

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 18, Fall 2022
January 25, 2023

Members Present:

Max Slotnik (presiding), James Cheng (clerk), Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia, Diego Palos Rodriguez, Kamal Tijani, Ric Chang, Jay Messina (observing), Neha Kohli (observing)

Ombuds: Hunter Smith, Heaven Hicks (observing), Saif Ganni (observing)

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing the Student of unauthorized aid and plagiarism on an assignment for an upper level BIOS course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student's written statement
- Clarification emails
- Class syllabus
- Assignment instructions
- Random class submissions
- Side by side comparison of assignment
- Student's submitted assignment

Plea:

Student pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

The student begins the testimony by disagreeing with the accusation and stating that there are many differences between the submitted assignment and published version of the abstract. Variations in order and structure as well as additional information never mentioned in the published abstract illustrate how the submitted abstract dissimilar. The student argues similarities arise from taking key points and paraphrasing them from the paragraphs to make the abstract, which is what an abstract entails. A unique key word that is included in the student's and published abstract in addition to being absent in all other student's submissions is explained as being a commonly used word derived from another class the student took. The student also mentions that the professor briefly taught students how to come up with a title and an abstract, which could have explained the similarities of the abstracts. While the abstracts are alike in syntax, grammar, and structure, the student asserts that differences in style and content exist such that they are reasonable and plagiarism could not have occurred.

In an explanation of the timeline, the student describes in detail how the first submitted version of the abstract was a mistake due to attaching the wrong file. Subsequent

submitted versions of the abstract were correct, however, the student assures that the assignment was completed before the deadline.

The student also brought up the CPS, citing that the accused portions of the assignment only included the title and abstract, not the entire assignment such that the council can consider mitigation during penalty deliberations.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because of the many similarities between the student's submitted abstract and the published abstract, including key words, structure, style, among other factors. Despite minor differences the student highlights and explains, the council could not overlook how this could explain the exact content described in the same general order, down to the sentence. In comparison with other students' titles and abstracts which greatly varied, the student's submitted assignment simply could not have been created without accessing the published paper's abstract and title. A panel member noted that a lack of evidence referenced by the student in their verbal testimony but was not collected made it difficult to make a determination in the student's favor.

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

Yes: 6+2

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not the Student committed the violation. Given the immense similarities between the student's submitted assignment and published paper, the council found that the student committed a violation.

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

Yes: 6+2

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

Penalty Deliberations:

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. Although not the entire assignment was accused in the Honor Code violation, it was not believed that the remaining assignment composed enough of the total grade to warrant any mitigating factors. No aggravating factors were considered.

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:	6+2
1 letter grade reduction:	0
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

Decision:

The Honor Council thus finds the Student “In Violation” of the Honor Code and recommends that they receive a 2-letter grade reduction.

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2 hours

Respectfully submitted,
James Cheng
Clerk