore

**Current City:** London

**Current Employer:** Linklaters LLP



**Education:** National University of Singapore (LL.B.); Boston University (LL.M.)

**How did you get involved in international arbitration?** Somewhat accidentally at first, but it quickly became compelling. I first encountered international arbitration when I took a module on the subject taught by Professor William ‘Rusty’ Park at Boston University. I soon realised that I wanted to pursue a career working on cross-border disputes, which were (and still is) largely being resolved through international arbitration. When an opportunity presented itself to specialise in arbitration, I took up the challenge. It soon became clear that the procedural flexibility of arbitration and its ability to adapt to modern business needs made it compelling for international commercial disputes.

**What is your favourite virtue?** Fairness, and relatedly, being measured.

**What are your favourite qualities in another person?** Kindness and a good sense of humour.

**What is your chief characteristic?** I take the work seriously, but not myself.

**What is your main fault?** Being fascinated by too many different things.

**What is your favourite occupation?** When I was growing up, I once harboured dreams of being an investigative journalist or documentary filmmaker.

**What is your idea of happiness?** Travelling – spending a sunny (but cooling) day out walking my dog or on horseback, with some mind-blowing food to round out the day.

**What is your idea of misery?** Reading lengthy, poorly reasoned arguments dressed up as indignation.

**If not yourself, who would you be?** Probably a diplomat or a professional in the field of international relations.

**Where would you like to live?** As an imaginative exercise, it would be interesting to spend some time living in Japan, Mainland China or Taiwan.

**Who is your favourite prose author?** John le Carré.

**Who is your favourite hero/heroine in fiction?** Jackson Lamb from *Slow Horses* – he’s very much the atypical “hero” you don’t need, but who you would absolutely want on your side when the chips are down.

**Who is your hero in real life?** Winston Churchill – for his courage, doggedness and linguistic mastery during World War Two.

**What historical person do you most dislike?** Those who sought power by fomenting hatred, violence and aggression.

**What is your favourite name?** Mario (it's the name of my dog, and probably the name I say the most daily).

**What do you hate the most?** Static electricity.

**What is your natural talent?** Finding common ground without ignoring real differences.

**What is your favourite arbitration-related decision?** The decision to adopt the New York Convention in 1958. The early adopters had immense foresight to push through what has become one of the most important and successful multilateral treaties. It required a great deal of multilateral cooperation which, sadly, is in short supply today.

**Who is your favourite arbitrator?** One who is not afraid to make a decision and to take charge of the proceedings.

**Who is your mentor?** I have been fortunate to have met and learnt from many amazing individuals at school and in legal practice, all of whom I am indebted to.

**What is your motto?** To borrow a famous motto (for which I cannot claim credit): "*Who Dares Wins*".

**What do you hope to contribute to Young ICCA as a Co-Chair?** With its laudable mission of opening doors for young practitioners to access international arbitration, Young ICCA has an exceptional track record as one of the largest and most internationally diverse organisations. What makes Young ICCA distinctive is the breadth of its work across four pillars — events, mentoring, publications and scholarships — which together offer holistic support for its members.

If elected as one of the Young ICCA Co-Chairs, I would build on my experience working with leading organisations and young practitioners (including through YSIAC, CIArb) and my international network (particularly across Asia and the Middle East) to ensure that Young ICCA remains the most relevant organisation for the needs and challenges that young practitioners face today.

Working with the other Co-Chairs and the wider Young ICCA team, I am excited to explore the following key initiatives:

1. **Listening at scale (feedback gathering):** Given Young ICCA's reach and scale, staying relevant requires structured and measurable input. I would launch a survey for Young ICCA members to share what they value most, what they find challenging and the skills, opportunities and resources that would make the biggest difference to them.
2. **Developmental roadmap:** Reflecting the growth of international arbitration, there is an unprecedented number of arbitration events and initiatives today. We do not necessarily need more activities, but we can be more purposeful.

Using the insights from the above-mentioned survey, I would develop a practical roadmap that sets out the key competencies and opportunities – to help members make more intentional choices in their development and to help Young ICCA design more impactful activities.

- For instance, the roadmap would set out the core developmental interests under the categories of: (1) legal knowledge, (2) practical skills, (3) meaningful networking, (4) profile-raising opportunities, among others.

- The roadmap would also help the Young ICCA steering committee and regional representatives shape programming – and articulate how each initiative serves the developmental needs of Young ICCA members.
  - Ultimately, the aim is to give members more agency in designing their growth, and for Young ICCA's initiatives to have a lasting effect on careers.
3. **Young ICCA as the de facto 'bar association' for young arbitration practitioners:** Traditional bar associations are designed for domestic or jurisdiction-specific practice, but international arbitration is a distinct, cross-border profession. I would like Young ICCA to further strengthen its role and evolve to become the natural professional home for young arbitration practitioners — building community, creating meaningful connections, and supporting development across jurisdictions and career paths.