

SCHOLASTIC OFFENSE

PAULINE BARMBY

Madeleine Featherstonehaugh
S/N 6661234
mfeath@student.malefst.edu
October 13, 2029

Dear M Featherstonehaugh,

This letter is in response to your appeal of the penalty you were assigned by Prof. Ehrlenmeyer Trask, Director of Undergraduate Programs in the Department of Evil Science, for a scholastic offense in EVS 101, "Introduction to Evil Science," under instructor Prof. Mina Boring.

Prof. Trask's letter informing you of the offense describes the circumstances. In the first group assignment for the course, you were assigned to work with three other students to develop and document the specifications for a mind-control device that could be used to transmogrify civilians into a zombie-like state. You took a leadership role in your group, convening meetings and coordinating the other members' efforts. In completing the peer evaluation section of the assignment, you attempted to honestly and transparently assess individual contributions including your own. Your group submitted the assignment in compliance with the directions and before the deadline.

One of your group members reported this flagrantly anti-evil behaviour to the course instructor, who confirmed it using the spyware installed on your university-supplied laptop. In addition to the offense of complying with the assignment instructions, you did not attempt to fraudulently take credit for the work of others or sabotage their work; additionally, the portion of the work attributed to you appears to be original, with no effort to plagiarize or enlist the help of online homework services. Your contribution to the assignment even goes so far as to consider the ethical implications of the device design.

Prof. Trask discussed this behaviour with you. Disappointingly, you did not disavow it, ascribe blame to the other group members, or attempt to manipulate the instructor by bribery or inappropriate accusations. Instead,

you confirmed the facts of the situation as stipulated by Prof. Trask, expressed remorse, and pledged that you would do worse on future assignments. Prof. Trask assigned a penalty of a grade of Z on the assignment – for you alone, and not for the other members of your group – and warned that another such offense would lead to expulsion or, potentially, mutagenic transformation.

Your appeal to my office did not dispute the account given above and was based on intellectual arguments alone. You claimed that it was unfair of Prof. Trask to assign a penalty to only one member of your group, that the true purpose of the assignment (assessing group and individual tendencies toward evil) was not apparent to you, and that mind control is ethically wrong. In your appeal, you did not attempt to blackmail either Prof. Trask or myself, threaten to expose the university to a lawsuit or the vigilante actions of the Justice Alliance, or distort Prof. Trask's account by manipulating the electronic record of your group's activities.

I am extremely disappointed by your complete lack of recognition for the principles of Evil Science and am therefore not only denying your appeal but increasing the penalty assigned by Prof. Trask. You will be expelled from the program and from the university, with notations entered on your academic and credit records such that you will be unable to enroll in other university programs, rent an apartment, or, indeed, adopt a stray dog. No appeal to this penalty is possible. Any attempt to reply to this email will result in your electronic device catching fire, opening an interdimensional rift, and/or emitting an ultrasonic signal audible only to bats, and is therefore not recommended.

Sincerely,
Cornelius Smith-Jones, MadSciD
Assistant Deputy Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs
College of Natural and Unnatural Sciences
Maleficent State University

END

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pauline Barmby is a Canadian astrophysicist who believes that you can't have too many favorite galaxies. She has been publishing in scientific journals for nearly 25 years; her fiction-writing career began in 2022 with work published or forthcoming in *Martian*, *Tree and Stone*, and Flame Tree Press' *Compelling Science Fiction* anthology. When not reading or writing she runs, knits, and ponders the physics of curling. Find her on Twitter @PBarmby.