

University Policy on Faculty Conduct; Section II, Part II; Section A:
Professional Responsibilities, Ethical Principles, and Unacceptable Faculty Conduct.

Type of unacceptable conduct: Evaluation of student work by criteria not directly reflective of course performance.

I have been dismissed from the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. According to the termination notices I received from the Department Chair and the Graduate Division, I was dismissed due to the insufficient GPA on my academic record at the time of my dismissal. However, at the time of my dismissal, my academic record showed two Incompletes for courses in which I had submitted works several months earlier (Educ 253E; Hist 201H). Thus, the Department's and the Graduate Division's evaluation of the work for these two courses and their evaluation of my total academic work (my GPA) were based on an academic record on which two Incompletes had not been replaced with the grades I received for my work in these courses. These grades, when finally put on my academic record following my dismissal, brought my GPA above the minimum requirement.

Following my dismissal, I called attention to this fact in a meeting with my advisor, Dr. Blurton-Jones, my division head, Dr. Val Rust, and the Department Chair, Dr. Harold Levine, the faculty member who had recommended my termination. (My advisor had been left out of the dismissal decision.) At this meeting, Dr. Levine reiterated that I had been dismissed for an insufficient GPA, as indicated in the dismissal notices, and that he would stand by the dismissal decision because I had not been "proactive" during my probationary period in taking the steps necessary to have my academic record corrected to show a sufficient GPA—notwithstanding the fact that I had submitted the two works for which I had not yet received grades. When I asked him why my advisor had not been involved in my dismissal, he said, "I don't know," and further

stated that “there may have been some problems with [my] dismissal,” and that the circumstances surrounding my termination were “murky.”

My advisor and I contacted the Ombudsman and the Graduate Division about this situation involving Incomplete forms that had not been processed, which had resulted in an inaccurate GPA on my academic record. I also telephoned Dean Komar to request a meeting to discuss the situation. In this phone conversation, I asked her whether the Graduate Division verified the accuracy of the information it used to terminate a student. She said, “We cannot be expected to do that.” In a subsequent letter, Dean Komar stated that I had been dismissed for “[my] grade point average, which at that time was below 3.00 due to Incomplete grades lapsed to “F” and other grades below 3.00,” and for “insufficient progress toward the degree (the department indicated ‘Began coursework in fall 1991 but has not taken qualifying exam.’).” I had not been previously told that my academic career had been in jeopardy due to insufficient progress. And while she noted one grade change that had been posted to my academic record subsequent to my termination, Dean Komar made no mention of the grades for the two courses in question, which by then had been posted retroactively to my academic record to a date several months prior to my dismissal. These two grades had raised my GPA above the minimum requirement. Dean Komar’s only apparent response to the issue of an inaccurate academic record due to incompletes not being processed was that I was “responsible for taking timely action—completing outstanding work and notifying in writing the department, your faculty and advisor the exact status of your work, irrespective of the filing of the forms to reflect this.”

I had completed the outstanding work necessary to bring my GPA above the minimum requirement several months before my dismissal for an insufficient GPA, although grades for this work did not appear on my academic record at the time of my dismissal. Therefore, the decision to dismiss me for an insufficient GPA was necessarily based on an evaluation of my academic work by criteria not directly reflective of my performance in all of my courses. The above statements made by the Department Chair

and the Graduate Division Dean demonstrate that they were evaluating my academic work not on my actual performance in all my courses, but on the ‘proactive’ and ‘timely’ steps necessary to follow and correct the administrative procedures involved in the processing of Incomplete Removal forms. Consequently, their evaluation of my academic work rested on these non-academic, administrative matters that were not directly reflective of my performance in my courses.

In raising their own concerns that criteria not directly reflective of my course performance had entered into the evaluation of my academic standing, my advisor and the head of my division wrote to the University Ombudsman that “neither of us had been asked for any background information on Mr. Wilde’s case.

Nor apparently was much effort taken to verify the apparent facts of Mr. Wilde’s academic record. Incompletes that had been cleared were listed as Fs and no enquiries about their real status or about the student’s general progress were made.

Moreover, in recommending a review of my dismissal, my advisor stated to me that he would argue that the circumstances of my dismissal “indicat[ed] that you have been made to pay with your academic career for department error (no copies of probation letters to me), professor and university disorganization (incompletes not being processed), carelessness by whoever (Harold [Levine] claimed it was the Grad Division office?) issues the dismissal notice (for their failure to verify the situation).” This statement demonstrates that my advisor had found that the evaluation of my academic standing and the resulting dismissal decision had not been based on my academic performance.

Part II, Section A: Teaching and Students, *Ethical Principles* holds, in part, that “Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to assure that their evaluations of students reflect each student’s true merit.”

The above facts, together with those statements made by my advisor, my division head, and Dean Komar, demonstrate that Dr. Levine and Dean Komar made no reasonable efforts to assure that their evaluation of my academic standing reflected my actual academic performance. As the only faculty member involved in recommending

my termination, by the above ethical principle, Dr. Levine needed to have made *some* reasonable efforts to assure that his evaluation of my academic standing reflected my actual work—his simple reliance on the GPA recorded on my academic record, as indicated in the dismissal notice to me, gave no such assurance. And Dean Komar’s statement that the Graduate Division cannot be expected to verify the GPA on a student’s academic record acknowledges her abandonment of the above principle as an actual practice. As the only two persons involved in the decision to dismiss me, Dr. Levine’s and Dean Komar’s failure to “make every reasonable effort” “to assure that their evaluations” reflected my actual academic performance is not justified by the Ethical Principles guiding conduct under Section A: Teaching and Students.

According to the probationary notices that I received from both Dr. Levine and Dean Komar, I was on academic probation because of an insufficient GPA. And according to the dismissal notices I received from both Dr. Levine and Dean Komar, I was dismissed because of an insufficient GPA.

Following my dismissal, my advisor, my department head, and I met with Dr. Levine to discuss the dismissal decision that had been made by him and Dean Komar. At no time during this meeting—and at no time before or after—did Dr. Levine offer me any other reasons as factors in the dismissal decision. Yet thereafter, Dean Komar brought forth other reasons for the dismissal decision, citing the additional reasons as given by Dr. Levine on the Recommendation for Termination form he had sent to the Graduate Division. For Dr. Levine to have not fully informed me of the reasons for my dismissal, and for Dean Komar to have informed me of these reasons for my dismissal *after* my dismissal demonstrates their failure to make “every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct,” as this ethical principle is established by the AAUP Statement in Section A: Teaching and Students.

Since the probationary period was indeed offered to me as a means to remedy an academic deficiency (an insufficient GPA), it was clearly impossible for me to remedy other academic deficiencies when I was not told of these. Dr. Levine and Dean Komar failed “to foster honest academic conduct” when they first dismissed me for one

academic deficiency and then, when academic work showed that deficiency no longer stood, upheld the dismissal by criteria not directly reflective of my course performance and by claiming other reasons that I had not previously known were at once jeopardizing my academic career and factors in their decision to dismiss me. This conduct was not justified by the Ethical Principles under Section A: Teaching and Students. Likewise, and after two such requests by my advisor, it was not justified by these same Ethical Principles for Dean Komar to deny a review of my dismissal based on the Graduate Division policy of no review for a dismissal for an insufficient GPA when she was told by my advisor and me that that same insufficient GPA was due not to academic work, but to Incomplete Removal forms not being processed.