

Who is responsible for my learning?

(Alan/David) **This 'students as partners in learning' thing annoys me.** I don't want to pay thousands of pounds to be told I am responsible for my own learning.

- But the teacher can't MAKE you learn. They can only help and guide you.
- That's just an excuse. They make us do all the work. I have one class where every week one of us delivers a presentation. We are doing his work for him!
- No you're not. You are all learning to do the research and to make a presentation, that's what learning is all about.
- Well I wasn't expecting to have to do so much independent study. I'm not sure I really KNOW HOW!

Where does the responsibility for your learning lie. It is certainly true that students come to University to learn, but they are not empty vessels waiting to be filled up with facts. Learning requires that skills are developed, knowledge acquired and that that knowledge can be applied and tested in different situations. Learning is a shared responsibility.

(Paul /Joey) I'm not enjoying this class. **I'm just not good at numbers**

- Are you having to do a lot with numbers?
- Well there are lots of charts and graphs and the teacher asks us questions and I just can't make sense of the information quick enough.
- But is that because it is numbers or because you can't make sense of the graphs? It's not the same thing is it?
- Maybe not. I just need more time to look at the data and then I sort of understand it. But when she shows things in class and asks questions I panic.
- Hmmm. You should tell her. Ask her if you can have the charts and data ahead of class so that you can contribute. I think she will be pleased you want to learn.

The teacher will take time to learn about your strengths and weaknesses. It is your responsibility as a learner to ensure the teacher can support you. In this example Paul has a problem reacting quickly to graphs and charts in class and is beginning to feel he just can't handle numbers. But, as Joey points out, the teacher may be happy to share that data in advance of the class if it helps Paul learn. He has to tell the teacher what would help him.

(Kimberley/Catherine) **My teacher asks me to speak in class but I'm shy.**

- Last year the teachers just asked the whole class questions but now I have several teachers who ask us directly. That's a bit scary.

- I often have the answer but I like to think about the English and how I am going to express it. Sometime before I can answer she asks again and tries to help but then I get really embarrassed.
- Maybe you could have a tutorial and explain. In one of my classes the teacher tells us the question he is asking and then comes back to it five minutes later.
- Ah yes. I have Dr. Roberts too; I like that style because I have time to think.

Not everybody is confident to speak in class. Some people are shy. Some people come from cultural backgrounds where social etiquette dictates a certain order or structure to who may ask and answer questions. It can take time to get used to the British classroom. You can help the teachers to structure their questions so that you can participate. Tell them how best you would like to contribute.