

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
FACULTY OF LAW**

OPEN DAY 2016

Welcome to the Faculty

Speaker: Professor Richard Fentiman

Good morning everyone. I would like to welcome you to Cambridge, to the university, and to the Faculty of Law. Let me start with a question; teaching law is all about questions. Does this building remind you of anything? When was the last time you were in Stansted Airport? This was built by Norman Foster in what you might call his Stansted Airport phase. When you walk into the main foyer what do you see? You see the reception desk, but look hard and you can imagine it saying 'Business Class Club World'. Of course we had to take away the conveyor belts at the back for the luggage.

I wanted to begin by saying that we are very proud of this institution and we are delighted that you have come here today to find out something about it. We are proud of the fact that we are, by any measure, in all the league tables the UK's top law school. We are, with Oxford, Harvard, and Yale, one of a sort of super league of world law schools which dominate in all the league tables. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "He would say that, wouldn't he? Anyway, what are league tables?" Well, they don't tell you everything, but they tell you something, especially when you're topping all of them. But the point I want to make is this: these tell a story. They tell a story about what we do and who we are. Why is it that we maintain this position? Well, there are many reasons. The first is we do it by innovation. People seem to imagine that law is old-fashioned, it's fusty, it's fuddy-duddy, and people imagine that the same is true of Cambridge. Look at this building. Look around you. We are at the cutting edge of our subject. We stay where we are not by looking back but by looking forward. Of course, there's an old joke that in Oxford they push back the frontiers of knowledge whereas, of course, in Cambridge we push them forward, and I would like to believe that was true. We also succeed by maintaining our traditions. We have a core business. We do well the things that we do best and that we have always done best. I put at the heart of that a very distinctive way of teaching, the Cambridge supervision; teaching in groups of two or three with people like me, people like Claire who you'll hear from in just a moment. In Oxford – sorry, we never mention that word – in another university in the south Midlands they call these tutorials, but it's the same thing. This is absolutely at the heart of what we do and makes the teaching experience here special. We also succeed by maintaining our belief that research and teaching go hand-in-hand. That sounds very airy-fairy. What does it mean if you're a student sitting in one of those supervisions? It means that you won't merely be taught by people who read books, you will be taught by people who write the books, and that makes an enormous difference to the experience. Our students are participating with us in making the subject.

But having said all that, the most important ingredient in our success is people. Our staff is second to none. We have the best teachers of law from around the world, and I mean around the world. We are an extraordinarily cosmopolitan faculty. But most importantly, of course,

when it comes to people, we have the best students. We strive to get the best students, ambitious, eager, committed, hard-working, wanting to learn with us in this common experience in the supervision. We work very hard, not simply to ensure the quality of our students, but also the diversity. Our student body is remarkably diverse, coming from a wide range of cultural, national, educational backgrounds and we take great pride in that.

This is where you come in because you are the potential students of tomorrow and we very much hope that you will enjoy today and you will learn something about what we do and you will appreciate why it is we are so very proud of what we do. Welcome.