

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 46, Spring 2023
May 31st 2023

Members Present:

Kamal Tijani (presiding), Zachary Zelman (clerk), Dean Toumajan, Kaylah Patel, Pedro Ribeiro, James Cheng

Ombuds: Ammar Siddiqi

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of cheating for an upper-level electrical engineering course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Class lecture slides
- Excerpts from course textbook
- Random samples of exam responses from other students for question
- Evidence from student including browser history, scratch work etc.
- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Exam directions
- Course syllabus
- Homework solution
- Student exam solution
- Exam solution

Plea:

Student A pled "not in violation."

Testimony:

Student A said they provided evidence of written notes and scratch work for the problem on the exam that shows that the work was completed at the time of taking the exam (has not been modified since) along with student browser history showing that Student A did not look up the solution on the internet as was accused of doing, but that they did come upon a similar solution during the course studying but not during the exam itself. Moreover, there were no directions as to not being allowed to look up stuff on the internet during the course.

Student A further claims no collaboration with the other students accused, and that the professor did not provide direct evidence that Student A was in violation other than the similarity of the answer to the actual answer.

Student A continued by explaining their internet browser history around the time of the exam further demonstrating the lack of illicit internet use referencing the solution on the internet while taking the exam.

Student A continued by showing how one or two of the random samples supplied (samples 4 and 5) was like their answer but with more detail, especially sample 5. Student A felt that they did not have to go further in depth as they had written it out in scratch notes and didn't need to reexplain fully for the answer. The unsubmitted written scratch notes show this level of detail. The student added that the professor had previously directed students to not submit scratch work, opining that this had not been strictly enforced as the random samples suggest other students' level of depth including what he had viewed as scratch work. Student A then looked back and realized that this had not been explicit on this specific exam.

Student A suggested that given this is a singular problem on one exam that the council might treat this as a mitigating factor along with the high level of cooperation they have had with the council throughout the process.

Student A added that they did not use any other web browser during the exam beyond the one submitted in evidence.

Student A explained their thought process for answering the exam problem.

Student A again explained having found an example online during the course before the exam like exam question that aided their understanding but did not feel it was illicit to reference this and did not reference it during the exam.

Student A explained that the professor had provided homework solutions during the course and that student A had referenced these solutions both before and during the exam.

Student A acknowledged similarity of their answer to the final answer / solutions manual answer but reaffirmed that they put down what they felt was necessary to answer the question and further demonstrated understanding in scratch notes for the problem.

Student A closed by reaffirming that their browsing history shows that they did not reference the exam solution online, that they provided evidence of their own work for the problem, and that their response was like other unaccused samples just with more detail. Such details can be found in Student A's scratch work and that the similar problem they had encountered previously was not referenced during the exam. Student A added that it was not forbidden to use the internet during the course for learning purposes and that they were not in collaboration with other accused students. Student A again suggested mitigating factors should be that this is a single question on the exam and that the student has cooperated with the council etc.

Verdict Deliberations:

At start of discussion, council members were divided on whether a violation had occurred, with some believing there was not enough evidence directly linking the student to having looked up the answer, while others felt that the student's answer was too

closely analogous to the solution manual answer to not have been copied from the internet.

Further discussion swayed an additional council member toward agreement that a violation occurred.

Further discussion led to another council member agreeing that a violation occurred, due to the logic that it was more likely that Student A simply copied then answer rather than having arrived at the answer through mere coincidence.

Two council members remained unpersuaded by the in-violation arguments, with one not willing to change their vote without evidence directly linking Student A to having copied the answer.

Straw Poll #3: Does a preponderance of the evidence support that a violation occurred?

Yes: 4

No: 0

Abstentions: 2

Council voted to make Straw Pool #3 binding.

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2hrs15min

Respectfully submitted,
Zachary Zelman
Clerk