

## Education and Innovation Committee

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**From:** Barry Winning [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 13 May 2013 3:48 PM  
**To:** Education and Innovation Committee  
**Subject:** Mathematics assessment

Dear Committee Members,

I have been teaching mathematics/physics/chemistry for many years. I feel gravely concerned about the QSA and their approach to assessment. After my retirement in 2001, I have tutored many students in Senior or University Mathematics and Physics. Much of this time involved assignments. The standard of many of these assignments has been well above the ability level of the students I have been coaching, even though these were good to excellent students, mainly from private schools. Discussions with the boys and girls concerned revealed that many of their fellow students were also being coached and effectively having their assignments done for them.

Can the teachers not see the disparity in the standards of the assignment work and that done under supervised examination conditions, or don't they care? Can the review panels not see this difference, or can't they do anything about it? I have had a couple of examples where students had to indicate any assistance they were given and they listed me as a friend of their mother, which was correct. But if any of the others had to make ownership statements, I knew nothing about it. A little white lie doesn't hurt if it enables you to get a start on the others, does it?

Assignments put a great deal of pressure on students, take a good deal of time and produce unreliable results. They benefit the tutors, but I am not convinced they are of much benefit to the students, especially in the field of mathematics. The time would be better spent practicing their techniques and fundamentals. Unfortunately the assignment demands of other subjects may take all the study time available for many students.

Is it wrong to expect students to perform under pressure in an examination situation? Many will, some won't, but life in the real world is full of pressure situations. I would rather see what student can actually do than see what their tutor could do. True, many teachers teach to the paper, but at least the student has to have that knowledge in their heads on the day. Many of the assignments I have done passed straight from my head to their paper without any student involvement. A benefit for the student being tutored, but a definite disadvantage for those doing it themselves in both time involved and results achieved.

Sincerely,

Barry Winning

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