

Abstract of the Honor Council

Case 24, Spring 2021

October 26, 2021

Members Present:

Izzie Karohl (presiding), Caroline Brehm (clerk), Isabelle Reynolds, Adam Zawierucha, Clyde Xu, and Kamal Tijani

Ombuds: Suravi Sarkar

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A and Student B of unauthorized collaboration on a lab report for a lower-level CHEM 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 lab report
- Student B lab report
- Course syllabus
- Course Honor Code Policy
- Random student samples
- Course videos and files
- Text conversation between Students A & B
- Student provided screenshots

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Student B pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A explained that she and Student B met on Zoom to work on laboratory assignments, which is permitted by the Honor Code. They usually individually use a whiteboard to perform any calculations, but while working on this assignment, Student B's camera was not working. As a result, Students A and B discussed each question and sent the answers over Zoom chat. Student A asserted that she and Student B came up with those answers together while collaborating, and they agreed to reword the answers they worked on together. Student A states she later copied the

answers from the Zoom chat and pasted them into her lab report, making minor adjustments to the wording. Student A told Student B to change the wording of her answers for the lab report; however, Student A recounted that Student B had computer trouble, so Student B copied and pasted the Zoom chat answers. Student A concluded by stating that the professor encourages collaboration on lab assignments, so her work with Student B was not an Honor Code violation.

Student B explained that the answers on her lab report were the result of authorized collaboration and this did not violate the Honor Code. She mentioned how she became good friends with Student A and worked on homework assignments, studied for tests, and collaborated on lab reports together. Student B stated that because she and Student A lived in different countries, Zoom was the best method to work together. Student B mentioned that because she lived in a different country, she ended up attending lab from 2 AM to 5 AM, so she relied on help from Student A. Student B explained how she and Student A worked together on the lab—they began talking about the theory behind the question, formulated an answer, and then typed it up and sent it in the Zoom chat. She pointed out how one question she is accused of violating the Honor Code on is a simple mathematical calculation that is solved using a method given in class, so it was not fair to say the identical answers on such a simple question are a violation of the Honor Code. Student B said that the answers she and Student A came up with followed the logic given in class. She pointed out how she and Student A had different answers to several questions.

Student B discussed the content of her lab report. She mentioned that she and Student A planned to meet over Zoom one last time to review the logic behind their answers before the due date. However, Student B's Zoom failed, so she lost the document where she made edits to the Zoom answers. Since the assignment was due soon, Student B copied and pasted the Zoom answers into her report and submitted it. Student B emphasized that they equally worked on and contributed to the answers, and believed the collaboration fell within the bounds of the Honor Code. She also explained how she was an international student who went through many hardships to seek out an education, and she would never intentionally violate the Honor Code.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the students' collaboration exceeded what was permitted by the course Honor Code.

The course syllabus stated that “students must individually do their own work, including calculations.” Since the students admitted to typing up collaborative answers and submitting those answers, the Honor Council believed that this collaboration constituted a violation. Additionally, the syllabus stated that students were not permitted to copy answers to lab questions. The lab submissions for Students A & B were nearly identical, and both students testified that they copy and pasted answers due to time constraints. Ultimately, because

collaborative work was used in a final lab report, the Council believes an Honor Code violation occurred.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council determined Student A committed a violations since Student A testified to copying collaborative answers.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council determined Student B also in violation since she testified to copying collaborative answers.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing any mitigating or aggravating circumstances. The Council found several mitigating factors.

Since the course syllabus did allow for in-depth collaboration on the assignments, the Council likely would not have been able to easily reach a conclusion about if the Students had copy and pasted work if not for their testimony. Council members decided this testimony constituted substantial disclosure.

Additionally, the Council found reason to mitigate because the majority of the assignment was not accused of being in violation. The grounds the professor gave for making the Honor Code accusation were that the students’ collaboration exceeded the course Honor Code by copying answers. The professor only accused Students A and B of copying answers for a small portion of the total assignment, so the Council decided to only consider a portion of the total assignment weight when determining an appropriate penalty for the violation,

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 1 letter grade reduction.

Vote #4: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

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:	0
Letter of Reprimand	6
Abstentions:	0

Vote #5: What is the appropriate penalty for Student B?

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:	0
Letter of Reprimand	6
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 Letter of Reprimand.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours and 29 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Caroline Brehm
Clerk