

New demanding mark it

When a student fails an examination paper it doesn't necessarily mean it's over as DR ERUDITIO SEDIF explains in this Faculty Monologue

So you are unhappy with your mark? Sit down; you've caught me at an odd moment. Yes, I understand you are working full time and that you are a HECS paying customer. I understand that a good mark is desired, but we don't offer warranties I am afraid.

You shouldn't push the HECS thing too much, you are after all an Arts student — the cheapest there is, financially speaking. After calculating face-to-face teaching and expected reading over the semester, this course costs less per hour than your new ring tone. By the way, it sounds totally 'book'. Don't look too surprised, I am up on the latest trends. Spell 'cool' on your mobile and the predictive speller will give you 'book'. See, I am not all nose-hair. But I digress.

Now about your mark, I appreciate the fact that you could only turn up to four tutes and two lectures, but did you get the gist of the subject? So, the student advocate

has said you have a right to make-up personal tutorials with me at your convenience, before the exam? But the exam was two months ago. Perhaps you'll need to take the subject again? Yes, more delayed fees to pay.

Please don't get angry. Perhaps the cosmetic surgery can wait?

Do you not see that the money game is our common bond? We are ants to the Administration grey suits. From their indifferent metallic grey towers they peer down at us seeing only units: points for every publication we

write; dollars for every student's bum on seat — however uncomfortable and prone to diabetes that bum may be. Clearly, I am speaking in general terms.

So, you think you've been hard done by? May I see the comments I wrote on your essay. Yes, I can see why the mark is ordinary. A few key phrases suggest why — incoherent argument, lack of research, reliance on Wikipedia, and excessive paraphrasing. Basically, it is not a good essay. No, that does not mean I think you are worthless, let alone unintelligent. Please, no tears. We don't like to be judged, I understand. I know how you feel — my own peers rate me poorly. Here, take a tissue.

I am constantly rated below average, so really there is a lot of empathy here. I'm not good at winning competitive research grants. Get one of those and the Dean looks at you with a gleam in her eye. You get taken out for coffee. Your words suddenly carry gravitas. How I long for a research grant, just as you long for that mark of competence — H2B. Actually, I am sure with hard work you could get a first, so stop that flow of tears.

As for me, I've been turned down by every research funding agency in the country, I'm in the bottom 20 per cent. No one wants to fund my new project, absolutely vital to the national interest, *Metaphysics of Big Brother and the Shakespearean dynamic of the Turkey Slap*. I tried to explain in my application that *Big Brother* has given flight to new poetic imagery. Oh, the Bard had it right: "Is love a tender thing? It is too rough, too rude, too boisterous; and it pricks like thorn."

As for pricks, I fondly think of Brendon Nelson, the former Minister of Education. You can thank him for the overcrowding at the lecture on the first day, and then the emptiness at subsequent lectures while you are all off trying to make a living because of the lack of a student allowance. Then again I just put up with poverty while I was a student, I didn't have a car, drink martinis or take frequent overseas holidays. And I walked ten miles to school; in the snow; without shoes.

The point of the exercise of Higher Education is this: the more of you and the less of us, the better. That's why, when you do actually come, we now have tutorials with 25 people on the roll, in rooms fit for


ten people, and only six turn up anyway. No matter how small the tutorial is, I can always smell the underarms of the guy whose biceps are more exercised than his brain. If reading literature was three sets of 15 repetitions he'd have read all the classics by now. I did notice that he was giving you undue attention the times you actually came to the class. Be kind to him. His inability to spot your irritation is not his fault. Breathe in and take it as an existential moment. A life not given to another is not worth living as Socrates might have said. You might like to consider that, no?

Sorry? No, Socrates is not a life fitness coach, and I do not have his number.

I don't understand, you want to challenge me to a dual? I'm not sure I get your meaning. Dual is what in predictive spelling? Oh I see. Well, Claire, Claire right, oh sorry Chantal, I am quite flattered. Perhaps we should lock the door?

Now about your mark, I do remember that especially good tutorial we had. Did we not converse, take in the narrative foreplay of Hardy, the steadily progressive mayhem of Dickens, and the effusive frolics of Wilde coming to a climax. Tell me Claire that this means more than the H2B you have asked from me and the fees that you have paid. Say that, and I might just regrade your paper. As for the exam you missed, why don't we improvise one right now, perhaps something on the transgressive coding of mobile phone predictive text? Yes, a 'dual' indeed.

Memo

Re-marked student essay — Please note that on second marking I have found this essay to be inventively playful in the argument it advances, its deliberate lack of research allows for more imaginative insights to be developed, unencumbered by droning secondary sources. The student has also shown an uncanny ability to play with Wikipedia, demonstrating a capacity to deal with knowledge as fluid and contested and ever-changing. Her interesting riffs on other people's words suggests a bold indifference to claims of plagiarism. 

“I appreciate you could only turn up to four tutes and two lectures.”

