

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #39, Spring 2010
May 11, 2010

Members Present:

Hilary Baker-Jennings (presiding), Kelsey Zottnick (clerk), Trey Burns, Jackie Ammons, Lindsay Kirton, Keenan May, Adnan Poonawala , Kate Snyder, Rejnal Tushe

Ombuds: Eric Harrison

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism on a final paper for a graduate level music course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Assignment prompt
- Student A's paper with professor's notes
- Web source
- BEACH graph
- Professor's statement
- Professor deposition
- Student A's original paper
- Web source with professor's highlighting
- Expert deposition

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A said the paper he wrote was a good substantial academic paper and that he did all pre-work beforehand in order to write the paper.

Student A explained the assignment and then explained his process for analyzing the piece of music. Student A said that he chose to analyze the development section of the work because it was important. Student A said that he left out several bars of his analysis because it was the exact same music as the earlier music. He could determine this from his own experience with the piece, and did not need to copy it from a source as the letter of accusation stated. Student A also said that he noticed the voice exchange in the section on his own from playing the piece many times, and did not need to copy it from an outside source.

Student A said that his written analysis of the piece showed that he had understood what he had done in analyzing the music. He said that he looked at the outside source after doing his own analysis to check if he had the right answers.

Student A said that he looked at a different web source to help figure out wording for one section of the paper. He said that he had already done the musical analysis but wasn't sure how to put it into words. He said that he knew he should have cited the source, and what he did was wrong.

Student A said that he started his own analysis where he did was because it didn't make sense to start it in another measure. It was a logical place to begin analysis, which is why the other source also started there.

Student A said that the professor had said something in class about using students outside books or sources to help figure out anything that they didn't understand. Student A said that he didn't know they weren't allowed to use outside sources on this paper, and the professor had not made that clear.

Student A said that he had done the analysis himself, and that the statement by the accuser that it was too advanced for him to have done was not true. Student A said that he worked hard on the analysis which is why it was good. Student A also said that he consulted his own notes, textbook, and other students for help when he didn't understand something.

Student A said while writing his paper he had friends check whether he had done certain parts right. He said that the professor had encouraged working in groups to help figure out what to do on assignments.

Student A said that he knows he should have cited the source he paraphrased from, but he only used it to help with wording, not analysis. He said that he had done all the detailed pre-work and the musical analysis himself.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that there was clear and convincing evidence that a violation occurred because Student A paraphrased another source and failed to cite it. Some Council members were unsure whether or not there was clear and convincing evidence that Student A graph had copied the musical analysis, but other Council members did not think there was clear and convincing evidence. Council members agreed that there was also clear and convincing evidence that Student A committed a violation by consulting with friends about the musical analysis.

DESCRIBE DISCUSSION

Straw Poll #1: Is there clear and convincing evidence that a violation occurred?

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. Student A admitted to using the web source and consulting with other students about the paper, so he had committed the violation.

Straw Poll #2: Is there clear and convincing evidence that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Straw Polls #1 and #2 made binding.

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Council members mitigated based on cooperation, because they believed Student A had fully and truthfully disclosed all information. Council members discussed whether or not the small portion of the assignment that was in violation was enough to mitigate for nature of the violation. It was pointed out that despite the small portion of the assignment that was actually plagiarized, the weight of the entire assignment was very significant.

Some council members discussed aggravating based on potential for Student A's collusion with other students because of her consulting of others to help her analysis, but it was pointed out that the council had no way of knowing how much and to what effect such outside help actually affected her assignment. Some Council members said that they would not be aggravating for collusion, but would instead not be mitigating based on the nature of the violation.

Straw Poll #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 2

F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 6

F in the course: 0

3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction: 0

Abstentions: 1

The council discussed how much the amount of the paper under consideration and importance of the student's own analysis should factor into mitigating on the nature of the violation.

Straw Poll #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 2

F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 7

F in the course: 0

3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
Abstentions:	0

Straw Poll #4 made binding.

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 7 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Kelsey Zottnick
Clerk