

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 21, Fall 2015
April 27, 2016

Members Present:

Alex Metcalf (presiding), Katie Jensen (clerk), Ike Arjmand, Owais Syed, Jake Reinhart, Natalie Swanson, Nikki Thadani, Allen Hu, Reece Rosenthal

Ombuds: Carey Wang

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of giving and receiving unauthorized aid on an exam for an upper level MUSI course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student B's written statement
- Student A's exam
- Student B's exam
- Course syllabus
- Practice midterm
- Student notes

Plea (Student A):

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony (Student A):

Student A opened his testimony with a timeline regarding the accused violation. He stated that the test was given and students had one week to complete the exam. He completed the exam towards the beginning of the week because he had many other obligations closer to the exam due date, and he did not want to worry about taking the exam during that time. Student A completed the exam in one sitting. He did not grant any other students access to his exam after he completed it. Student A left the exam in his book bag from the time he completed the exam to when he turned the exam in.

Students were allowed to use the textbook and notes on the exam. Student A stated that the notes were provided by the teacher. Student A clarified that the professor notes included formatting on how to structure answers, explaining the verbatim similarities between the short answer sections of Student A and Student B.

Student A stated that he completed the exam by himself. He did not work on the exam with Student B. However, Student A did give class notes and other notes provided by the

professor to Student B because Student B had missed classes during the semester. The notes Student A gave to Student B were cumulative, and included material relevant to the final exam as well as material relevant to subjects taught earlier in the semester.

Student A stated that he did not meet with Student B to discuss the exam during the week that the exam was released to students. However, he later stated that they did meet to discuss general concepts of the test in that week. They discussed how to analyze the music, and where to look in the course notes to answer particular questions. This discussion occurred before Student A took the exam.

Student A and Student B were not in contact in the time between when Student A took the exam and the time when he turned his test in.

Student A closed by reiterating that he gave notes to Student B, but did not violate the Honor Code policy of the course.

Plea (Student B):

Student B pled “Not In Violation.”

Testimony (Student B):

Student B informed the Council that he has been very busy in recent months with other time commitments, and has had to miss many classes. Because he had to miss so many classes, he asked for and received notes from Student A from all of the classes he missed. Student B missed the last week of classes, and thus asked for the final exam review from Student A.

Student B clarified that the exam was open book and open notes. Because he missed classes, he used notes from Student A on the exam. Additionally, Student B informed the Council that he had already covered the material in previous classes.

Student B stated that he and Student B completed their exams separately. They had a week to take the test, and they discussed concepts that would be on the test but did not discuss actual test questions.

However, Student B then stated that he and Student A met with each other before taking the exam to discuss material on the exam. Student B stated that he and Student A had the exams out on the table in front of them, and discussed how to approach questions. Confused about some of the material on the exam, Student B asked Student A how to approach questions on the exam. Student B believed this level of collaboration was allowed because they did not answer any questions on the exam when they were talking about it. They only discussed how to answer the questions, they did not complete the questions together. After discussing the questions of the exam, they separately completed the exam. Student B did not think that he was in violation of the course Honor Code policy.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the similarities between the tests and student testimony.

Every answer on the test was identical, for multiple choice questions and short answer questions. Additionally, testimony from Student B indicated that a violation occurred as students went beyond the allowed level of collaboration by discussing the test questions together before taking the exam. The front page of the exam explicitly stated that students must work individually on the take-home exam.

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 A and Student B committed the violation. The Council found no reason to vote otherwise.

Vote #2: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is “In Violation?”

Yes: 9

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. The Council did not find any mitigating or aggravating factors for this case.

The Council decided that Student A and Student B should receive the same penalty. It was a violation to give and receive unauthorized aid on the exam.

In determining an appropriate penalty, the Council mainly considered the weight of the assignment in the overall course grade (worth 25% of the overall course grade). Considering the large weight percentage of the assignment, invalidation of the assignment and an added punitive aspect would result in a minimal F in the course. Council members determined that an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension would be most appropriate given the complete disregard Student A and Student B exhibited towards the trust implicit in the take home exam provided to students by the Rice Honor Code.

Vote #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A and Student B?

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:	7
F in the course:	2
3 letter grade reduction:	0
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 and Student B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive an F in the course and 1 semester of suspension. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Jensen
Clerk