

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 12-2, Fall 2020**  
**April 27, 2021**

**Members Present:**

Sam Holloway (presiding), Max Slotnik (clerk), Kamal Tijani, Zac Zalles, Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia, and Hannah Dryer

**Ombuds:** Michael Katona

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received four letters accusing Student A of copying code from the same previous student for a lower level CAAM course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusations aloud in full. Due to the nature of the accusations, and the same students being involved, the four accusations were heard in the same hearing.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusations
- Student A's written statement
- Code comparison files for all four projects
- RLA material for all four projects
- Random samples for all four projects
- Lecture slides for all four projects
- Example code for all four projects
- PDF project description for all four projects
- MathWorks Documentation
- Class Syllabus

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation" for project A.  
Student A pled "Not in Violation" for project B.  
Student A pled "Not in Violation" for project C.  
Student A pled "Not in Violation" for project D.

**Testimony:**

**Project A:** Student A began by commenting on how the explanations and comments of the code were distinct. She stated how the input and output comments and the introduction of the code are both more elaborate in her code when compared to the code she is accused of copying from. Further, for project A, she said that the variables used to describe the functions and the chronological order of the functions are significantly different from the ones her code is being compared to. The student said she only utilized RLA materials and MathWorks for resources when completing the code, using MathWorks only to better understand how to use a function, which is outlined as acceptable in the course Honor Code. She also stated that no other students were consulted for help regarding the project code.

**Project B:** Student A began by commenting on how the variables and the structure were distinct from the code she was accused of copying from. She referenced that the descriptions for each function were provided before the code of the function to help with understanding, and this was not done by the student whose code she is being compared with. The student said she only utilized RLA materials and MathWorks for resources when completing the code, using MathWorks only to better understand how to use a function, which is outlined as acceptable in the course Honor Code. She also stated that no other students were consulted for help regarding the project code.

**Project C:** Student A began by commenting on how the variables were different for this project too. Again, there was a different chronological order of the functions which were distinct from the code she is accused of copying from. Student A stated that the syntax for the functions and graphs were also dissimilar. The student said she only utilized RLA materials and MathWorks for resources when completing the code, using MathWorks only to better understand how to use a function, which is outlined as acceptable in the course Honor Code. She also stated that no other students were consulted for help regarding the project code.

**Project D:** Student A began by commenting on how the ways in which the variables were ordered in the functions, their names, and the structure of the variables' display and locations were unique. She explained that the syntax for the graphs and functions also diverge from the code she is accused of copying from. She mentioned that she referenced a MathWorks document while constructing one of the functions in question to help her better structure it. She stated that no other resources were utilized, as this was a pledged project.

Student A closed by saying she never spoke to the person she is accused of copying from on all four projects, and that she only resorted to MathWorks documentation and RLA materials for resources.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

**Project A:** Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the level of similarity in the structure of the code could not have happened by chance. The Council discussed how there did not appear to be a single line of code where Student A's project and the previous student's project functionally diverge from one another, except for different variable names, which only serve as a superficial difference. In looking at random sample codes, no random samples followed the same function structure as the accused and the student she is accused of copying from. The amount of overlap between the two codes resulted in the Council's belief that the similarities are far too extensive to happen coincidentally, especially when compared to the differences in both structure and function present in random samples.

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

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council believed Student A committed the violation.

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

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

**Project B:** Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the level of similarity in the structure of the code could not have happened by chance. In both codes, the comments were closely worded and structured, along with the code of the functions being very alike. Council members conducted a similar comparison with random sample files like that done in Project A’s deliberation and concluded that the accused student’s code was inexplicably similar to the code she was accused of copying from.

Vote #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred on project B?

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council believed Student A committed the violation.

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

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

**Project C:** Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the only differences in the code were due to spacing of the code and the placing of the comments. The structure of the code was far too similar to have occurred by chance, and the line-by-line functionality of the code is almost exactly the same. Council members conducted a similar comparison with random sample files like that in Project A’s deliberation and concluded that the accused student’s code was inexplicably similar to the code she was accused of copying from.

Vote #5: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred on project C?

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council believed Student A committed the violation.

Vote #6: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

**Project D:** Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the codes seemed extremely similar in terms of both function and structure, especially due to its being a pledged project. Furthermore, the Council members conducted a similar comparison with random sample files like that in Project A’s deliberation and concluded that the accused student’s code was inexplicably similar to the code she was accused of copying from.

Vote #7: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred on project D?

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council believed Student A committed the violation.

Vote #8: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that Student A is “In Violation?”

Yes: 6  
 No: 0  
 Abstentions: 0

**Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. The Council did not see any aggravating or mitigating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the four assignments judged in violation, is an F in the course and a 1 semester suspension.

Vote #9: What is the appropriate combined penalty for Student A on Project’s A, B, C, and D?

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:	6
F in the course:	0
3 letter grade reduction:	0
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

The Council then learned that Student A had a previous Honor Code violation from this same lower level CAAM course in the same semester (Fall 2020). Thus, the Council treated this prior violation as a major aggravating factor and deliberated about what the elevated penalty should be.

Vote #10: What is the appropriate combined penalty for Student A on Project's A, B, C, and D?

F in the course and 3 semesters of suspension:	0
F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension:	6
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:	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 an F in the course and 2 semesters of suspension.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours and 12 minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
Max Slotnik  
Clerk