

Abstract of the Honor Council
Case 29-1, Spring 2024
April 17, 2024

Members Present:

Pedro Ribeiro (presiding), Anastasia Loiko (clerk), Caroline Snider, Rachel Kilgard, Rodolfo Gutierrez-Garcia, Helena Song

Ombuds: Vinay Joshi

Letter of Accusation:

The Honor Council received a letter accusing Student A of using an unauthorized source on a coding assignment without citation for an UPPER level DSCI course. The Chair read the Letter of Accusation aloud in full.

Evidence Submitted:

- Letter of Accusation
- Student A's written statement
- Course syllabus
- Student A's submission for the assignment
- Professor clarification on course policies
- Student A's past assignments
- Student A's Chat GPT History
- Student A's Browser History
- Text message logs between Student A and another student in the class
- Interview preparation notes
- TA email correspondence with Student A
- Student A's response to a survey indicating their familiarity with SQL
- Student A's past assignments

Plea:

Student A pled "Not in Violation."

Testimony:

Student A clarified the syllabus at the beginning of the semester with the professor, who said that having high-level discussions on the content is permissible, but sharing code is not allowed. When completing the assignment, the student discussed the methodology for solving the problem with other students but neither shared nor received any code. They went to office hours, and the TA told them their output for one of the questions was incorrect. They then confirmed the correct output for that problem via text message with another student.

The professor accused the student of using the "WITH" command, which was not discussed in class, without citation since the student indicated on a survey at the beginning of the semester that they had no experience with SQL. The student explained that they had self-studied SQL the semester before to prepare for a technical interview,

but they had never coded in SQL and did not think they had enough experience to indicate on the survey that they had self-studied SQL. When completing this assignment, they remembered the WITH command from self-studying common table expressions and did not think it was necessary to cite the command because it came from prior knowledge.

Verdict Deliberations:

Council members believed that a preponderance of the evidence supported that a violation occurred because the student sent their output to a classmate, who confirmed that the output was correct. Some council members pointed out that it would be impossible to expect everyone to cite their prior knowledge, and it is clear from the evidence the student submitted (their interview notes, browser history, and ChatGPT history) that the student was already familiar with the WITH command and did not look it up while coding this assignment. Ultimately, the Council agreed that the student was not in violation for not citing the WITH command, which led to a discussion on whether the student was in violation for sending their output to a classmate. While the student did not consider sending outputs the same as sending code, the syllabus states that students may not share answers with each other, and the professor clarified that outputs fall under answers. Some council members thought the syllabus was not very clear in this aspect, but everyone agreed that a violation occurred in this aspect.

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

Yes: 6
No: 0
Abstentions: 0

Vote 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. Council members acknowledged that they would not have arrived at this decision without the student-submitted evidence of the text messages, and the student was overall extremely cooperative, so the Council decided to mitigate on the grounds of substantial disclosure. There was also a discussion on whether the mitigation should be on the letter grade reduction or the severity, since there were concerns that the violation is not strictly technical. Since the violation was minor, and the CPS suggests that mitigating on substantial disclosure should fall under severity level, majority of the Council decided to mitigate the severity to a warning.

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

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

Vote 4: What is the appropriate severity level for Student A?

Expulsion:	0
Suspension:	0
Reprimand:	0
Warning:	5
Abstentions:	1

Decision:

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

Time of testimony and deliberations: 1 hour 15 minutes

Respectfully submitted,
Anastasia Loiko
Clerk