

Abstract of the Honor Council

Case 47-22, Spring 2020

July 8, 2020

Members Present:

Ricky Robinson (presiding), Matey Yanakiev (clerk), Adam Zawierucha, Rapha Onyeka, William Wang, and Zac Zalles

Ombuds: Dylan Glenn

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of accessing class materials on Canvas during a closed-book midterm exam in a lower-level ECON course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Additional professor and OIT clarifications (4 PDFs)
- List of students with possible Honor Council infractions
- Student's online activity during exams, filtered
- Midterm exam file
- Canvas files list (matching file ID to filename)
- Class syllabus
- List of inappropriate URLs visited during exam (matching file ID to filename)
- Midterm #2 logistics
- Student full Canvas access logs, unfiltered (2 files)
- Student-submitted evidence (screenshots of timing of hospital visit)
- Student-submitted screenshot with timestamp of when exam answers were last modified

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony:

The student started the exam at 8:04 am local time, as reflected in the Canvas records, and submitted the exam at or a little before 11:10 am, approximately 39 minutes earlier than what Canvas records indicated. The student then took a taxi at 11:11 am (confirmed by receipt) to go to the hospital for a COVID test, which took place at 11:26 am (confirmed by hospital note). After approximately 45 minutes in the hospital, the student's mother took him home.

In the period between leaving for the hospital and coming home, the student used his iPhone to access Canvas files to check how well he had answered the exam questions, believing his exam had been successfully submitted. He had no idea the exam had not properly uploaded before leaving home; in fact, he had only found out after seeing the Honor Council's Canvas records.

The student believed the delay in submission likely happened because instead of connecting to his poor, unreliable WiFi, he had connected his iPad (on which he completed the exam) to his iPhone's hotspot. In having to leave rapidly to get a COVID test, the student had taken his phone along with him and may not have given the exam file enough time to submit on the iPad. Since he was also using a VPN, the delay could have been further exacerbated. The student was confident he had only pressed "submit" once and not initiated another submission upon returning home.

During the questioning period, the student submitted into evidence a screenshot of his exam answers from the Notability app. The timestamp indicated the last modification had taken place at 10:31 am local time. The student had spent the last 40 minutes thinking through his doubts on certain questions but had made no further changes before submitting at or before 11:10 am.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did not occur.

Overall, the student testimony and additional evidence (timestamped hospital records, a timestamp taxi receipt, and the timestamped Notability file with his exam answers) reasonably explained the Canvas records; for one, the full Canvas records did indeed indicate a submission process may have begun a few minutes before 11:10 am local. Additionally, the student testimony about when and how he had used his iPad and iPhone was consistent with the Canvas records. The Council likewise found reasonable the student's hypothesis that hotspot and VPN difficulties may have caused the delay in final submission. More generally, the student reconstructed, with the help of material evidence, the hospital visit which had forced him to leave home prematurely and possibly severed his iPad's connection to the internet before the final exam answers could have been submitted.

Ultimately, the student's testimony and additional evidence introduced sufficient uncertainty in the Council's mind about whether a violation had occurred, failing to meet the preponderance standard.

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

Yes: 0

No: 6

Abstentions: 0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “Not In Violation” of the Honor Code.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 5 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Matey Yanakiev

Clerk