

# Formal Complaint Against Tim Holt and Others

Martin Sewell

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On 5 July 2012, Tim Holt, Head of Communications, Office of External Affairs and Communications, sent an email with the subject heading ‘Martin Sewell’s employment status’ to John Rallison, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Professor of Fluid Dynamics in the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, which was Cc’d to Stephen Jolly, Fellow in Communications, Judge Business School. The email purports to clarify my employment status at the university, but reads more like a witch hunt, and evidences a deliberate attempt to sabotage my career, and this is a formal complaint on that basis. Below, quotes from the email are italicized and bulleted, in each case followed immediately by my response.

- *Mr Sewell was employed on a short term contract by the Cambridge Centre for Climate Change Mitigation Research (4CMR), part of the Department of Land Economy, from March 2009.*

This is, at best, a deliberately misleading statement. As my CV, which is in the public domain at <http://www.martinsewell.com/cv.pdf>, indicates, I worked as a Senior Research Associate from March 2009 until September 2011. By omitting the end date and describing a 2.5 year postdoc contact as ‘short term’ is nothing short of deceitful.

- *During this time a complaint was made about the content of his personal website and lawyers were consulted but it was deemed that since he was not a Cambridge student, the website was a personal one, not on a University server, there were no grounds to dismiss him.*

Given that my personal website, <http://www.martinsewell.com/>, largely distils peer-reviewed science on various topics, why on earth were lawyers consulted? Is it now illegal for an academic to do science?! This was a witch hunt—nothing more than a deliberate, unprovoked and groundless attempt to compromise my career. Someone was clearly looking for grounds to dismiss an academic on the grounds that... he had done some science. This breaches just about everything the university claims to stand for. The above concedes that I’ve done nothing wrong, but implies that there were attempts to compromise my career—this is direct evidence of discrimination.

- *When his contract expired in September 2011 it was not renewed.*

At 4CMR I published more than my contemporaries put together, I presented more than my contemporaries put together and I brought in more funding than my contemporaries put together, yet only my contract was terminated. My contemporaries included a convicted bully, Ann Thompson, who all but destroyed 4CMR. Furthermore, shortly before my contract expired I was formally informed that my contract would most likely be renewed, but it was not, this is the worst thing that one can do to an employee, and was also a breach of regulations. I was informed that my contract was not renewed due to lack of funding, yet others were soon recruited.

- *From January 2012 he was paid to give some supervisions to economics undergraduates on specific topics relating to specialist statistics at Home-rton, Newnham, Queens' and St Edmund's Colleges.*

Again, '*specific topics relating to specialist statistics*' (emphasis added) is deliberate obfuscation. I taught maths and econometrics for two terms to fill in for Helen Bao, Department of Land Economy and Newnham College, who was on sabbatical, there was nothing specialist about it.

- *No students have complained about his teaching.*

Indeed, so why were six academics interviewed?

- *This did not make him an official employee of any of the colleges.*

According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, an *employee* is 'a person employed for wages or salary, especially at non-executive level'. I worked for the colleges, and the colleges paid me for the work that I did.

- *None have plans to engage him further.*

This was not true, Newnham College did plan to employ me further. Besides, why would they have no plans to engage me further, given that the students were happy?

- *From April 2012 he was engaged on a part-time temporary single assignment basis by Judge Business School's Centre for Risk Studies, with payroll arranged through the Temporary Employment Service.*

The reason that I was on a temporary contract at the Centre for Risk Studies was that they were not prepared to give me a permanent contract due to prejudice. The matter is currently under investigation by Julie Brown, Human Resources Director, Judge Business School.

- *This employment ceased on 1 July and there are no plans to re-engage him.*

The contract was terminated with indecent haste, again, due to prejudice.

- *He was never officially affiliated to the Faculty of Economics as he claims on his website.*

This is misleading and defamatory, and could only possibly refer to my CV, which is a pdf downloadable from my website, and states ‘For two terms, worked as a Supervisor in the Faculty of Economics, University of Cambridge, providing undergraduate supervisions to 27 students for the Economics Tripos. Specifically, Part I, Paper 3: Quantitative Methods in Economics (Mathematics) (for Homerton College and Newnham College) and Part IIA, Paper 3: Theory and Practice of Econometrics I (for Newnham College, Queens College and St Edmund’s College).’ Given that I booked rooms in the Faculty of Economics, taught supervisions in the Faculty of Economics and had my own pigeon hole in the Faculty of Economics, saying that I worked as a ‘Supervisor *in* the Faculty of Economics’ (emphasis added) is wholly accurate.

Furthermore, the above implies that Tim Holt has seen my CV, so why did he not just relay the facts, rather than propagating misleading obfuscation? Why waste the time of six academics? Or does he imagine, for no reason whatsoever, that my CV contains untruths? This would be implied defamation.

- *Contacts interviewed:*  
*Land Economy: Professor Philip Allmendinger, Director*  
*Homerton College, Dr Peter Warner, Senior Tutor*  
*Newnham College: Dr Teri Apter, Senior Tutor*  
*Queens’ College: James Kelly, Senior Tutor*  
*Judge Business School: Laura Whitehead, Human Resources Coordinator*  
*Faculty of Economics: Dr Toke Aidt, Academic Secretary*

Given that there were no complaints, why were the above people interviewed? If anyone wished to know anything, why not simply contact me? My CV, email address and telephone number are all in the public domain. Interviewing the above members of staff gives them the impression that there was a reason to interview them and thus a cause for concern. There was not. The net effect was to defame my character across the university, thus tarnishing my reputation and directly compromising my career prospects within the university.

In sum, the email written by Mr Holt seeks to trivialise the significance of the three paid roles that I have had with the university. Why? He has implicitly conceded that I have done nothing wrong. This is pure prejudice and discrimination. The email also evidences a witch hunt, motivated by nothing but prejudice and a desire to compromise the career of an academic on the basis of his science.