

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 24, Fall 2015
April 17, 2016

Members Present:

Alex Metcalf (presiding), Katie Jensen (clerk), Reece Rosenthal, Sofia Yi, Joanne Kim, Dessy Akinfenwa, Angel Garces, Claire Bonnyman, Haihao Liu

Ombuds: Carey Wang

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of accessing unauthorized aid on a problem set for an upper level psychology course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Student A's homework assignment
- Homework problem statement
- Homework solutions
- Random sample of homework submitted by three other students
- Course syllabus
- Student class notes
- Teacher lecture notes
- Textbook pages

Plea:

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

Testimony:

Student A stated that she never accessed the solutions manual. She stated that she worked on the homework assignment with another student, and that they completed the assignment together before submitting it via OwlSpace. She stated that this homework partner did not observe her receiving unauthorized aid while completing the homework assignment.

Student A stated that the answers to the homework assignment were influenced by the textbook and class lectures. Student A said that the way she phrased her solutions were dictated by the guidelines specified by the textbook and exemplified in the textbook solutions (to odd numbered problems).

Student A stated that she also learned to answer questions in specific ways in the class. She said that she had been taught how to answer questions in specific ways, and this explained the similarities between her homework answers and the solutions manual.

Student A provided the homework of other students in the course in an attempt to show that there was a very particular way to report answers. She then stated that she had performed well on other homeworks in the course, and had no reason to cheat.

To explain the lack of work in the submitted assignment, Student A stated that she did her work on scratch paper, but submitted the answers online via Owlspace. She stated she did not bring the scratch work.

Student A concluded that the nature of the homework was very factual, which caused her homework to be very similar to the solution manual even though she never accessed the solution manual.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the homework assignment of Student A was too similar to the solution manual to be mere coincidence. The homework submitted by Student A is essentially the solutions manual with a few minor syntax changes. The unaccountable similarities between the solutions manual and the submitted homework indicated that a violation did occur. The qualitative and quantitative answers were identical from both sources in content and syntax, beyond explanation of textbook guidelines or material.

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 committed the violation. Student A was the person who submitted the homework assignment, and the only one who could have committed this violation.

Vote #2: 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.

Council members decided to not mitigate for the amount of the assignment, because the entirety of the assignment was plagiarized from the solutions manual.

Council members decided that a letter grade reduction would be the most appropriate penalty in order to invalidate the assignment and add a punitive aspect. Though the assignment was only worth a small percentage of the overall course grade, the Council decided that a one letter grade reduction was the most appropriate penalty given the blatant plagiarism from the solutions manual.

Vote #3: 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:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	2
1 letter grade reduction:	7
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 a 1 letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to her record.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 10 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Jensen
Clerk