

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 24, Spring 2013
March 21, 2013

Members Present:

Trey Burns (presiding), Izzy Lelogeais (clerk), Adriana Bracho, Daron Stone, Hurst Williamson, Shep Patterson, Brooke Evans, Ibrahim Akbar, Sam Kwiatkowski

Ombuds: Amy Ryu

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of cheating off of another student on a midterm exam for an upper level Social Sciences course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A's Exam
- Accuser's Exam
- Answer Key
- Expert Deposition
- Accuser Deposition
- Course Textbook

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A began by saying that she had no reason to violate the Honor Code on this exam, particularly because she had the option to take a final at the end of the course that would replace her lowest exam grade. She continued to say that she did not copy any answers from the accuser. Addressing an expert deposition, Student A suggested that the deposition seemed biased, and that most of the similarities noted by the expert could have occurred organically. In addition, she stated that many of the similarities between her exam and the accuser's exam could be attributed to the wording and organization of their textbook, which was her primary study aid for the course.

Student A then went through the events of the test. She said she did the test to the best of her ability. She stated she remembers flipping through her test and looking off, but did not remember particularly looking in the direction of the accuser's exam. In response to the accuser's suggestion that she had been writing on her desk during the test, Student A stated that this is a tool she has been using for a long time to keep her answers organized during a multiple choice test. Student A then turned her attention to the "free-response" portion of the test. She continued to say that the definitions and wording were very

straightforward, and that because of this she felt some degree of similarity between answers would be expected.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members agreed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred based on the high degree of similarity – in some cases, word-for-word similarity – between Student A’s exam and the accuser’s exam. Members also based their decision on the expert deposition, which clearly and emphatically stated that this degree of similarity could only be explained by an Honor Code violation.

Vote: 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. Council members saw no reason to believe that Student A had not committed the violation in question.

Vote: 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. Council members did not observe any relevant mitigating factors at play in this case.

In discussing an appropriate penalty for the case, some members felt that the blatant nature of the violation - direct copying from another student’s exam - warranted suspension because it was significantly damaging to the academic atmosphere of the University. Other members thought that the fact that the weight of the assignment was too small to warrant suspension.

Vote: 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: 2
 F in the course: 7
 3 letter grade reduction: 0
 2 letter grade reduction: 0
 1 letter grade reduction: 0
 Letter of Reprimand: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 20 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Isabelle Lelogeais
Clerk