

**Abstract of the Honor Council**  
**Case 6, Fall 2023**  
**12/04/2023**

**Members Present:**

Pedro Ribeiro (presiding), Kamal Tijani (clerk), Neha Kohli, Riya Yarlagadda, Ric Chang, Sriya Kakarla

**Ombuds:** Henry Cassidy

**Letter of Accusation:**

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of violating the course Honor Code on a project for an upper-level COMP course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

**Evidence Submitted:**

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Grading Clarification
- Class Syllabus
- Student A TA Email
- Student A Hearing Testimony
- Submitted Assignment
- Group Member #1 Evidence Response
- Group Member #2 Evidence Response
- Professor Statement
- Professor Evidence Response
- Professor Clarification
- Professor Clarification #2
- Project Grade Report
- Question to Professor
- Question to Teammates

**Plea:**

Student A pled "Not In Violation."

**Testimony:**

Student A began their testimony by explaining the context and needed background to understand the case, including an explanation of GitHub, the workflow, and the nature of the project. The student explains that they used a force push command to quickly merge the group's separate code into one file. The student says they didn't know that the force push overwrites the commit and upon reviewing the course honor policy a week later realized that they had made a mistake. The student argues that their commit history was recoverable but wasn't given adequate time to show this to the professor before the Honor Council received the case. They believe that they made the mistake, but they did

not misrepresent any work and from the professor's testimony, the peer evaluation was not affected by the command.

The student called in a witness to give their account of events. The witness describes git as being difficult to use, and a lack of awareness about the command was plausible. The witness details the stress of the approaching deadline, and that the accused student was not trying to be malicious in using the command. The witness found it unfortunate that Student A could not effectively inform the honor council before the honor council sent the accusation of Student A. The witness believed that the force push didn't affect their final score. The witness left the task of performing the merge up to Student A.

### **Verdict Deliberations:**

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the syllabus clearly stated that the use of the command was prohibited, a fact Student A admits to.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

The Council then discussed whether or not Student A committed the violation. Council members agreed that Student A committed the violation since the student readily admits to the violation and all evidence and witness testimony corroborated this violation.

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

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstentions: 0

### **Penalty Deliberations:**

Council members opened by discussing mitigating circumstances. The Council opened the discussion by attempting to categorize this situation by referring to case precedent. The Council agreed it wasn't quite a technical violation as the use of the hindered the ability of the professor to accurately measure group contributions. The Council was split on deciding whether there was an unfair advantage gained and ultimately could not come to a clear conclusion.

The Council considered the risk Student A placed the rest of their team members in as a potential aggravating factor. However, this was counterbalanced by Student A's attempts to contact the Honor Council, the Professors, and TAs. The student did not have the opportunity to come forward since the violation was sent mere hours after the Student discovered their mistake.

The Council decided to mitigate the CPS penalty based on the nature of the violation. The Council felt that since the violation fell in between a standard violation of unauthorized aid and a technical violation, the CPS penalty was not warranted and was potentially too harsh.

The CPS penalty for this case, based on the weight of the assignment, is an F in the Course.

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

F in the course	0
3 letter grade reduction:	1
2 letter grade reduction:	0
1 letter grade reduction:	5
Letter of Reprimand	0
Abstentions:	0

The CPS severity starts at a baseline of severity level 2.

Straw Poll #4: What is the appropriate severity level for Student A?

Expulsion:	0
Suspension:	0
Reprimand:	6
Warning:	0
Abstentions:	0

**Decision:**

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 2h 30 min

Respectfully submitted,  
Kamal Tijani  
Clerk