

**Abstract of the Honor Council  
Case 3 Fall 2012  
October 30, 2012**

**Members Present:**

Trey Burns (presiding), Abby Endler (clerk), Jessica Mintz, Hurst Williamson, Aaroh Parikh, David French, Andrew Austin, Jen Shafer, Adriana Bracho, Ibrahim Akbar (observing), Brooke Evans (observing)

**Ombuds:** Divya Bhat

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter from Student A accusing himself of exceeding the time limit on a take-home exam in a lower level Engineering course during the Spring 2011 semester.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's Written Statement
- Course Syllabus
- Student A's Exam
- Student A's Scratch Paper
- Professor Deposition

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began by describing the incident that prompted him to bring this self-accusation to the Honor Council. The exam in question was a take-home exam with a four-hour time limit; the exam was open-note and open-book. Student A said that while working on the exam, he realized he did not know the material well enough and had a panic attack. He stated that he stopped working at the three-hour mark. Student A said that he then began to study and ask for help from his friends and his roommate, all of whom were unaware he had already begun taking the exam. Student A said that he tried to study all the material the professor had said might be on the exam, not just the material he knew to be on the exam. He stated that he studied on and off for a couple days, and then returned to the exam. Student A said that when he came back to work on the exam, he only worked on it for one hour, so that the total time spent working on the exam was four hours - the set time limit for the exam.

Student A explained that he chose to come forward with this self-accusation at this time because it had been on his mind for over a year, and he had always wondered if he had done anything wrong in the way he handled this situation.

Student A said that the exam has a space asking for the start and end time in which the exam was completed. When filling this out, he did not indicate that he had worked on the exam in two sittings. He simply filled it out as though he had completed it in four consecutive hours.

Student A said that no one else knew about this violation, and that no one else spoke to him about his actions.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the student's testimony and a deposition from the professor that stated that students were required to take the exam in one sitting. Although the student put away his exam after he began to feel sick, he had nevertheless already seen the exam questions. Therefore, the extra time taken by the student in between his two sittings with the exam gave him significantly more time to work on the exam than his peers had. Additionally, Council members discussed the fact that Student A consulted other individuals about material he did not understand. The syllabus clearly lists what resources are acceptable for use on a take-home exam, and while he was not working on the exam at the time that he spoke to other people about it, he had already started the exam, making it a violation of the Honor Code. Members agreed that these actions also constituted a violation of the Honor Code.

Vote: 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.

Vote: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

### **Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing whether or not this case qualifies as a self-accusation made in good faith. Council members agreed that this is an example of a self-accusation made in good faith made prior to any confrontation, as no one else knew about this potential violation other than the student. The student was never confronted by anyone about this potential violation.

Vote: Was this an unprompted self-accusation made in good faith prior to any confrontation?

Yes: 9  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

As a result of this vote, the Council was barred from considering suspension as a penalty.

The Council then discussed mitigating factors in this case. Council members agreed that the Student A's level of cooperation - including his self-accusation - warranted significant mitigation. Some members also stated that mitigation was appropriate based on the weight of the assignment - 10% of the overall course grade. Others, however, believed that this was too significant a portion of the course grade to mitigate. Additionally, these members noted that the exam policy for the course stated that the exams for the course would be weighted according to how well a student did on them - a student's highest exam grade would be worth 20%, their second highest would be worth 15%, and their lowest (which applied to the exam in question) would be worth 10% of their course grade. Some members stated that because Student A had no way of knowing how their exam would be weighted at the time he committed the violation, mitigation should not be given because it could have also been worth 15% or 20%.

The Council then discussed aggravating factors. Council members questioned whether or not the false end time that the student wrote on his exam should be considered an attempt to conceal the violation. Some members were concerned that the fact that the student marked his end time at exactly four hours after his original start time, even though in truth he had finished it days later, indicated that he was attempting to conceal a potential violation. However, the Council agreed that this action did not constitute an attempt to conceal the violation, and that no aggravation was warranted.

Council members discussed appropriate penalties. After applying the relevant mitigating factors, Council members agreed that a two letter grade reduction in the course was appropriate in this case.

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	9
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

**Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A "In Violation" of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a 2 letter grade reduction in the course. A prior violation flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Abby Endler  
Clerk