

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 45-5, Spring 2015
November 2, 2015

Members Present:

Alex Metcalf (presiding), Kristin Sweeney (clerk), Billy Rothwell, Destiney Randolph, Natalie Swanson, Owais Syed, Sarah Meadow, Eliot Baerman, Isaac Batt

Ombuds: Sophie Schnietz

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Students E and K of sending/receiving unauthorized aid on two assignments for a lower level COMP course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Course Syllabus
- Student E's written statement
- Student K's written statement
- Log of Student E and Student K sharing clone links

Plea:

Student E pled "In Violation."

Testimony:

Student E did not remember sharing the clone links, but the server logs indicated that such a thing did occur. Thus, a violation occurred. This evidence led Student E to agree that a violation occurred. Student E stated that he would not have done it if he had been aware it was against the Honor Code.

Student E did read the rules in the syllabus, but, because it was easy to clone and send a link, he did not remember this incident or identify it as being against the course Honor Code.

Student E lamented that this could have been better handled by the instructors if they had addressed sharing clone links to the class. It would have been more effective to have addressed the issue in class. He never had any intention of breaching the honor code.

Plea:

Student K pled "In Violation."

Testimony:

Student K did not remember under what circumstances this occurred. Student K recalled that he shared clone links with Student E for test cases. In the COMP course, they were required to write their own programs and test cases. At the end of semester, they had to produce extensive test cases. The test cases could fail in a lot of different ways. Student K thought that Student E messaged him to ask to test a case because Student K wrote detailed cases. Student K thought Student E sent code to be tested using Student K's test cases.

Student K remembered the syllabus being read the first day in class, but he did not specifically remember this rule against sharing and testing test cases.

Student K acknowledged that code was shared via a link, and anyone with that link could access that specific code. Sending a clone link would be logged in the system that the link was sent and then that the link was opened. Student K thought that he probably received the code, ran the test cases through it, and then sent a message back to say that the code had worked.

Student K looked in his phone for this message exchange but could not find exchange.

Student K knew he sounded like he did not remember much, but this accusation was from over a year ago. Student K did not even remember which project this was or what was going on at that time.

Student K admitted that he was in violation because he clearly sent the clone link. Student K did not intend to dishonor Rice, he wished that the professors had addressed this issue at the time of the violation.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred.

Vote #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 E committed the violation. Given Student E's plea of "In Violation" and the evidence provided in the case, the Council believed that Student E is in violation of the Honor Code.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student E is "In Violation?"

Yes: 9

No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student K committed the violation. Given the plea of Student K and the evidence provided in the case, the Council determined that Student K did commit a violation.

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student K is “In Violation?”
 Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether both students should receive the same penalty. Because the syllabus and the Rice Honor Code forbids giving or receiving unauthorized aid, the Council determined that both students should receive the same penalty.

Vote #4: Should Students E and K receive the same penalty?
 Yes: 9
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating and aggravating circumstances.

Members believed that there were no aggravating or mitigating circumstances because the same conclusions could have been reached without student testimony and only the evidence, so the students were not especially cooperative. The weight of the assignments prevented any mitigation in regards to overall weight of the assignment.

Council members discussed that the students did not understand that this was a violation and were unaware of their actions. However, it was clear in the course syllabus that sending of links was against the Honor Code. There was a breach of the Honor Code, but there was no evidence of plagiarism or anything beyond the sharing of the clone links. The violation did not seem malicious, ill-willed, or intended as a method of cheating at Rice. The syllabus did prohibit sharing code. They did read and share code, but it was speculation to go beyond this statement.

Test cases were useful, and using somebody else’s was a violation because it was using other people’s code. Each student wrote their own test cases to fulfill a certain purpose. This information caused Council members to consider penalties on the scale of letter grade reductions were appropriate because the purpose of sharing the code was to gain an unfair advantage.

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Students E and K?
 F in the course: 0

3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	7
2/3 letter grade reduction	2
1/3 letter grade reduction	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student E and K “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive a 1 letter grade reduction in the class. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 40 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Kristin Sweeney
Clerk