

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 42, Spring 2016**  
**April 17, 2016**

**Members Present:**

Katie Jensen (presiding), Nikki Thadani (clerk), Natalie Swanson, Alex Metcalf, Ellen Diemert, Haihao Liu

**Ombuds:** Matt Nobles

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of disallowed collaboration on a homework assignment for a lower level CHBE 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
- Homework assignment 2 problem statement
- Student A's homework assignment 2
- Student B's homework assignment 2
- Random student homework assignment
- Lecture slides from two topics in class
- Course syllabus
- Professor clarification on number of homework assignments

**Plea (Student A):**

Student A pled "Not in violation"

**Testimony (Student A):**

Student A said students were not allowed to share copies of assignments but were allowed to discuss concepts, and that is where similarities arose. Student A said that the students discussed explanations of concepts step-by-step but did not discuss precise syntax. Student A said that the students brainstormed ideas together and then went through the slides and book to determine main concepts. Student A said Student B explained concepts to her, and she would take notes then read the concept back to confirm her understanding. Student A said the assignments were very similar because students A and B worked together.

**Plea (Student B):**

Student B pled "Not in violation."

**Testimony (Student B):**

Student B said that the honor code statement of the class allowed discussion. Student B said that the TAs believed the students involved sent each other documents, but their similarities were purely discussion based. Student B said working together could lead to similar answers with similar writing. Student B said she reviewed evidence with Student A and saw sections that were marked as identical but some of them were not identical, including a portion highlighted in section 2.1 of the discussion. Student B said she, student A and several others would work on the assignment for about 12-13 hours independently and then meet together to discuss. Student B said they would discuss the overall topics without sharing answers or looking at each other's screens. Student B said they would reference the textbook as they explained their approaches. Student B said the answer sections may have differed because different computers will produce different results, but students collaborated on the discussion while referencing the book and powerpoint to understand their answers. Student B said she used the word "we" because that's what TAs said when they were discussing problems in recitation and all the students should have had the same answer. Student B said the professor explicitly permitted use of the textbook and slides but did not clarify whether students needed to cite the textbook or not. Student B said students A and B did not directly copy their answers word-for-word from the collaboration discussion, but would discuss together and get the solutions at the same time. Student B said the students completed the results and some of the discussion independently but wrote the remainder of the discussion together referencing textbook sections.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the similarities in the discussion section of the problems were too great to fall under the honor code policy of the course that allows discussion of the mathematical concepts.

Vote #1: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A and Student B committed the violation. The council felt that both students were culpable for this violation since there was no evidence to suggest otherwise.

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

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

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

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The council discussed whether the students should receive the same penalty for the violation, and found no reason to suggest otherwise.

**Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. One member mentioned the amount of the assignment in violation, while other council members did not see a reason to mitigate.

No council members identified any aggravating circumstances.

The council discussed an appropriate penalty for the violation. The council felt that given the assignment's 5% value towards the course grade, the amount of the discussion sections in violation, and the significance of the discussion section towards the assignment the appropriate penalty was a one letter grade reduction.

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:	0
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	6
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 a one letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their records.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 45 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
Nikki Thadani  
Clerk