

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 3, Fall 2022
11/02/2022

Members Present:

William Wang (presiding), Pedro Ribeiro (clerk), James Cheng, Max Slotnik, Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia, Naidhruv Ananth Iyer, Olivia Thom (observing)

Ombuds: Neil Chopra, Vinay Joshi (observing)

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of plagiarizing a research proposal for an Upper level BIOS course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course Syllabus
- Assignment description
- Assignment weight
- 4 sample assignments
- Professor clarification of samples
- Student A's assignment
- Alleged plagiarized proposal
- Slack messages between Student A and professor

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A stated that they joined the course late and did not receive mentoring by the professor. The student said that their lab manager only advised Student A to not copy the proposal word for word, and that they were free to propose a project already in progress. The student then stated that they had sent the assignment to the professor ahead of time and the professor had OK'd it, so they thought everything was fine. The Student also said that they had difficulty rewording some aspects due to the highly specific terminology, which was why their assignment was similar to the proposal.

The Student said that the reason that there were no in text citations was because they were not entirely sure on how to do the citations and thought the professor had approved the way they had done it.

The Student also stated that the reason why there was an additional section that was not required for the assignment was a product of confusion.

The Student reiterated that they were not mentored by the professor in the lab, which was a potential cause of the misunderstanding. Student A then reiterated that they believed the professor had approved their proposal based on their messages on slack.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the proposal was a close rewording of the professor's proposal with no citation to it. The Council also considered that the student testified that they did indeed take inspiration from the professor's proposal but did not cite it. The Council also considered whether messaging the professor would exonerate the student; however, the Council found that the professor did not give feedback on slack and the student had already submitted the assignment to canvas.

The Council also considered whether there was an expectation of citation given the proposal was provided as a primary resource to base their own proposal on. The Council ultimately found the assignment description was clear that ideas must be cited. Thus, the lack of any reference to the Professor's grant proposal in the sources section meant that this assignment had violated the Honor Code.

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

Yes: 6+1

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. The Council found that given the lack of citation to the original proposal, the Student committed the violation.

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

Yes: 6+1

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. The Council considered that the alleged miscommunication between the lab leader (about the purpose of the assignment), the professor (of whether the professor had reviewed the work) and the Student could be a mitigating factor. Ultimately, a majority of the panel decided that none of these held a significant portion of the blame and therefore, did not mitigate the penalty.

The Council found no aggravating factors.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is a 2 letter grade reduction.

Vote #3: What is the appropriate penalty for Student A?

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:	1
1 letter grade reduction:	4 +1
Letter of Reprimand	1
Abstentions:	0

The Council discussed whether the CPS penalty was a 2 or 1 letter grade reduction. Technically the CPS delineates only under 5% as a 1 letter grade reduction. However, the Council considered that the Alternative Resolution letter assumed the assignment was on the border, so the Council considered the grade as on the border for the hearing. This is because the assumption of a 1 letter grade reduction penalty by the student could have factored into their decision to proceed to a hearing.

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds Student A “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive a 1 letter grade reduction.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Pedro Ribeiro
Clerk