

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 22, Fall 2012
January 23, 2012

Members Present:

Kaleb Underwood (presiding), David French (clerk), Adam Hartman, Isabelle Lelogeais, Melissa Fwu, Jen Shafer, David Kim, Mick Pryor, Ana Watson (observing)

Ombuds: Pedro Santacruz

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarizing a paper for a graduate level engineering course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Assignment prompt
- Student A's paper
- Alleged source of plagiarism
- Investigator report
- Additional alleged source of plagiarism
- Student A prospectus

Plea:

Student A pled "in violation."

Testimony:

Student A said:

- Didn't know that text taken from online sources had to be placed in quotation marks.
- The online sources were, however, cited in the References section.
- Some paragraphs that seemed to lack citations were in reference to figures that were cited.
- Did not read course honor code policy.
- Believed that simply including the source in the references section was sufficient to allow copying and pasting text without further citation.
- Admits that she did not adhere to the prompt of the paper.
- Does not remember the professor saying anything about the honor code policy.
- Believed that the assignment was about gathering information on a subject rather than actually analyzing or interpreting the information.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because most paragraphs of the paper were lifted directly from online sources without proper citation. In almost all of these instances, the copied text was pasted without any further modification. The assignment prospectus also contained

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

Yes: 9 (1 observing)

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 (1 observing)

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Straw Polls #1 and #2 made binding.

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Some council members mitigated for cooperation, but most members did not mitigate, because they did not think that student A’s testimony shed new light on the violation.

There were no aggravating factors.

Some council members considered raising the penalty due to the student’s graduate student status. All members agreed that suspension would be an appropriate component of the penalty.

Some members also considered making the violation heinous because of student A’s possible participation in a seminar focusing on academic integrity and plagiarism. These members brought up the negative repercussions of someone receiving a Rice P.H.D. with such a significant violation with such a large violation on her record. Most members came to the conclusion, however, that the violation did not fit the definition of “heinous.”

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

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 5 (1 observing)

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 3

F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 1

F in the course: 0

3 letter grade reduction: 0

2 letter grade reduction: 0

1 letter grade reduction: 0

Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

People at F and 3 thought that the most severe punishment was appropriate considering the large majority of the paper that was copied and the student's graduate student status. People at F and 2 thought that there was no reason to aggravate further. The member at F and 1 mitigated for cooperation.

Straw Poll #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	8 (1 observing)
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	1
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:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

The members who moved to a higher penalty did so when considering student A's graduate student status and the large percentage of the paper that was either improperly cited or not cited at all.

Straw Poll #4 made binding.

The Honor Council thus finds Student A "In Violation" of the Honor Code and recommends that she receive an F in the course and three semesters of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
David French
Clerk