Downton Abbey: An Honor Council
Academic Trial
Released Spring 2014

This abstract was not released in accordance to the timeline specified by the Students’ Association Constitution. The confronting party consented to the release of the abstract. The confronted party consented to the release of the abstract. (The addition of this disclaimer began in Spring 2010).

Key:
Mr. Carson - Confronting Party
Anna - Confronted Party
Postwar Estate Management - Course

Summary:
[Anna], a Bryn Mawr student enrolled in [Mr. Carson’s] class on [Postwar Estate Management], submitted a problem set in which several lines appeared to come from outside sources. [Mr. Carson] found similar language in an outside academic paper and an outside website, and he brought the matter to Honor Council. Council consented to send the matter to an academic trial. Since [Anna] was unsure about what may or may not constitute plagiarism in a field like [Estate Administration], the trial resolutions focused primarily on education.

Pre-Trial:
After Honor Council consented to send the case to an Academic Trial, it consented to use Extenuating Circumstances, in the interest of timeliness, to change universal trial procedure to allow for the use of four Honor Council members instead of five. The jury composition was thus four Honor Council members and five community members. All other requirements were unchanged. Both parties consented to this change. Honor Council decided to leave the decision of how many jurors could stand outside of consensus up to the jury. The jury consented to allow two members to stand outside of consensus.

Fact Finding:
[Mr. Carson] could not attend Fact-Finding, so the trial chair summarized [Mr. Carson]’s statement. [Anna] then spoke, and mentioned that she always does outside research and review before starting problem sets. She clarified that she did not review her notes on outside material while working on the problem set, only before. The jury was concerned because several lines of her problem set
appeared directly plagiarized from an outside paper and an outside website. Some of the plagiarized material did not seem to relate to the problem.

[Anna] said she thought the meaning of plagiarism is different in [Estate Administration], as every problem requires the application of similar constructs, and she did not think she had to cite outside sources in the same way that would be required in other disciplines. Previous professors had encouraged her to find alternative ways to solve problems, learn outside information, and find relevant resources outside of class material to better understand the problem at hand. She also talked briefly to a friend about the problem set but wasn’t sure whether this was appropriate under Haverford’s collaboration rules.

Further details: [Mr. Carson] had asked [Anna] to stop taking the course, because she had struggled in the class and needed to take more prerequisites. She did eventually drop the course. The Bi-Co Liaison was an active participant in the trial in both Fact-Finding and Circumstantial.

**Jury Deliberations/Statement of Violation:**

Following fact-finding, the jury discussed whether a violation had occurred. Some jurors expressed concerns that [Anna] may have copied and was not telling the truth. It seemed that [Anna] did not understand that, even with [Estate Administration], ideas from outside sources need to be cited. There was also a sentiment that the jury should convey the facts of this case to the Bryn Mawr administration to help streamline cross-college plagiarism education. A juror also mentioned a topic briefly touched on in Fact-Finding, that [Anna], as an international student, came from an education system that emphasizes rote memorization and that she might have a different idea of what plagiarism is than we do. The jury agreed that a violation had occurred, and that education should be the focus of the resolutions.

Statement of violation: [Anna] violated the Honor Code by not giving credit to the outside sources whose ideas she reproduced on her problem set, thereby committing an act of plagiarism.

**Circumstantial Portion:**

At the last minute, two jurors told the trial chair they would not be able to attend the meeting, and would automatically stand outside consensus. The jury decided to move forward with the caveat that an additional meeting could be held if necessary.

[Anna] said she felt like she was not learning the material well enough in class, which is why she did outside research and talked with classmates. She also felt like the class was too simple compared to the problem sets, which contributed to her difficulties in understanding. [Anna] reiterated that in high school classes, [Anna]’s teachers had encouraged outside research, saying she could use the library or the Internet, but did not emphasize the importance of citation. She mentioned there was a strong focus on memorizing details before exams. [Anna] also mentioned that leaving [Mr. Carson’s] course had significantly affected her major plans.
She said that after the conversations with the jury during Fact-Finding, she understood why what she did was plagiarism and that she needed to cite outside sources even for [Estate Administration]. She said that, especially on essays and papers, she was very aware of the importance of the Code at Bryn Mawr but that she had only been taught how to cite, not why to cite. The jury also talked with her about why she went to Bryn Mawr. She said she came because she wanted a liberal arts college and close relationships with professors, but not specifically because of the Honor Code. The jury and the Bi-Co Liaison also talked about potential resources that [Anna] could use at BMC to avoid plagiarism in the future.

**Jury Deliberations and Tentative Resolutions:**

The jury consented to the following tentative resolutions, which the trial chair emailed to the confronting and confronted parties. Since two jurors were missing, they counted as standing outside on all resolutions. While a Bi-Co liaison cannot consent to resolutions, the jury wanted her opinion to be noted next to the resolutions.

1. [Anna] will meet with Rachel Heiser, the Academic Support and Learning Resources Specialist at Bryn Mawr to discuss issues of academic integrity and citing one’s sources. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
2. The jury recommends that [Anna] take the Haverford academic integrity course on Moodle. Honor Council will let [Anna] know when this is available. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
3. Haverford will make its Academic Integrity Tutorial on Moodle available to all Tri-Co students and mandatory for all students taking courses at Haverford. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
4. The jury recommends that Bryn Mawr revisit its plagiarism education program, especially how it might be incorporated into E-sens and the Customs program. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
5. The jury recommends that, in the future, [Anna] consult her professors about using outside sources for their classes. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
6. The jury feels grade change is not necessary because [Anna] dropped the course. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
7. The jury recommends that [Anna] meet with [Mr. Carson] to restore their breach of trust, with the option of having a juror present to mediate. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
8. The jury gives [Anna] the option to write a letter to Bi-Co community, to be included with the abstract, reflecting on the violation and the trial process. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)
9. [Anna] will not be separated from HC or BMC. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison
10. The jury recommends that this incident not be reported to institutions of higher learning. (7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus)

Resolutions as a whole: 7 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 2 jurors stand outside consensus

Finalizing Resolutions:

One juror could not attend the meeting. The jury started the meeting by looking over the collaboration rules for the class which [Mr. Carson] had handed out to the class at the beginning of the semester. The jury agreed that the document did not address performing outside research, only collaboration; the jury didn't change how it felt about the resolutions. The jury clarified some of the resolutions for [Anna] and she agreed that they seemed fair.

The jury reviewed the resolutions again and decided (due to concerns about jurisdiction) to recommend rather than mandate that the school make the Moodle tutorial mandatory for all Tri-Co students taking classes at Haverford. It also corrected a grammatical mistake in the sixth resolution. The jury member who could not attend is listed as standing outside consensus.

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2. The jury recommends that [Anna] take the Haverford academic integrity course on Moodle. Honor Council will let [Anna] know when this is available. (8 jurors consent, 1 Bi-Co liaison approves, 1 juror stands outside consensus)
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Resolutions as a whole: (8 jurors consent, 1 juror stands outside, Bi-Co liaison approves)

Post-Trial:

There was no appeal. [Anna] opted not to write a letter to the community.

Discussion Questions:

1. Should Honor Council trials make resolutions that suggest administration-level changes?
2. How should the jury hold Haverford’s and Bryn Mawr’s administrations accountable for the changes that resolutions propose?
3. How should juries take cultural differences into account when hearing plagiarism cases?
4. What should be the level of involvement of the Bi-Co Liaison in trials involving Bryn Mawr students? For example, is it useful for them to be fully involved in Fact-Finding and Circumstantial portions, as they were during this trial?