

Who has the answers?

I'm not sure my teachers know enough, they're so young (Brian/Kimberly)

- My Tutor is fantastic. She is only thirty maybe but she's spent five years doing the job I want to do. She has experience.
- I just find it strange. At home all our teachers were much older.
- But we are now older too so it's not really that strange. Maybe our teachers weren't really that old! I think the experience that our teachers have makes all the difference. I would rather have a young teacher with experience than an older teacher who had never had a career outside University.

It is quite normal to expect teachers to have expertise and experience. Many of us come from communities where it is normal for only the older members to have the authority to speak. So it can be surprising to find young teachers who Universities believe are expert. Some of us may have grown up in communities where only men have the right to authority and so it might seem strange that a woman appears to be in charge of our learning. In British universities it is your ability to teach that is the only criteria. A tutors age or gender is not relevant.

Some of my teachers are not very good. (Steven/Catherine)

- Why do you say they are not very good?
- Students make lots of noise. Some talk during class. One guy even answers his mobile phone during the class.
- That's ridiculous. I think some teachers find it very hard and some students just don't seem to want to learn. I think they are bored and frightened to admit they don't understand.
- But I want to learn so I need a teacher that can teach!
- Maybe you can ask your class representative, or talk to your personal tutor. If I was you I would even approach your head of department. Maybe there is something the class can do to help the teacher if most of you want to learn.

There is no excuse for poor teaching. There is a lot of support available to teachers. However it is not always as straight forward as sometimes it appears. Students have different motivations for being in class and very different expectations. Some have come from cultures where discipline was very strict and they often unconsciously want to 'test' the boundaries of what can seem like new found freedom. Students can help each other, and the tutor, by being open about their expectations.

My teacher makes us do too much on our own when they should tell us things. (Amy/Catherine/Bridget)

- Yes. I think so too. Shouldn't they be teaching us.

- They are teaching us! How can you learn to work together like we will after University if we just sit there and listen.
- But. We spend ages in class doing activities.
- The teacher should explain why it is important. My teacher does, she always explains that an activity is contributing to this real world experience or this outcome.
- Well it would help I guess if we knew that. But I just prefer to work on my own, it is what I'm used to.
- There are not many jobs where you work in total isolation!

Classroom activities can play an important part in learning. But, everyone has their own preferred way of learning and not everyone wants to learn in a group. Some students prefer to listen, make notes and maybe discuss with people outside of class. Teachers prepare activities to reinforce learning and provide real-world experience. If you do not understand why you are being asked to do an activity you can ask the teacher to explain its purpose.