

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 33, Spring 2013
May 9, 2013

Members Present:

Adriana Bracho (presiding), David French (clerk), Seth Lauer, Aaroh Parikh, Mitch Massey, Brooke Evans, Pedro Santacruz, Shantan Cheermerla, Jen Shafer

Ombuds: Aubrey Sirtautas

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of cheating on a regrade for an upper level Economics course.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student A Original Answers
- Student A Resubmitted Answers
- Student A Regrade Request
- Investigator Deposition
- Investigator Problem Comparisons
- Exam Prompt
- Exam Answer Key
- Course Syllabus
- Email between Student and Professor
- Professor Deposition
- Grader Depositions

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Opening statement: Student A suggested that the accusing professor exhibited bias against her. He also pointed out that his written regrade request did not match some of the exam answers sent in for the regrade. The student denied having made any alterations to the exam as submitted for the regrade.

Student A said that the professor did not provide a secure way for submitting a regrade, thereby making it possible for someone else to alter the answers. The TAs for the class may have been offended by the regrade request and could have changed student A's answers out of spite. All of the TAs had access to the submitted exam regrade before the professor got to it. The accused student said that he did not have any personal interaction with the TAs or graders prior to the regrade, but his earlier interactions with the course

professor were negative. The professor had previously expressed distrust toward student A and may have changed the student's regrade answers to expose him as a fraud.

For the regraded problems in question, student A methodically went through each one during the testimony phase to show that many of the alterations were incorrect. He therefore asserted that he did not make the alterations and that the alterations would not have helped him even if he had. The accused student affirmed that he was in fact the author of the regrade request as submitted.

Student A took nearly a month to submit the regrade because he was more focused on studying for the second exam.

Closing statement: The regrade policy was not clearly defined in the course. Additionally, the regrade submission process was not secure, and the course professors and graders had motive to discredit student A.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the answers in the regrade were clearly altered.

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.

Some council members could not come up with a reasonable argument why anyone other than student A would have committed the violation. Other members questioned whether the student's regrade request perfectly matched the alterations on the exam. One member pointed out that parts of the regrade request did in fact allude to some of the alterations, suggesting that student A was the one who committed the violation.

Some of the abstaining members still had difficulty reconciling the discrepancies between the regrade request and the exam alterations. Other members pointed out that none of the hard evidence at hand corroborated student A's argument that a third party was responsible for the alterations.

Straw Poll #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Straw polls #1 and #3 were made binding.

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances.

Some members mitigated for amount of the assignment in violation.

No one saw any reason to aggravate.

Straw Poll #5: 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

Straw poll #5 was made binding.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that he receive a 2 letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to his record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

David French

Clerk