

**Abstract of the Honor Council****Case #32, Spring 2021****April 28, 2021****Members Present:**

Izzie Karohl (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Rodolfo Gutierrez, Adam Zawierucha, Zac Zalles, and Kamal Tijani

**Ombuds:** Jean Choi**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of accessing unauthorized materials during an exam for an upper level BIOE course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Student A's exam
- Exam .pdf
- Exam answer key
- Canvas access log
- Exam practice questions
- Exam practice key
- Exam submission confirmation with timestamp
- Student submitted note sheet
- OIT Information Request Email
- OIT Clarification Email
- Course Canvas announcements
- Random student exams (x10)

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began her testimony by stating that she did not reference the exam answer key while sitting for her exam. The student explained that she receives academic accommodations, so she took the exam at a later date than her peers. At the time Student A sat for the exam, the professor had released the exam answer key on Canvas. Student A explained that she completed the paper

exam mid-afternoon on a certain date; however, she did not end up submitting pictures of her exam work to the professor until very late at night due to a medical crisis. Student A stated that she did view the exam answer key after she completed the exam but before she submitted the exam. Canvas access logs confirmed that Student A accessed the exam answer key approximately twenty minutes prior to the email submission. Student A stated that she did not use the answer key to alter her exam and that she only used her own note sheet to complete the exam. The student emphasized that the Canvas access logs show that she did not access the exam key during the three hour period in which she took the exam.

Student A explained that the professor allowed students to use a one-page handwritten note sheet during the exam, and Student A created her note sheet using her lecture notes. Student A mentioned that she had taken the class in a previous semester before dropping, so she mostly used her previous lecture notes to create her exam note sheet. The student said that the reason her answers look similar to the answer key is because she used the exact verbiage from the professor's course notes and from the previous exam keys to create her note sheet. Student A presented the Council with class materials with very similar wording to the exam key. The student pointed out many random student samples contained similar wording to the exam key.

The testimony shifted to discuss the content of Student A's exam. Student A said she used the provided study materials and the professor's lecture notes to create her exam sheets, which explained why her exam answers were similar to the answer key. To illustrate her point, Student A presented class materials with very similar wording to the exam key. Then, Student A moved on to explain how she submitted her assignment. The student explained that she took photos of her exam immediately after completing the exam, but a medical crisis kept her from submitting the photos to her professor until very late at night. Student A said she did not alter her exam after taking photos, but she could not access time stamps for the photos she'd taken of her exam. Student A concluded her testimony by stating that the exam key did not influence her exam answers in any way.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation did not occur because there was not sufficient evidence to conclude that Student A's actions rose to the level of an Honor Code violation.

The Council agreed upon several facts; most importantly that Student A submitted her exam to the professor after having viewed the key. However, Council members disagreed on several points.

### *Similarities between Student A's Exam and Exam Key*

Council members began by discussing the content of Student A's exam. Several Council members determined that many similarities between the key and the student exam could be explained by Student A copying the lecture notes when preparing her exam notes sheet. Council member A pointed out several exam questions where Student A's exam answers came directly from her notes sheet, and the content of the exam sheet came directly from class materials. Council member B expressed suspicion that Student A's notation for an arithmetic problem was the exact same as the exam key's notation. In response, another member referenced the practice exam key, which had an arithmetic problem with the same formatting as the exam problem. Several members agreed that while the similarities were suspicious, it wasn't more likely than not that Student A used the exam key to alter her exam. A few members disagreed and said that Student A's answers were too similar to the exam key to have arisen without consulting the answer key.

### *Exam Period*

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A accessed the answer key during the exam period. Student A testified that she sat for the exam for three hours in the mid-afternoon and only made changes to her exam during that time. A few Council members contended that the Honor Code only applies during the time period that the student is working on the exam; therefore, the Council cannot immediately conclude that Student A received unauthorized aid on her exam by accessing the key very late at night, prior to submission. Other members argued that the Honor Code applies the entire time an exam is in a student's possession. They believed that because Student A could not definitively show that she did not alter her exam after completing it mid-afternoon, accessing the key prior to submission qualifies as accessing unauthorized aid, regardless of whether or not this access ultimately led the student to changing their exam.

### *Nature of the Accusation*

Finally, Council members discussed what constituted a violation in this circumstance. Some Council members argued that accessing the exam key before submitting the exam violated the honor code. They believed that by signing the honor pledge at the top of the exam, Student A had pledged not to receive any unauthorized material up until the exam had been submitted to the professor.

Other Council members believed that Student A's testimony and evidence demonstrated that Student A took the written exam without accessing unauthorized materials. They believe that because of this, Student A is "Not in Violation" of the Honor Code because the exam was considered "complete" once the student had photographed the exam as opposed to once the student had sent the exam to the professor via email.

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

Yes: 2

No: 4

Abstentions: 0

The Honor Council did not reach unified consensus on why Student A was not in violation. Each Council member's decision was determined by their opinion on:

- a. If accessing the exam key during the exam period was considered a violation
- b. If Student A accessed the exam key during the exam period
- c. If Student A used the exam key to modify her exam

For a verdict of "In Violation," the Honor Council must reach a unanimous conclusion. Thus, after much deliberation, the panelists found Student A "Not in Violation."

**Decision:**

The Honor Council thus finds Student A "Not In Violation" of the Honor Code.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 53 minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Caroline Brehm

Clerk