

Richard Krever, *Mastering Law Studies and Exam Techniques*, 3rd Ed., Butterworths, 1995, pp xiv, 280, \$32 (pbk).

It is always a pleasure to read Richard Krever's study techniques for law students. This latest edition is as practical and useful as the previous editions, providing a guide to the mysterious and often unexplained requirements for success in a law degree.

As stated in the preface, this book is designed to 'provide a jump start past the luck stage'. For students at the beginning of a law degree, this book does indeed lay the foundations upon which they can build skills for the successful translation of hard work into good grades. Certainly, any teacher of law students at the introductory level at university will have seen the students Richard Krever is trying to help. They are the students slogging away, reading everything, underlining, highlighting, cutting and pasting, unconcerned with the relative merit of that information to their studies, and then rewriting entire books and cases in their own words until they are faced with revising from their own ten-volume set of notes on the intentional torts or common law and equity. This book clearly sets out the pitfalls of such an approach, and canvasses and explains methods for students to acquire more useful skills.

In doing so, Krever illuminates the mysterious style of teaching still adhered to in many law courses; that is, an apparently aimless wander through an endless list of cases without ever stating that the paramount concern is that students should understand and consider the principles and issues raised. Whilst it is certainly instructive for the student to know that they are expected to extract rules and principles, this discussion will also be instructive to lecturers who are willing to question the underlying assumptions made in presenting material to students.

Chapter Five, which deals with basic rules, is particularly good. It discusses the expectations of a law lecturer with special reference to assessment, and should be compulsory readings for students beginning their legal studies. Warnings such as 'Do not repeat the question', 'Do not review entire areas of law', and most importantly, 'Do not look for the definitive answer', are the mantras of teachers of introductory law courses.

These basic rules are presented in context in the final chapter, which includes sample questions across a range of areas of law, providing both basic and above-average answers to demonstrate the benefits of applying the basic rules.

Chapter Four contains additional methods for presenting good exam and assignment answers and provides study hints, particularly on

'Notes and Review Notes'. Whilst I agree entirely that constant review of notes and consolidation is crucial, I found this chapter to be rather exclusive in its approach to learning methods. The only method of note preparation and review discussed seems to be an overwhelmingly linear approach, which is not suitable for every student. It is vitally important at the start of any study programme to consider the best methods available to the individual student. Not all students will find a thorough, neat and organised set of notes approachable when they come to revise their work. Those with a visual approach to learning may find maps, pattern notes, rhymes or tapes just as useful as a paper or disk set of notes. Whilst this book concentrates on the issues relevant to the production of a good law paper, it seems to me that it would be entirely valid to examine the underlying learning method by which that may be achieved, and to encourage the students to work with their own learning styles rather than adopting an ideal approach.

The lay-out of the book itself limits its accessibility to non-linear learners. Even where note preparation is being discussed, for example, material is presented in standard paragraph format. Given the many and varied ways in which notes can be set out, I would have thought that this is a missed opportunity as far as demonstrating improvement in study skills is concerned.

One final 'omission' I would raise is the lack of a discussion of the language skills needed for law. The author does state clearly that whilst content is the central requirement for a good law answer, the manner in which that information is conveyed is crucial. Clarity, correct spelling, grammar and punctuation are fundamental. However, without examples to accompany these guidelines, it is possible that a student may be none the wiser. Whilst law schools are not required to provide basic courses in the application of the English language, it is important for the students to be aware of the enormous role expression plays in the proper communication of legal concepts.

Those criticisms aside, the content of this book is enormously important. A text such as this should be required reading at law schools, and not just for the students. Certainly any lecturer would find the discussion and analysis of the components of a satisfactory law paper useful, and those chapters could easily be built into the teaching and assessment of introductory law and skills courses, benefiting both the student and the teacher.

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