

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 68, Spring 2016
September 6, 2016

Members Present:

Katie Jensen (presiding), Reece Rosenthal (clerk), Sara Meadow, Ike Arjmand, Emily Wu, Angel Garces

Ombuds: Aaron Shaw

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of giving and receiving unauthorized aid on a midterm exam for an upper level bioengineering 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 Midterm Exam
- Student B's Midterm Exam
- Midterm Exam Questions
- Professor Clarification
- Syllabus
- Conversation Images
- Textbook Images
- Witness Statement
- Student A's Homework
- Student B's Homework
- Homework problem statements

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A:

Student A stated that both of the students involved were not in the same city at the time of the alleged violation, that the evidence suggested that no communication or exchange of files existed. Therefore, she stated that both of the students had no possibility of exchanging files and code. In addition, the student stated that problems A and B were taken from homework 6 which both students, during the homework, had a high level of interaction (which, the student notes, was allowed). Any other similarities could be

explained through the homework or through the textbook. At no point, the student contended, did they exchange the code.

Student A concluded by stating that similarities between their exams came from the fact that the two students learned the class together and that helping each other on the exams was impossible due to communication barriers at the time of the alleged violation.

Student B:

Student B stated that the midterm assignment in question was only worth half of the total grade; thus, only worth about 4%. The student stated that Student A and Student B worked closely together on many things. Student B contended that they made a good learning group throughout their educational career and thus they tackled classes together and taught each other on many of the homeworks. The student explained that they would have homework sessions due to Student B's being a better programmer than Student A. Student B stated that these discussions were only high-level, and about general material. As a result, the student said, they both learned the material in the same way and had homeworks that looked similar – as could be seen, the student stated, in the evidence's similarities in algorithmic thinking.

Student B stated that, in the provided facebook messenger logs, there was no communication regarding the exam during the period that the test was available.

Student B urged consideration that the tests were not closed-book; instead the students were allowed to use homeworks, textbook, and class materials. The student stated that the similarities in naming in the code is due to their generic nature and similarity of coding methods – to “name things after what they are for”. In addition, the student explained that, with regards to the interval and increment range, the range selected made sense from a logical perspective because of the range of data that had to be considered. The student stated that another similarity that the professor pointed out could be attributed to the fact that the method used in the code was identical to what was used in the textbook. The student then traced another similarity back to a homework. The student explained that, in part b of the exam, the use of the function came from a problem in Homework 6. The student also stated that the TAs were the ones that illustrated this point on Homework 6.

The student stated that the numbers that were similar were not randomly selected and instead were drawn from the “most true” value; i.e., the value that would make the most sense. The student then drew another similarity between the textbook and the examination, stating that the textbook was the common inspiration, and that no cheating had taken place.

Student B stated that a similarity in variable names could be the result of the use of that variable; its use was also its name.

Student B concluded by restating that the reason why the similarities occurred is likely that the students had learned the material together through the course.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the two codes have an incredibly similar format, syntax, and naming. The council determined that, even though Student B provided an in-depth explanation for the origin of her code, her explanation did not address the fact that the student's both drew from the "same inspirations" at the same time in the same manner in a way that, to the council, seemed incredibly implausible.

Vote #3: 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 committed the violation. The council determined there is no reason why the students both did not commit the violation.

Vote #4: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is "In Violation?"

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Vote #5: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student B is "In Violation?"

Yes: 6
 No: 0
 Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Councilmembers saw no reason that Students A and B should receive different penalties given the nature of the violation.

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Many councilmembers mitigated for amount due to the nature of the assignment – half take-home and half in-class. Then, certain councilmembers mitigated for the fact that only part of the take-home was in violation, although this was not the opinion of all of the councilmembers.

Vote #7: What is the appropriate penalty for Students A and 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: 2
 1 letter grade reduction: 4

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

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Students A and B “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that both receive a one letter grade reduction. A Prior Violation Flag is also attached to their records.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hr 40 mins

Respectfully submitted,
Reece Rosenthal
Clerk