



18 August 2020

Mr Johnny Brebner

By email: fyi-request-13352-479c682c@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Mr Brebner

Official information request for correspondence and complaints regarding LAWS211 2020

I refer to your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) dated 20 July 2020:

1. *"I am emailing to request the contents of all complaints made by students regarding LAWS211 (The Law of Contract) since the beginning of trimester 1 (2nd March 2020) up to the date this OIA request is received.*
2. *Additionally, I request the contents of correspondence which indicates a complaint or concern about the teaching and administration of the same course regarding the online period of teaching (trimester 1, weeks 4 through 12). Note that this is correspondence regarding that period of teaching, not just correspondence had during that period. I seek the contents of the relevant correspondence from the beginning of trimester 1 up to the date that this OIA request is received."*

Please see the attached documentation relevant to your request. In the interest of fairness and completeness, positive comments have also been included.

Please note names and contact details of students and other individuals have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act in order to protect their privacy.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact me at oiarequests@vuw.ac.nz.

Yours sincerely

Simon Johnson
Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington

From: [Pam Thorburn](#)
To: [Mark Hickford](#)
Subject: FW: Reputational risk to university
Date: Friday, 26 June 2020 5:05:24 PM
Attachments: [Contract Test Feedback.m4a](#)
Importance: High
Sensitivity: Confidential

Hi Mark

I have just received this as an FYI from VUWSA in case this becomes an issue over the weekend. They just wanted to alert us to the issue. I assume that you are aware of the matter. Happy to discuss. Pam

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 June 2020 4:43 PM
To: Pam Thorburn <xxx.xxxxxxx@xxx.xx.xx>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Reputational risk to university
Importance: High
Sensitivity: Confidential

Kia ora Pam

We have been getting numerous emails from students today about this podcast. It was posted at 9.30pm last night to the LAWS 211 students. It is feedback on a 10% test, which **only 56% percent of them passed (after what the lecturer calls "heroic" scaling.**

A major issue is that students do not have individual results back yet – only a podcast telling them how many of them failed. As today is the final day for withdrawals this is doubly cruel. I haven't listened to the whole recording but I understand at some point he mentions withdrawing.

As one student wrote to us:

"I've got major concerns about the fact that in a voice message he stated that 30% of students should consider dropping out of the course if their circumstances are going to continue to be challenging for the rest of the year. He advised these students should avoid a fail and come back and resit the course next year (as it is a compulsory full year paper in an LLB)).

I believe he mentioned the deadline to pull out was either today or tomorrow (in the feedback recording). This is a huge amount of pressure to put on students in the final days of the trimester and this is completely unacceptable especially after all the stress of the past few months. Many of these students have multiple assignments due, with other compulsory papers LAWS301 and LAWS312 both having large assessments due today."

One of the quotes from students summarises as follows:

"During online learning, we were provided with only online 'podcasts', i.e. voice recordings with no visual content except for some word documents with minimal text. It is also worth noting that the documents provided did not meet the requirements for my disability, [REDACTED], which I had discussed with David McLaughlin at the beginning of the year. Many of the students

in our class, including our class rep, complained to our lecturer multiple times about the format of the lectures with no success. The length of the podcasts also varied greatly, from over an hour to half an hour, which made it incredibly hard to plan study.

The test itself was also confusingly worded, using double negatives and roundabout language, in my opinion, to purposefully mislead students. I believe from the marking guide that I got two questions wrong due to this alone.

David McLaughlin also claimed in his exam feedback (which was 47 minutes long) that our grades were scaled up by 7% to get it down to only 46% failure. It is worth noting that law courses I have been in before have been scaled by nearly 20% if necessary.

I do not believe that this situation is fair to us as students, particularly given the circumstances around online learning, and the failure of our lecturer to take into account our needs or requests regarding the style of lectures. The fact that the blame has been placed on us by the lecturer is unacceptable, as a failure by 46% of the class is not an individual mistake, it is clearly a failure by the lecturer.

We have not yet received our individual grades back, which I regard as cruel and unnecessary. We should not have to wait 12 hours for the coin flip to see if we are 'lucky enough' to be in the top half.

A lot of these comments reflect the comments of my peers and classmates, so I hope that you may be able to take some kind of action on this matter.”

VUWLSS has contacted us as well, and we have suggested that we meet with them on Monday. They have also escalated the matter to Mark Bennett (Associate Dean). That said, there are lots and lots of comments on twitter/ social media, and it may be that any individual student might seek to go to the media. As such, I felt it prudent to make you aware of this risk.

Ngā mihi,

█

█

Student Advocacy Manager (she/her)

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From: VUWLSS Education <education.vuwlss@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, 26 June 2020 12:43 PM
To: Mark Bennett <mark.bennett@vuw.ac.nz>
Cc: VUW Law Students' Society <vuwlss@gmail.com>
Subject: LAWS211 Important Concerns

Hi Mark,

Just getting in touch as we've had deep concerns about LAWS 211 in the last 24 hours. Last night, David McLauchlan released some feedback about the test at 9:30pm indicating that only 56% of students passed and 50 students received less than 30%. The unreasonableness of that grading aside, what is perhaps more concerning is that in the voice message he stated that students who got less than 30% should consider dropping the course if their circumstances are going to continue to be challenging this year to avoid a fail to come back and do the course next year instead. I believe he mentioned the deadline to pull out was today (tomorrow in the feedback recording). While we understand that this was likely well-intentioned, putting this kind of pressure on students on their last day of term after an extremely stressful few weeks, isn't appropriate in our view. Many students in contract will also be sitting a property test that began at 12pm today, as well as potentially finishing an equity assignment due today as well. This late-night message has likely jeopardised their other assessments while they wait for their results and then consider dropping the course. Even those not sitting further assessments today should not have to deal with this anxiety on their final day of term.

That aside, at 56% pass rate for an assessment during Covid is also extremely alarming.

Thanks


Education Officers 2020

Victoria University of Wellington Law Students' Society

G16 Old Government Buildings, Victoria University of Wellington, Pipitea
Wellington 6011
04 463 6304 | www.vuwlss.com

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From: [Katherine Edmond](#)
To: [Pam Thorburn](#); [Stuart Brock](#); [Mark Hickford](#)
Cc: [Madeleine Setchell](#)
Subject: FW: SM - the thread is about a lecturer here at the University - unnamed
Date: Friday, 26 June 2020 5:03:35 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Hi all, I am aware there have also been emails to the University about this today, which you have Pam.

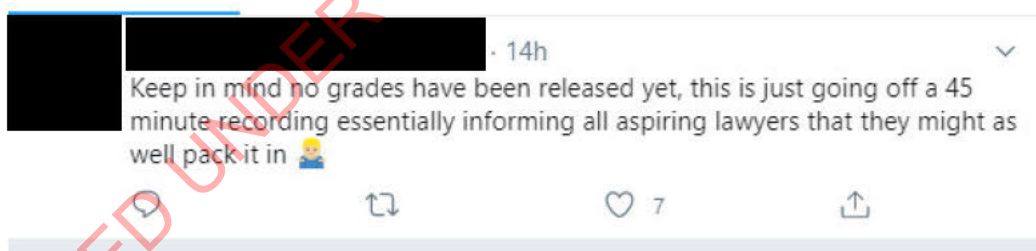
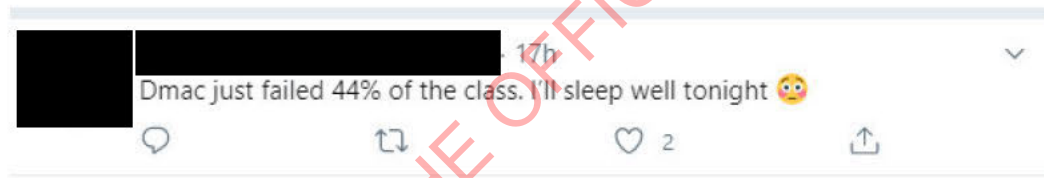
Here is info from our social media monitoring team:

A couple of law students have been tweeting about a lecturer they refer to as 'dmac' failing a large percentage of the contract law class. Possibly this person:

https://people.wgtn.ac.nz/David.McLauchlan?_ga=2.92799837.1980597332.1592861379-1340822190.1574719239

As there are a lot of tweets I have included links to the twitter accounts of both students as well as screenshotting the tweets:

[REDACTED]



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[REDACTED] 14h
How can you give 90% of the class 0 marks for a question? That doesn't even make sense 🤔

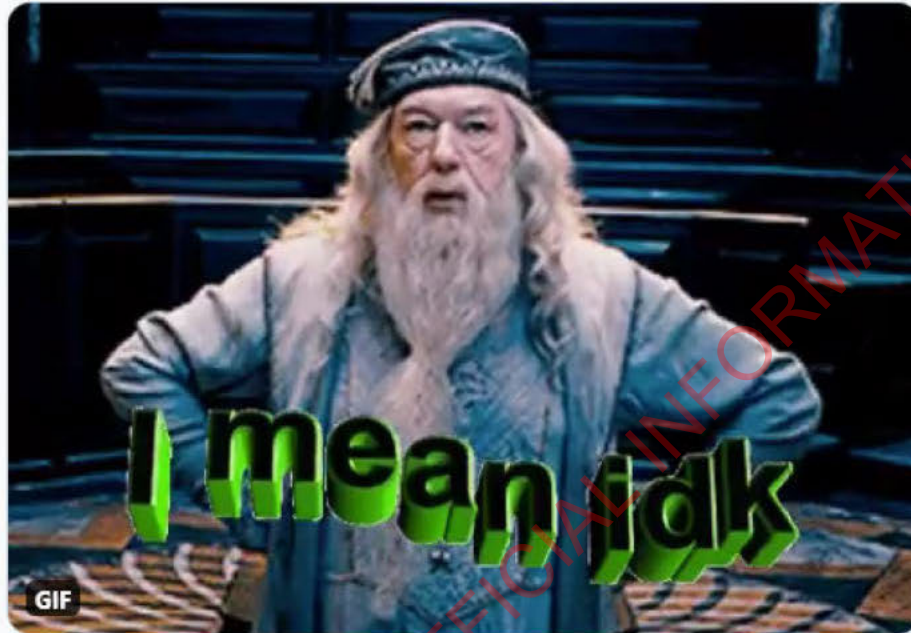
3



13



[REDACTED] 15h
Is the failing of 50% of ones class year on year perhaps indicative of ones ability to teach?



6



[REDACTED] 17h
Dmac getting ready to mark contract (circa, 2020)



2



[REDACTED]

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[Redacted] · 14h
i know i shouldnt go to bed angry but GOD this has got me fully incensed...
bring back the scratch and win

[Redacted] · 14h
if there is one thing law students need to achieve this year it is getting dmac
removed from 200 level contract if not altogether fired

[Redacted] · 15h
can we troll gr*nt now? is that allowed?

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- [REDACTED] · 15h
dear vuw,
BOOOO we hate your pussy!!!!
1 1
- [REDACTED] · 15h
anyways vuw deserves to BURN
1 1
- [REDACTED] · 15h
power rankings of the vuw lecturers who have lost their shit and treated students like horseshit through covid
1 2
- [REDACTED] · 15h
#1: @economythomas's publ lecturer
#2: dmac
1 2
- [REDACTED] · 16h
vic uni staff going sicko mode tonight
1 1
- [REDACTED] · 16h
telling students to drop out? a WHOLE new low
1 2
- [REDACTED] · 16h
dmac be like "this is really disappointing" as if a 56% pass rate doesn't reflect more on his teaching than on the students
1 4
- [REDACTED] · 16h
well im glad i took contract last year after all i guess?
1 1

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 26 June 2020 10:59 AM
To: Mark Hickford <xxxx.xxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.x>
Subject: Concerns regard LAWS 211

Morena, Professor Hickford.

I am emailing to you to express my concerns regarding recent announcements by the LAWS 211 course co-ordinator.

As you may know, the course co-ordinator posted on Blackboard late last night regarding the recent test we undertook. In his recording, he informed the class that 44% of the students failed and 50+ students received E's and this was after serious scaling - so he stated. He also said 90% of the class got 0% for an entire question. While this in itself is worrying from a number of perspectives, perhaps the most frustrating part was the fact that he posted this late at night and the grades of which he was referring are still not up.

I just want to take some time to express some concerns - which I'm sure you have heard from countless people over the years.

1. How is it acceptable that a lecturer who fails 50% of his class year on year is still able to teach? While the Professor is clearly an eminent scholar in the area of contract law, the fact that 50% of his class fails each year seems troubling and surely indicative of his ability to actually provide an education to his students.
2. How is it acceptable for a faculty member of this university to post at 10:30pm a message which so many students will find distressing, especially given the unique position we are all in. Also, how is it acceptable that that recording would be so utterly disrespectful and lacking empathy, not only in regard to the circumstances under which it was posted but its actual content.
3. It seems truly hard to believe that 90% of a class of nearly 300 students all in their 2nd, 3rd or even 4th year of studying at the law school could fail to achieve even a single mark in a question.
4. Simply failing people who do not write verbatim what the lecturer writes in his model answers cannot surely be grounds for failure. As you would know from your many years in practice the very nature of the legal profession is that one will attempt to justify their position and interpretation of the law against another, and inevitably one must lose. That losing side is not laughed out of the courtroom or sacked from their job so long as they make a reasonable argument justifying their position.

These are just a few of my concerns regarding the academic integrity of this course. I

have been approached by a number of faculty members who have expressed more serious concern than I at the situation and who find it simply unacceptable. I can assure you that the students of this university find being disrespected and shown such a lack of empathy that it would border on contempt absolutely unacceptable and in fact disgraceful.

I hope you do not think this is me simply trying to get the grades bumped up or be disrespectful of members of this faculty - that is not my intention. I am proud to be a student at Victoria University Law and part of being a student at this law school is standing up for, and calling out, injustices when they appear.

I hope to hear from you soon in regard to these concerns, though I do understand you're quite busy.

Kind regards,

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VUWLSS + Faculty



faculty come along but I know that's it's very last minute too. Is there anyone I could email the event info to and ask them to forward it to all staff?

11:37 AM

Fri, 26 Jun

I just got a call from Nicola Willis about LAWS211 and David's announcement to students last night. Some students have gone to her saying they are very anxious and overwhelmed by the whole situation.

4:32 PM

Gordon Stewart

Is that the MP?

4:33 PM

Yea, the National MP

4:35 PM

"From: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] <do-nc-reply@blackboard.com>

Sent: Friday, 26 June 2020 7:12 PM



From: "VUW Law Students' Society" <vuwlss@gmail.com>

Date: 20 July 2020 at 3:34:34 PM NZST

To: Mark Hickford <Mark.Hickford@vuw.ac.nz>

Cc: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] **Subject: David's statement in LAWS211**

Kia ora Mark _____

I have been informed by students that many of them felt uncomfortable, anxious and overwhelmed after David's statement in LAWS211 today.

As I had expected, students felt as though their concerns and complaints had fallen on deaf ears especially considering the dismissive nature of his statement. The fact that David read out some of the complaints word for word during class was quite inappropriate too. He even singled out the class rep for raising complaints with him. Students should not feel scared to raise complaints about their lecturers but now I am concerned that the awkwardness amongst the LAWS211 cohort this year has only gotten worse.

As I had mentioned earlier, I have genuine concerns about how supported and safe students feel attending LAWS211 now. This year has been stressful as it is and now this additional anxiety is unfair on students. They should not have to feel bad or scared raising genuine issues with their courses.

Are there any next steps I could take to ensure the wellbeing of students in this class or can you reassure me that David's behaviour in class will not negatively impact students' learning?

Ngā mihi

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Victoria University of Wellington Law Students' Society

G16 Old Government Buildings, Victoria University of Wellington, Pipitea Wellington 6011
04 463 6304 | 021 084 30856
www.vuwlss.com

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 25 June 2020 10:30 PM
To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>

Subject: LAWS211 Feedback

Hi David,

I am a student in your contract course. I just wanted to quickly say that I am sorry that your feedback was misconstrued. I had felt your feedback was honest and very helpful. I also felt that the test well reflected the content that was covered in your podcasts.

I wouldn't want you to think that the opinions of some students were held by all of us. I hope you have a good weekend.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 26 June 2020 at 11:04:09 PM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <xxxxxx.xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.xx>
Subject: Re. I agree with you

Hi David

I just wanted to pass on my thanks for all the effort you have put in over this year. I am disappointed in the responses of my classmates to course related work and am saddened to hear of your interactions with the faculty who its seems to me are bowing to socio/political pressure. That's just my opinion.

I know we've been in covid world and all the different challenges it may bring to students but it also highlights what little resilience there is amongst the students. That is a shame given how much emphasis there is now about well being. To me, it seems this emphasis has also, as a side effect, engendered a sense of entitlement.

Anyway, keep teaching as you do. It's part of the reason we study Law at Vic and get out the otherside feeling like we have achieved something!

Take care

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 26 June 2020 at 11:14:38 PM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>
Subject: LAWS 211 Feedback

Hi David,

I am a student in your LAWS 211 class and I have read the latest announcement on Blackboard. I just wanted to say that I have really appreciated all the hard work that you have put in to the contract podcasts this trimester and I have found them extremely informative - they definitely helped enhance my understanding of the readings.

This trimester has been very difficult on the students, but I also understand that it has been very difficult on the staff and I appreciate the informative feedback you have given for the recent take-home test.

I agree that people should get their realistic mark for future understanding, especially considering it is a double-chance test that does not necessarily have to count towards our overall grades. I think it is important for students to know what they still do not fully understand in contract law because otherwise they will not know what it is they need to learn further. Also, perhaps since it is double-chance students did not take it as seriously as they should have and instead of using it as a learning experience to get useful feedback they just thought of it as something that did not matter. I do not at all think the low marks are due to your teaching abilities nor your judgement on the marking schedule.

I am just emailing to let you know that I think you are a great professor and have been excellent with the move to online learning. I hope you have been doing well and I look forward to seeing you again in person in trimester two! :-)

Warm regards,
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 27 June 2020 at 10:06:32 AM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <~~xxxx~~>
Subject: Message of support

Hi David

I just wanted to pass that I really appreciated your recorded feedback – I thought you fair and honest, and I am very sorry your comments have been misconstrued by so many of my cohort.

I've really enjoyed your recordings and that I've been able to listen as I can spare has been fantastic as I've juggled the demands of this new kind of life.

I'm part of your 8.30 stream and likely not of the original 46% not to meet the mark. And I understand why – I simply haven't dedicated the time essential to have a thorough understanding and I have to take ownership of that.

Your recorded guidance is motivating me to be a better student – I do hope I get there!

Above all, thank you.

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 27 June 2020 at 10:39:13 AM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <[REDACTED]>
Subject: LAWS211 - 2018 Student - Positive Feedback

Greetings Professor McLauchlan,

I hope this email finds you well.

I have seen the recent news concerning the LAWS211 test and the overwhelmingly negative response that followed. I cannot speak personally about that test as my time in LAWS211 has long passed. However, I am apt to write about my experience of LAWS211 from 2018.

In my opinion, LAWS211 was the most competently taught paper at 200-level. If it was not for LAWS211 I would have probably ended my degree in 2018. That is not to say that I did not think that there were issues with the course. No course is completely perfect, but by no means did I think that the course was unfair in any sense.

I expressed these favourable opinions during the VUWLSS investigation last year. The report found that a significant portion of students (30%) had positive experiences with LAWS211. This finding highlights that there is a significant portion of students that enjoyed the course.

I feel that the negative comments/personal attacks have gone a little far concerning recent events. I just wanted to let you know that there are students that loved LAWS211. I had no doubts that you cared about our best interests and welfare in 2018 and see no reason why that would change.

I was looking forward to taking LAWS303 Advanced Contract this year and was wholeheartedly disappointed to discover its cancellation.

Please take care in these difficult times.

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Kind regards,



Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 27 June 2020 at 10:46:00 AM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <xxxxxx.xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.xx>
Subject: 211 feedback

Good morning sir

I just wanted to let you know I thought the way the test was done (double chance) was more than fair, (generous) and your feedback was really good and helpful.

I believe the students complaining are in for a shock when they enter the real world and get jobs especially in prestigious law firms. There is no double chances there.

There is no space for 'constructive feedback back there either ' and 'do better next time' as the clients are paying mega bucks. If your work isn't up to standard you will get told, and told pretty bluntly. You deal with it and move on. You don't throw your toys around.

In addition, the judge won't be happy if you ask for an extension because you have multiple submissions all due in the same week. Life gets busy sometimes. Pandemics hit. Clients call you names. Develop good time management skills and resilience.

Perhaps some students also need to understand it is also okay to fail sometimes. I did and I'm redoing the whole contract 211 course. I didn't go whining to the faculty that the course was too difficult. Law is hard, people pay lawyers alot of money for a reason. I accepted that my work wasn't good enough and that I had to do better.

Anyway just wanted to let you know my thoughts and that not all of your students are so entitled, and do appreciate the teaching you do.

[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 27 June 2020 at 5:28:45 PM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>
Subject: LAWS211 - a positive experience

Dear Professor McLauchlan,

I hope you are well.

In light of the recent 'bad press' so to speak, of the LAWS211 course, I would just like to express my own positive experiences with the course when I took it in 2018.

While no course is perfect and there is always room for improvement, in my experience LAWS211 was the most competently lectured paper during my 200 levels. I cannot point to many other classes where I gained as much knowledge and experience of the law, and ways of thinking about the law, as I did during your portion of the course. Nor can I point to a class where I was as engaged with the substantive material being taught as I was during your teaching. Throughout the course, students were treated with the utmost respect, and personally I never felt any aggressive attitudes towards students during class, nor any apathy towards their learning.

I believe that there is far too much negativity directed towards the course, but in particular too much has been directed in a personal nature towards both

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yourself and the other lecturers and co-ordinators of the course. The majority of students I have spoken to have had nothing but praise for your teaching style of the course and treatment of students. Although it is undoubtedly more difficult to deliver lectures over VStream and Panopto, I do not doubt that your attitudes towards students and their learning has remained at the same level of care as it was in 2018.

Best Regards,

■

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From: [REDACTED]
Date: 28 June 2020 at 12:22:47 PM NZST
To: David McLauchlan <~~xx@xx~~>
Subject: contract test thank you

Good Afternoon Professor,

I wanted to thank you for the feedback you have given us in relation to the Laws 211 test. I really appreciated the detail that you went into, regardless of the grade that I will get, it has been incredibly helpful in conjunction with the model answer you put out, to help refine what kind of answers you were looking for. Since contract law is such a fundamental part of law, I genuinely appreciate the care that you have taken in teaching this subject, and making yourself available when we have questions.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

P.S. I'm being genuine, not (as one might think) a teacher's pet. I know that while this semester has been stressful for the students, it has also been incredibly stressful for the teachers, and I thought you might appreciate the feedback.

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From:

Date: 2 July 2020 at 9:56:43 AM NZST

To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>

Subject: LAWS 211 take home test

Dear David,

I would just like to lend my support to you regarding the contract take home test. I think the criticism over the fail rate and marking is, to be quite frank, ridiculous.

The test is double chance and only 10% even if it does count. Additionally we had 24 hours and the freedom to consult our notes or even watch lectures again to answer questions where we would normally only have an hour under exam supervision; even with Covid, the former is far easier than the latter.

As a 23 year old, I think all the complaining is a sad reality of today's youth, where if they fail a test it wasn't because they did not work hard enough but rather someone else's fault.

I agree with your announcement and I don't think you should have had to adjust the fail rate. At the end of the day the test was more a chance for feedback with a safeguard in the form of double chance to ensure it doesn't contribute to your final grade if undesirable.

My friends and I think the criticism is unwarranted and a large overreaction. Just wanted to get in touch to let you know what I think and hopefully your not too bothered by it all (I don't think you would be anyway). Have a nice break!

Yours sincerely



Sent from my iPhone

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From:

Date: 26 June 2020 at 10:47:30 PM NZST

To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>

Subject: (Positive) Laws 211 Feedback

Good evening David,

My name is _____, I'm a member of your contract class and I am writing on behalf of some other students and myself in support and appreciation for your fair, encouraging and helpful teaching so far for our course. I would appreciate if you could keep this feedback to yourself. I can only imagine how you feel right now with the negative response many law students have had to the test results. Please know that this does not represent the views of all of us. Contrary to the outcry from perhaps, a loud minority, many of us do see and appreciate the effort you have put in to accommodate our new circumstances. We wholeheartedly support the fairness and quality of your teaching and tests thus far.

Personally, having listened to your lectures and revised the content, I found your test very fair and well set out. I'm in my third year of law and it wasn't any harder than any other law assessment I've done. Indeed, I think it is one of the fairest law assessments I've done. No question in the test was totally unexpected or out of the blue. The effort you made to accommodate us by providing the 24+ hours to complete the assessment was also more than reasonable considering the circumstances. Your feedback video explaining your marking was very fair and thorough.

We sincerely thank you and appreciate the effort you have made to adjust to the new teaching environment, provide the best possible resources and feedback for us to learn, and for your honesty and sincerity in considering our circumstances and clearly communicating with us. I believe the response from law students has been quite unfair considering the efforts you have taken to accommodate our new situation. You have been a great professor and we know that you will continue to do your best to support us.

Yours sincerely,

██████████

From:

Date: 27 June 2020 at 9:49:03 AM NZST

To: David McLauchlan <xxxxx.xxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xx.x>

Subject: LAWS211 - Not a Complaint

Dear Mr McLauchlan,

On reading your most recent post I thought I would write this to let you know that the views that appear to have been shared by some students are not those of all students. While I must admit I have been unhappy with the way the course has been taught, I

would rather receive a mark that is reflective of the work produced rather than something adjusted to make me feel better. I cannot address my failings if I do not know what they are.

Even if I have found it difficult to engage with the university in an online format, I do wish to convey that I have found the material interesting and it has helped me to distract myself during isolation.

Covid will of course end and I would rather do this course twice than leave it with a substandard knowledge of the material. What would be worse than this would be to receive a mark giving me false confidence, leading to poorly informed, but confidently made, decisions in the future.

I look forward to in person lectures resuming.

All the Best,



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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, 20 July 2020 8:21 PM

To: David McLauchlan <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Contract Law Criticisms

Dear Prof McLauchlan,

In light of Monday's class where you addressed the number of criticisms advanced at you following the double chance test in trimester one it seemed you were somewhat frustrated with criticisms from certain students.

I just wanted to acknowledge that the feelings of what I would call a silent majority of the class have seemingly been usurped by a very vocal minority.

Talking to a number of classmates, many of whom didn't do as well as they would have hoped in the test, much of our discussions have been around how we appreciate the difficulty of online teaching and are thankful the amount of feedback we were given following the test.

I just wanted to thank you for the continued work you are doing and hope you continue to teach in a way that you deem the most beneficial for us.

Thank you,
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, 19 July 2020 8:40 PM

To: David McLauchlan <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Laws212

Hi David,

I just wanted to send you an email regarding the hysteria that resulted in the aftermath of the take home test and the statement you made in today's lectures.

Firstly, I just wanted to thank you for the time and effort you have put in to teaching through the online period. I think students forget that it is not just us who have found the switch to online learning difficult, but many of the staff would have too.

While, I much prefer in-person lectures I thought your podcasts were very informative and as clear as they could be in an online format. In fact, I got far more information and much better notes from your podcasts than I did from your previous in-person lectures.

In regards to the test, I thought you couldn't have given us a fairer chance if you had tried. I have never sat a law test that has not had some kind of time pressure. I think many students have complained about online learning, but this shows that you did take the difficulties, and concerns we had into account and allowed for ample time to sit the test. Something I very much appreciated.

I would also like to point out that this isn't coming from a A grade student, in fact I didn't do so well in that test but this was no fault of yours. I simply did not understand the content as well as I thought I had, which is something I hope to improve on in the coming weeks.

Lastly, in regards to your personal statement you made this morning (I was in your 8:30 stream, but also have listened back to the recording) it absolutely did not deserve a complaint being made. Seems people get offended at anything these days! I thought it was very professional and fair.

While, I appreciate the faculty have taken the students complaints seriously, I think some of them have been very unfair. This is not an accurate representation of the experience I had.

I just wanted to send you an email of support, so you know that this isn't the way all students are feeling. I for one, really appreciate your lectures and look forward to coming.

I hope the rest of the 2020 year runs a lot smoother!

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, 19 July 2020 4:16 PM

To: David McLauchlan <x@xx>

Subject: Thank You

David,

For the record, I think you are a very good lecturer and believe the comments some students have made to you were very unfair. In lockdown, I found you were the only one of my lecturers who had any cohesive structure to online learning. Your lectures were eloquent and well-paced, where you went over the difficult topics to ensure comprehension. Additionally, your test was, in my opinion, very fair, and I'm not saying this as if I got a high mark as I only got a C+. Though I was disappointed with the mark, I realised where I went wrong when comparing my answers to the model answer. I do agree with the message you are instilling in us, in that words matter, and you must say write the answer in the correct way to get the marks.

This is a hard course with many complicated issues and I feel students are using you as a scapegoat to blame their poor comprehension of the subject. So, I would like you to know that I thoroughly disagree with the allegations made against you and I am sorry you had to go through this distress in addition to the uncertain times of COVID-19. I thank you for caring so much about this course and your students, and I hope you do not get disenchanted with this course because I am thoroughly enjoying it so far.

Keep it up,
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Saturday, 27 June 2020 1:33 PM

To: David McLauchlan <david.mclauchlan@vuw.ac.nz>

Subject: Re: 20.F.LAWS211: Law of Contract: A message from Professor McLauchlan

Dear Professor McLauchlan

i was saddened to read the below.

I thought your podcasts were very good and clearly explained the subject matter.

My perception is that you are held in high regard by most of your students, although the subject matter is difficult.

Please don't be disheartened by a few idiots

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

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