

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 41, Spring 2020
June 5, 2020

Members Present:

Sam Holloway (presiding), Amy Lin (clerk), Matey Yanakiev, Ricky Robinson, William Wang, and Syed Shams

Ombuds: Jean Choi

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration on an exam for a lower level MATH course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Student A's exam
- Student B's exam
- Course syllabus
- Exam questions
- Random student sample of exams
- Student A's notes
- Student B's notes

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A stated that he did not collaborate with anybody on the exam. His notes show that any similarities to Student B come from being taught similar methods by the same professor. In addition, Student A pointed out that one of their matching incorrect solutions was the same as a submission within the random student sample. Student A claimed that he never studied with Student B and only knew Student B as someone who was in his class. Student A reiterated that any similarities between the exams were simply the result of two students who studied very hard for the exam from similar notes provided by the same professor.

Student B began by providing three reasons why they did not violate the Honor Code. First, their exams were not actually identical; while they were similar in nature, there were still some differences that show that they did not collaborate. Secondly, because they had learned the methods from the same professor and had very similar notes as a result, their logic and mathematical process on the exams was similar. Third, there was

no direct evidence implying guilt because everything in the Letter of Accusation was circumstantial. There was no evidence establishing a relationship between the students or a motive to work together. Student B also added that he had never met Student A prior to receiving the accusation, so they could not have collaborated. While the two students did submit the exam at a similar time, Student B did not believe that this similarity was sufficient evidence to prove collaboration since there were only 24 hours to take the exam, and most students probably took the exam in the afternoon. Student B said that he did not work with any other students during the exam period, and this claim is supported by the fact that the random student samples contained similar solutions to the accused students. Should he be found in violation, the penalty would be unjust because it would significantly decrease his grade for something he did not do. Student B reiterated that he took the exam on his own with zero outside sources, not even a calculator.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the exams submitted by Student A and Student B contained significantly more similarities than the random student sample. Many of their solutions were identical in logic, which was especially concerning on problems where they had 3 to 4 incorrect steps done in the exact same order to come to the same incorrect solution. Many solutions also had similarities not only in their syntax and content but also their placement on the page. Even though there were minor similarities to the random student sample, only the exams of Student A and Student B had overwhelming cosmetic similarities.

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 and Student B committed the violation. Since the two exams between the students were so similar, the Council found no reason to not believe they both were involved in committing the violation.

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

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Council members did not find any mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is an F in the course.

Vote #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:	0
F in the course and 1 semester of suspension:	0
F in the course:	6
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

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:	6
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Because there were no mitigating or aggravating factors, the Council decided to follow the appropriate penalty based on the CPS.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course.

The Honor Council thus finds Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive an F in the course.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 h 20 min

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lin
Clerk