

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 60, Spring 2016
October 13, 2016

Members Present:

Allie Salter (presiding), Ike Arjmand (clerk), Peter Rizzi, Stefano Romano, Bradley Hamilton, Joanne Kim

Ombuds: Natalie Danckers

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarizing a term paper for a graduate level sociology course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student A's paper
- Syllabus
- Published paper
- Alternative version of published paper
- Email detailing editing task
- OwlSpace instructions

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation".

Testimony:

Student A was a first year PhD student at the time of the accusation. When turning in the paper, she believed she had followed the honor code. She did not mean to violate the honor code. The student did not believe that the evidence accurately represents the case. The accused student noted the article in question in the final proposal, although there was a minor citation mistake.

The accused student noted that the professor changed the assignment substantially from what was originally written on the syllabus. Students in the class were not provided details on the final assignment until two weeks before the due date. The professor had initially asked the accused student to complete a different project instead. The student informed the professor that she did not feel she could complete this project in time, five days before the assignment due date. To compromise, the professor allowed the student to complete a different assignment, which the student found unreasonable. The student did not tell the professor this because she felt the power dynamic would not allow her to do so after her initial request. Additionally, no other students in the class received feedback on their assignment.

The accused student stated that she did not reference the manuscript of the article in question. Instead, she referenced an older copy of the manuscript. The student copy edited the manuscript. There are several differences between the manuscript she edited and the manuscript submitted.

The accused student stated that she was accused under the “literature review” section of the honor code. The student did not mean to claim others’ ideas as her own. Instead, the broader context of the section had to do with revising and reviewing the literature. However, this was not an excuse to plagiarize given that the literature review needs to be written of one’s own ideas.

The accused student reiterated that she did not intend to put the information forward as her own. Rather, the citation was not included because of a citation mistake. She noted that she did not intend to violate the honor code, and she properly cited the paper in question in her final copy.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because material was copied very closely from another paper and was not properly cited.

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

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

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

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

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. All council members chose to mitigate for the amount of the assignment demonstrably not in violation, as the issue was an improper citation.

The council did not see any aggravating factors.

Some council members were in favor of a letter of reprimand, because the amount of the assignment in violation was extremely small and, while the citation was incorrect, the student made an attempt to cite the excerpt in question. Others believed that a one letter grade reduction was more appropriate, as they believed it was an intentional honor code violation.

Because entire sentences were copied within portions of two paragraphs, a majority of members chose not to mitigate to a letter of reprimand, and instead believed that a one letter grade reduction was the appropriate penalty.

Vote #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:	5
Letter of Reprimand	1
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A in violation of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive a one letter grade reduction in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 40 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Ike Arjmand
Clerk