

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 28, Fall 2011**  
**01-19-2012**

**Members Present:**

Kaleb Underwood (presiding), Isabelle Lelogeais (clerk), Hurst Williamson, Adriana Bracho, Likeleli Seitlheko, Jeff Worne, John Cavallo, Ed Tsai, Melissa Fwu

**Ombuds:** Alec Lignitz

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of consulting unauthorized resources for an upper level Engineering course.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Assignment Prompt
- Assignment Solutions
- Student A's Assignment
- Alleged Sources of Unauthorized Aid
- Expert Deposition
- Professor Deposition
- Problem Samples
- Student A's Notebook

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

In her opening statement Student A said that she did not copy any other a student's assignment. She remarked that the coursework is very difficult, and that she works independently and without a partner. She relies heavily on her notes and exercises from the textbook. That is how she completes work in this course. For the particular problem in question, Student A realized that she had completed a similar problem in a previous course and used her notes to solve this one. She emphasized that she is a good student, and that most students in the course consult external resources without citation. She says she did not copy and paste, and referenced that she had completed other problems in the assignment in the same manner as the problem in question. She did consult the source in question, but not while writing his solution. She said that she did not cut and paste. Student A showed the council external sources used by other student's in the class. She said that she thought the consultation of external sources was allowed, so she is confused.

She mentioned that she consulted many other sources in the course of completing the problem in question, and she did not include any citations in her notes. She said that she just copied everything she saw on the website into her notebook in order to minimize any grammatical errors as English is not her first language. She found the source in question by means of internet search. When she was completing her final assignment, she copied what she had written in her notes referencing the internet source. In response to a question about similarities between the source and another problem in her homework, she said that she did that problem too in the same way, but only for a portion of the problem. Because she had not cited sources when she took her notes from the internet source, she could not remember what the source was or where it came from. She emphasized once again that other students in the class have told her that it is permissible to access entire solutions. She said that she did not know she needed to cite her sources. She says that she does not believe this was a violation because the ideas were her own. Subsequently, she brought forth the example of another student in the course who used an unauthorized source in a similar manner. She said that because this was a classic problem from a frequently used book, she thought she could use the solution without committing a breach of academic integrity. She continued to say that she is a new international student and that she was not in Houston for a large part of the semester and missed class as a result. She emphasizes that she did not search specifically for the full solution to the problem.

She said that she has sufficient proof that many other students in the class committed the same violation, and that it is not fair for she alone to be accused. She said that most students in the course consult and use online resources without citation. She had not read or followed the link to the course Honor Code Policy.

**Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because by an examination of her own testimony and the evidence submitted, Student A accessed a resource that was unauthorized by the Honor Code Policy of the course, did not cite her source, and copied the solution.

Straw Poll #1: 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.

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

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Straw Polls #1 and #2 made binding.

**Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Members of the council agreed that the small weight of the assignment warranted mitigation. Some members agreed that sufficient cooperation was demonstrated throughout the course of the investigation and hearing to make mitigation appropriate. Remaining members did not feel that the evidence and testimony Student A brought forth were not extensive or revelatory enough to deserve mitigation. Council members discussed whether or not to mitigate for Student A's intent. Some members believed that the course Honor Code Policy was unclear, but ultimately most members decided that the policy and expectations of the professor were made sufficiently clear in the course syllabus.

Members discussed appropriate penalties. Most council members thought that a one letter grade reduction would be appropriate. One member thought that an F in the course was more appropriate as the copying was so blatant and verbatim. In addition to the standard penalties brought forth, one member suggested that this student did not understand what plagiarism is, and that she should be given a course of instruction and training on academic integrity and plagiarism. Members proceeded to discuss this suggestion. It was emphasized that this form of instruction has never been included in a penalty before. Most members agreed that a course of instruction on academic integrity would be appropriate and helpful. The council discussed that it is a responsibility to educate students on the Honor Code Policy of the university.

Straw Poll #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

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

Straw Poll #4: Should Student A partake in an academic integrity education course?

Yes:	9
No:	0
Abstentions:	0

Straw Poll #'s 3 and 4 made binding.

The Honor Council thus finds Student A "In Violation" of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive a 1 letter grade reduction in the course. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: --:--

Respectfully submitted,  
Isabelle Lelogeais  
Clerk