

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #40, Spring 2012
March 18, 2012

Members Present:

Trey Burns (presiding), David French (clerk)

Ombuds: Divya Bhat

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of using unauthorized materials on a take-home exam for an upper level math course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Exam prompt
- Student A's exam
- Professor deposition

Plea:

Student A pled "in violation."

Testimony:

Opening statement: She admits unauthorized use of a calculator for the exam but insists that it was an honest mistake coming from not looking at the instructions carefully enough. The calculator was only used in the final step of one problem to convert a fraction to decimal form. She disputes the assumption that this limited use of the calculator gave her a significant advantage over other students.

She says that if she had done all the calculations by hand, it would have cost her less than five minutes. She did not use the calculator for any of the other problems. By the time she finished the exam, she had at least five minutes left.

Student A made no concluding statement.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the student admitted to using a calculator on the exam when it was prohibited in the instructions.

Straw Poll #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation.

No council member saw any reason why anyone other than student A was in violation.

Straw Poll #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances.

All council members agreed to mitigate for cooperation and for the amount of the assignment in violation. Some members also mitigated for intent, as the student did not seem to be seeking an unfair advantage in her use of the calculator.

No council members saw any reason to aggravate.

One council member suggested a 1/3 letter grade reduction, since a letter of reprimand was too lenient, and a 1 letter grade reduction was too harsh for such a small violation. Other council members agreed. Another council member suggested a 2/3 letter grade reduction.

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:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
2/3 letter grade reduction:	1
1/3 letter grade reduction:	8
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Some council members brought up a precedent case with similar circumstances where the student received a 1/3 letter grade reduction.

Straw poll #3 made binding.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive a 2/3 letter grade reduction in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 26 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

David French

Clerk