

## Whose responsibility is my degree?

It is your responsibility.

There is no question about that. It is no-one else's fault or responsibility. Your law school does care about the happiness, success and education of its students, but undoubtedly there will also be a very healthy, adult acceptance that ultimately it is up to you how you live your life, how hard you work, what you enjoy, and what you want to do next with your life.

If your grades are not what you wanted, then that is your responsibility. It is up to you to study, to read the cases and think about them, to read the statutes and think about them, to read the textbook and journal literature and think about it.

Law teaching at university is not about lecturers telling you what to write, and you then writing it down in examinations. It is not like modern secondary education where there is an emphasis on "teaching to the test" (i.e. telling pupils exactly what to write in the exam). This is known as "spoon-feeding".

Legal academics move in fear of "spoon-feeding": everyone agrees that it is not what we should be doing. It means that academics know that our role is not simply to tell students what to write in examinations: because training people to pass examinations is not the same as giving them a university education. Training people to pass examinations is like training a dog to sit, beg or roll over: anyone can do it, but it is not the point. Briefly put, there are two points:-

- The first one was discussed above in "What is a university?": basically, the role of university is to educate the student generally in the sense of enhancing her intellect, of exposing her to new ideas, of imbuing her with new skills and ways of thinking. Government policy also sees university as being a training ground for the workplace: in which case it is equally important that students are not simply being told what to write in exams, but rather that they develop better cognitive skills and expand their knowledge base on their own.
- There is a second, ethical reason for this. Most academics do not want simply to foist their own views on students and to make students simply think what the academic thinks. Academics have their own views, but the authentic law teachers are more interested in helping students to develop their minds and their own views, challenging them when necessary, and guiding them whenever possible. But spoon-feeding on its own is a definite "no".

That does not mean that law teachers will not explain. Far from it. If your course has lectures and then tutorials/seminars, that means that the teaching takes place in the lectures (see the bit on lectures above), then *you* are supposed to read the material for yourself, then you are supposed to *think* about it, and then you go into tutorials to discuss what you already know and to challenge orthodoxies, etc..

As I set out in Chapter [], there is an old-fashioned approach to a university which sees it as a place in which students have a reading list and a library ticket, together with the opportunity to listen to learned people talk about their area of learning and to have the chance to discuss aspects of your studies with them. Most modern universities are much more pro-active in their approach to teaching than that. But one essential grain of truth remains: a student is a person who studies, a self-starting learner. University teachers are not there to tell you what to write.

You are, instead, condemned to be free.