



7 September 2005

To whom it may concern

**Work Reference: Mr Sean Ardren**

I have known Mr Sean Ardren for the past two years. I know him in his capacity as colleague and fellow lecturer in mathematics here at the University of Cape Town.

What has struck me most about Sean, in his professional capacity, is the tremendous sincerity with which he tackles the job. He has responsibility for teaching the first course in mathematics to students from Business Science whose schooling has not given them an adequate preparation, so that additional interventions have to be made. His concern for the students is exemplary. I hasten to add that this does not translate into giving them an "easy time". He is firmly of the opinion, which I endorse, that the best service he can be to the class is to enable them to learn to take responsibility for their own work ethic (of course at the level of the first academic year). That said he is prepared to go the extra mile for those students who take the opportunities that he affords them. I have on a number of occasions found him tutoring members of the class over weekends or during vacation time. I have advised him a number of times to protect his own leisure time and to avoid the risk of burning himself out. The ratings he got from his student in 2004 were very solid and in fact two thirds of his students rated him in the range of "good" to "one of the best lecturers". Particularly notable was that the same proportion of students placed him in the highest bracket for showing concern for the students.

I have been teaching the same course as Sean, though to the regular students, and I have interacted with him at the lecturers' meetings where we set tests or discuss the course generally. I have always found his contributions to be thoughtful and insightful.

Sean is also a keen educationalist, in the sense that he tries to translate his readings and philosophy of teaching into practice. We have had a number of interesting discussions, mostly stemming from his interest in the work of Cardinal Newman, which is becoming an area of academic interest and research for him. Indeed he recently gave a conference talk at Rhodes on this subject.

I find Sean very friendly and appreciative, with a reserve that is often present with thoughtful people. He is a good colleague.

If you believe that I may be able to answer further questions that you may have then you are most welcome to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Assoc Prof Christopher Gilmour  
Head of Department**