

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #25, Spring 2013
Wednesday, March 20, 2013

Members Present:

Trey Burns (presiding), Abby Endler (clerk), Sam Kwiatkowski, Hurst Williamson, Isabelle Lelogeais, Seth Lauer, David French, Katie Stewart, Adriana Bracho, Stewart Hutton (Observing), Daron Stone (Observing)

Ombuds: Ira Shrivastava

Letter of Accusation:

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

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Follow-up to the Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Course Honor Code Policy
- Course Honor Code Affirmation (Signed by Student A)
- Paper Prompt
- Student A's Paper with Professor Comments
- Alleged Sources of Plagiarism (A, B, C)
- Professor Deposition
- Letter of Support
- Source Documents for Paper (those provided by Student A)

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

A translator was present in case Student A needed help expressing his thoughts in English.

Student A began his testimony by explaining that he cited the information marked "Source A" in his paper from a journal, not directly from the book. He found the information from the book quoted in a journal, and he cited this journal in his paper. The portion of the paper marked "Source B" contained verbatim quotes from other sources. He cited these original sources, rather than the source that cited them. For the information marked "Source C," Student A said that this information is essentially common knowledge in his field and that he knew this information from prior research that he had done. He stated that it may be similar to other sentences written by other people, but he wrote it on his own, thinking that it was just common knowledge.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because a large amount of quotations were not appropriately cited in the essay. In some places, it is also unclear what portions of the essay are cited and what portions are not. Large portions of work were also taken directly from other works and not cited correctly. Council members agreed that there seems to be a misunderstanding of how work should be cited; however, whether or not this misunderstanding led to improper citation or plagiarism, members agreed that Student A's actions still constituted a 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. The Council found no reason to believe that Student A had not committed the violation.

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 find any relevant mitigating factors. The weight of the assignment is high, and the amount of the assignment in question is significant. Moreover, the course Honor Code policy is extremely clear. Council members also did not believe that the accused student provided substantial cooperation which aided the Council in reaching its decision.

Council members then discussed aggravating factors. Council members did not find any relevant aggravating factors.

In considering an appropriate penalty, Council members discussed that this paper in question is a midterm paper, and large chunks of it were taken verbatim from other sources. However, some Council members also noted that there is an attempt to cite in this paper, which led them to consider a lower penalty. Council members emphasized that the student clearly knows that citation is important, but that it seems that he does not know the rules of proper citation. Council members agreed said that they did not believe that suspension was warranted in this case because the student made it clear that he was trying to cite throughout his paper.

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course:	3
3 letter grade reduction:	6
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Council members voting for an F in the course expressed that the large portions of work that were cited improperly cannot be considered to be cited at all, because they are improper. Other Council members discussed that the student deserves credit because he made a thorough attempt to cite throughout the paper. These same Council members emphasized that the student did not attempt to conceal his violation, he just did not cite properly.

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour

Respectfully submitted,

Abby Endler
Clerk