

Abstract:

Should either student be found guilty of an Honor System violation?

Yes, at least one student should be found guilty of an Honor System violation. At the very least, the student who was signing his friend in should be found guilty of an Honor System violation. If his friend also requested that the student sign him in, or knew he was being signed in and never asked to stop it, he, too, would be guilty of an Honor System violation, by a strict interpretation of the Honor System's Bylaws as well as the Constitution of the Stevens Honor System.

What penalty should be assigned?

Given the nature of the case and the latest version of the Honor System's Penalty Matrix, the students found guilty of Honor System violations should be given the minimum penalty for falsifying an attendance sheet, which in this case would mean **the students should not receive a grade "bump" for good attendance.**

Full Reasoning and Response:

In this scenario, the professor uses a sign-in sheet to take attendance, and relies on the honesty of the students in filling it out. We are not told whether the student being signed in knows that his friend is putting his name down on the attendance sheet.

What is an Honor System violation, and did either student commit a violation?

Knowing what constitutes an Honor System violation is necessary to answering the question of whether the students are guilty or not of violating the Honor System. Bylaw IV of the Honor System defines what constitutes an Honor System violation:

"A violation of the Honor System is any action that gives an unfair advantage over fellow students and/ or does not conform to the spirit of the Honor System as defined by the Constitution of the Stevens Honor System and interpreted by the Stevens Honor Board."

While one could argue the advantages over other students of a proxy sign-in, the second part of Bylaw IV is clear: any action that "does not conform to the spirit of the Honor System as defined

by the Constitution of the Stevens Honor System and interpreted by the Stevens Honor board” is a violation.

Thus, in a real case, whether an action conforms to the good spirit of the Honor System is left to the Honor Board’s interpretation the Constitution. In this scenario, however, the case information is fairly clear, and the Constitution of the Stevens Honor System states, in Article II, Section 2.01, one purpose of the Honor Board:

“1. To promote honor and integrity throughout the Stevens campus both academically and socially.”

The professor is, in good faith, trusting the students to sign themselves in when they come to class, in return for a potential “bump” of their grade for a good attendance record. Since the act of signing another student in violates the good faith of the professor, it at *least* constitutes a dishonorable social action, but since it also has academic implications, one could argue it constitutes *academic dishonesty* as well (the details would be left to the Honor Board to decide in a real case).

Thus, the Honor Board would likely find the action of the student signing his friend as not conforming to the spirit of the Honor System, and that student would be found guilty of an Honor System violation. Additionally, if the friend had asked the student to sign him in, or knew about it and never asked the student to stop, he also would likely be found guilty of an Honor System violation as those actions, too would constitute a lack of academic and social integrity not conforming to the spirit of the Constitution.

It is important to note that some details may be hard to determine in a real case, and that other issues could arise when constructing a ruling (for example, if the friend knew he was being signed into class and asked his friend to stop, but the student continued to sign his friend into class, it might be difficult to establish what classes the student actually attended). Luckily, the Honor Board conducts thorough investigations before assigning penalties, weighing in evidence on a case-by-case basis. The Honor Board also has an established appeal process established should a student find fault in the penalty assigned.

What penalty should be assigned?

The Honor Board maintains a Penalty Matrix listing recommended penalties to be consistent and fair in its rulings, however, what penalty is given is always determined on a case-by-case basis, with factors like the class year of the student, the type/number of the assignments affected, and premeditation or malicious intent also working to drive the decision of the Honor Board. The Penalty Matrix states that for the falsification of an attendance sheet, the recommended minimum penalty is a zero for the attendance portion of the final grade, and the

maximum is a letter grade drop in the class plus a removable Dean's Star pending completion of the ethics course.

Considering that the attendance in this case is not counted formally as a part of the grade, the impact (on their grades and on other students) of the student's/students' falsifying the sign-in sheet is fairly low. Therefore, the students found guilty of Honor System violations would likely receive the minimum penalty for their actions, which is a zero for the attendance portion of the final grade. In this case, however, since attendance does not count toward the final grade except in the "bump" scenario, the students found guilty of the violation should simply receive no grade "bump" for good attendance, which closely follows the recommended minimum penalty outlined in the Penalty Matrix. There is probably no need for an Ethics Course, since the impact is low (the Honor Board investigation itself will probably help the students understand the ethics of their actions and remind them to be more honorable in their future classes), but that decision is ultimately left to the Honor Board and could depend on the class year and cooperation of the accused.