

**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
FACULTY OF LAW**

OPEN DAY 2017

Welcome to the Faculty

Speaker: Professor Richard Fentiman

I must introduce myself. I am Richard Fentiman, I am the Chair of the Faculty of Law. If this were Harvard I would be called the Dean. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Cambridge and to the university and to the faculty. Some of you walking through this building, perhaps for the first time, will have been surprised by the fact that this is not in fact a gothic building, there is no ivy on the walls, there are no mullioned windows. This is not Hogwarts. This is instead a state of the art building designed by one of the world's most famous architects, Lord Foster. I say that because it says something about this faculty and how we view ourselves. We see ourselves as being innovative, we see ourselves as looking forward, which is why I can say without any fear of contradiction, because the league tables tell us, that we are by a country mile the country's best law school.

As to this building and as to Norman Foster, anyone who has been to Stansted Airport will recognise certain common features. When you walked in you will have seen the reception desk, which I am sure was originally intended to be check-in. If you look at it closely you can just imagine Economy, Club World and so on. My office, the chair's office, was, I think, originally intended to be the baggage handling area which I have to say, says a great deal about my role as head of the faculty. Today, we aim to do two things. We aim to tell you what it is like to study law at Cambridge and we want to give you some feel for why it is that we are so proud of what we do here. Now, I don't want to pre-empt what others are going to say. I mean, if I said everything in the first five minutes you could go and enjoy a day of punting on the Cam, but let me just give you a flavour of what it is that is special about law at Cambridge and why it is we are so proud of what we do.

I think the first thing I would say is that we strive to offer a legal education in the broadest sense. That is to say, we teach you law. Of course, we teach you law. We teach you stuff, we teach you rules, we teach you cases, we teach you statutes and that is the beginning of everything, but a legal education, and I stress the word "education", is more than that. We see the task of teaching our students law as being part of a broader educational enterprise. Maybe you do not wish to be a solicitor in a City of London law firm, maybe you do not wish to practice at the bar, but you will still be educated if you study law at Cambridge. Through teaching you the stuff, the legal rules, we teach you how to think, we teach you respect for evidence. We teach you the art of coherent argument, we teach you rationality. All those things are values in themselves, but we also teach you what it is to live in a society which is ruled by laws and that reinforces an important point.

Lawyers, by which I mean judges, law teachers, practising lawyers, law students, in a sense because of what we do and because of our respect for the values of reason, we are custodians

of the rule of law. We attach great importance to our role in educating lawyers with that in mind. Secondly, we believe in the idea of research-led teaching; one of these phrases which people in my position bandy around. What does that mean and why does it matter for you? I will put it very simply. If you study law at Cambridge you are not simply taught by people who have read a lot of books. You are taught by people who write those books and that makes a difference, not least because you the students are joining us in the endeavour of enquiring into what the law is and how it should be, which leads to my next point.

For us in Cambridge, and this would not be true in every law school in the country, teaching is absolutely at the core of what we do. In Cambridge you will not be taught by the professor's teaching assistant or the professor's teaching assistant's assistant, you will be taught by the professor. Everybody teaches in this faculty and we set great store by that. That clearly has an effect, because our score in the famous National Student Survey for student satisfaction is higher than that of any other law school. One of the reasons why we top every single national league table for the study of law is because of the attention that we pay to teaching, the attention that we pay to the student experience generally. Another reason why an education here in law is so distinctive is because we have the best staff and I mean the best staff from around the world. What is very striking is the number of people who would lecture you if you were to come here who would not just be the best in the country but the best in the world but, of course, most importantly perhaps, and this is where you come in, we have the best students. We try hard to ensure that we get the best student, those who have the best ability and the best aptitude for studying law at Cambridge, regardless of background, regardless of school background, regardless of nationality.

Let me put it to you this way. It is in our interests to have the best so the law students of Cambridge are part of the enterprise, they are part of what makes us the best. So do enjoy the rest of the day. I hope that you will find today the answers to the many questions which I know that you will have. I look forward to meeting you, perhaps over the sandwich lunch today, but also perhaps when I stand at this podium again at the beginning of the academic year in 2018 or beyond and I have the opportunity perhaps to welcome some of you as law students in the Cambridge Faculty of Law. Welcome.