Background:

- James had been a student in Professor Q's class his freshman year. Two years later, James believed that he may have plagiarized one of his homework assignments. James discussed the matter with his friends and decided that he wanted Honor Council to consider whether or not he had violated the Honor Code. Honor Council met and decided that a trial was necessary. The resolution of James' concerns, as well as the completion of the trial were complicated by the fact that in the two years since James had taken the class, Professor Q had left the college, and was not available to the jurors.

Fact Finding:

- The jury met with James, and asked him to begin by describing what had happened. James explained the circumstances surrounding the assignment on which he thought he cheated. He said that Professor Q gave a weekly assignment due in class each Monday. Students were allowed to turn in one assignment late, and an answer key was made available in the library each week after the assignment was due in class. Near the end of the semester, James decided that he needed to complete an assignment he had been unable to finish on time. He got a copy of the answer key, and "used it" as he completed the assignment. James also noted that Professor Q's instructions about how to use the answer key had never been very clear. James had discussed his concerns with other students in the class, and they said that they thought many students had believed that the late assignment was a "freebie" and had used the answer key to complete them. At this point James asked if the jury had any questions. Most jurors were a bit confused, and frustrated that Professor Q was not available to clear up concerns about homework policies. Some jurors asked questions about what James meant, when he said he "used it [the key]" to complete his assignment. Unfortunately, James had difficulty answering this question. He knew that he had not just taken it out and copied it. On the other hand, he had not just used it to check the answers after he completed it himself. He knew that he had used it to get the answer to a problem "at least once," and also remembered feeling like he might be using it more than he should. Other jurors asked whether he had tried to
determine what Professor Q's guidelines were. He said that he did not think that any rules had ever been handed out in class, nor did he remember them being discussed in class, but he also confirmed that, despite his uneasiness, he had not discussed the matter with Professor Q. After a few more questions to confirm parts of James' account, fact finding was concluded and James was excused.

Jury Deliberations:

- The initial reaction of the jury was very mixed. A few jurors thought that James had violated the code by plagiarizing his homework. Others felt uncomfortable finding James in violation because his use of the answer key might have been considered appropriate by Professor Q, and was supposedly common practice in this class. Furthermore, James had repeatedly said that he didn't think he had ever just copied a problem, but had used it as an aide. Discussion of this problem continued for some time, but the jury finally concluded that it could not say that James had misused the answer key, especially in light of the fact that James was uncertain how he had used it and there was no other evidence besides his memory. On the other hand, the jury was in agreement that James was in violation of the Code for not raising his concerns with Professor Q. The Code clearly states that "We must follow a professor's instructions as to the completion of tests, homework, and laboratory reports, and must ask for clarification if the instructions are not clear." (Part III, Section A) With this in mind, the jury quickly reached consensus on the following statement of violation:

Statement of Violation:

- James violated the Honor Code by failing to clarify the professor's expectations regarding the completion of homework assignments.

Circumstantial:

- The jury again met with James to discuss the circumstances surrounding his violation. James explained that he did not consider himself the kind of person who would cheat on his work. He said that he had been very unhappy at Haverford his freshman year, and had been considering transferring at the time. These factors combined with his impression that many people were using the answer key to do their homework had made it easy to just say he didn't care, when he started to think he was using the answer key too much. He explained that since then he had become much more involved in the Haverford community and wanted to clear his conscience.

Jury Deliberations II:

- The jury was quite comfortable with the fact that James understood why what he had done was a violation of the Honor Code. They were concerned, however, about the fact that an entire class seemed to have been ignorant of the Professor's policies concerning class homework. They also felt that since James had been uncomfortable, he owed it to his classmates as well as Professor Q to voice his concerns. The jury reached consensus on the following tentative resolutions, and broke for the 24-48 hour period.

Resolutions:
Presentation of Resolutions:

- The jury reconvened, and presented the resolutions to James, who accepted them willingly. After James left the room, the jury reached final consensus on the resolutions as they stand. After a moment of silence, the trial ended.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you agree with the jury's decision and/or resolutions?
2. Do you have any suggestions for Honor Council / Haverford Professors on presenting guidelines for homework / labs / assignments that are more clear?
3. Other comments:

Note: If you have further comments or questions about this abstract, Honor Council offers the opportunity for you to discuss this abstract with an actual juror from the trial. Please contact the Honor Council Chair for more information. If you have general comments about this or any other abstract, please contact your Honor Council Representative.

James' Letter to the community:

To the community: I find it somewhat difficult to put down on paper why I used the answer sheet and then didn't talk to my professor about it. The class did not interest me very much, and the homework problem sets were often long and confusing. My motivation for going to Honor Council was a desire to resolve the situation -- I'm sorry that doing so required the investment of twelve other people's time and effort, when, in the end, so few conclusive steps could be taken. I would encourage people who have questions about policy to ask them (it didn't even occur to me to do so, because I simply thought what I was doing was wrong, and did it anyway); I would further encourage students who think they have committed a violation and want to turn themselves in to do so -- the longer you wait, the more difficult the trial procedure becomes. Thank You.

-James
James' Letter to Department Heads:

To the Department Heads:
I took the course relevant to this trial as a first-year student from a Professor relatively new (I believe in her first year) to Haverford. The majority of my classes over the course of two semesters did not require (or I did not employ) work in which collaboration would have been possible, and I suppose I thought I should just wing it if I did not know the policy of a professor. The professor, as I and others in the class recall, did not specify a homework policy. In no way do I blame my professor for my mistake, but perhaps a clearer policy would have helped -- at least would have clarified whether what I did was a violation or not, and perhaps would have prompted me to act sooner. I encourage you as department heads to emphasize the need for clear assignment and collaboration policies, particularly, perhaps in classes taken by a large number of first-year students. Thank you.
-James

Send comments, problems, or suggestions to: code@haverford.edu
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