

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case #18, Fall 2015
12.8.2015

Members Present:

Alex Metcalf (presiding), Isaac Schultz (clerk), Isaac Batt, Destiney Randolph, Sara Meadow, Jacob Schneckloth, Elliot Baerman, Kristin Sweeney, Allie Salter

Ombuds: Katie Jensen

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarism for a graduate level ELEC course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Course syllabus
- Student A's written statement
- Student A's midterm exam
- Instructions for midterm exam
- Professor clarification (response to Honor Council inquiry)
- IEEE Wireless Communications and Networking conference paper

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

The student explained that she addressed 4 main topics the professor discussed in class in her exam. She noted that it is her second time taking the course. The student went on to note she searched the 4th topic the professor introduced online, to find a solution, and subsequently wrote down a solution path she found online to use as an answer. Her notes were prepared prior to taking the exam. The student explained that she did, in fact, copy down the response word for word into her notes—once again, prior to the exam. In further deliberations, the student noted she found the IEEE paper through Google, and thereon found the solution she wished to use. The student had no recollection of the professor stating that the specific midterm questions would be on the exam.

In her closing statement, the student contended the professor only stressed not using external sources *during* the exam. Further, the professor actually allowed for external sources to be used in the preparation of notes.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because a portion of Student A's exam (more specifically, question 3)

had extreme similarities with a section of the IEEE conference paper, without citation or indication.

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.

Specifically, the notion of plagiarism was addressed. As per the professor's instructions, no outside sources could be used during the exam, although they could be used to formulate notes prior to the administering of the test. Thus, Student A's note-taking methodology was in accordance with the professor's instructions. However, in the exam, she neglected to cite the IEEE paper in her response to the third question, which was nearly verbatim the solution provided in the 2003 work. Thus, it was evident that a violation had occurred; Student A provided a response that was another's idea, and in her omission of a citation, committed an act of plagiarism.

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 mitigating circumstances.

No council members argued for mitigation. There was a suggestion of arguing for deceit, as the student professed she copied the online solution word for word, but not all of the exam's response could be found in her notes.

The council then entered a discussion of possible penalties. The general consensus was between a three-letter grade reduction to an F in the course with a one semester suspension. The council went so far as to suggest that two violations have occurred: both the lack of citation, as well as the utilization of the outside source on the take-home test. Further, because of the student's testimony noted that the entire question was copied from the online source into his notes, and from there onto the test. Thus, there is a clear suggestion of deceit of the council, as his notes do not reflect the "verbatim" response in his exam. Additionally, the council noted that the plagiarized section was a "significant portion of a significant part of the course grade".

Vote: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension: 0

F in the course and 1 semester of suspension: 0

F in the course: 8

3 letter grade reduction:	1
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
2/3 letter grade reduction	0
1/3 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 she receive an F in the course.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 52 minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Isaac Schultz
Clerk