



**FOR INFORMATION**

**OPEN SESSION**

**TO:** Academic Board

**SPONSOR:** Mr. Christopher Lang, Director, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

**CONTACT INFO:** [christopher.lang@utoronto.ca](mailto:christopher.lang@utoronto.ca)

**PRESENTER:** See Sponsor

**CONTACT INFO:**

**DATE:** May 19, 2022 for May 26, 2022

**AGENDA ITEM:** 16c

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:** University Tribunal, Information Reports, Spring 2022

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The University Tribunal hears cases of academic discipline under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 1995* (the “Code”)<sup>1</sup> which are not disposed of under the terms of the *Code* by the Division.

Section 5.2.6 (b) of the *Terms of Reference* of the Academic Board provides for the Board to receive for information reports, without names, on the disposition of cases in accordance with the *Code*.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. Academic Board [for information] (May 26, 2022)

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

The last semi-annual report came to the Academic Board on November 17, 2021.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

The purpose of the information package is to fulfill the requirements of the University Tribunal and, in so doing, inform the Board of the Tribunal's work and the matters it considers, and the process it follows. It is not intended to create a discussion regarding individual cases, their specifics or the sanctions imposed, as these were dealt with by an adjudicative body with a legally qualified chair, bound by due process and fairness, and based on the record of evidence and submissions put before it by the parties.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

For information.

---

**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

- Information Reports of Tribunal Decisions under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 1995* (Spring 2022)

**TRIBUNAL DECISIONS UNDER THE**  
**CODE OF BEHAVIOUR ON ACADEMIC MATTERS**  
**(SPRING 2022)**

**PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of just under two years; notation on the Student's transcript for just under three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student copied an answer of another student in a final exam. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not participate in the hearing so there was no evidence of any mitigating factors; the Student had no prior offences; the seriousness of the offence undermines the very foundation of academic integrity; if plagiarism is left unchecked, it can undermine the credibility of the institution; plagiarism undermines the very foundation of academic integrity and allows students to obtain credit for work that is not their own; and it is fair that the penalty be just under two years as the Student will not be able to obtain credit from the University for two years.

**NOTE: THE STUDENT APPEALED THE IMPOSED SANCTIONS**

The University brought a motion to dismiss the appeal and without a hearing, as the Student ceased communications with the University. In allowing the motion and dismissing the appeal summarily without formal hearing, the Associate Chair noted the following: the proposed grounds of appeal do not identify any errors in the Trial Division's decision; the Student did not lead any evidence at the trial as they failed to appear and would need leave to submit evidence at the appeal hearing; absent special circumstances, a student who fails to appear at a hearing before the Tribunal of which they had reasonable notice cannot introduce evidence on appeal that they otherwise could have led before the Tribunal; there is no realistic prospect that the Student could establish an evidentiary basis for their appeal; a party who commences an appeal but then takes no steps to advance it ceases to have a genuine intention to appeal; and the appeal is vexatious, frivolous, and without foundation.

**FORGED OR FALSIFIED DOCUMENT**

**Suspension for four years; notation on the Student's transcript for five years; a grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student altered their examination booklet in an attempt to increase their mark on the exam. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not provide any character evidence; there was no

expression of remorse by the Student; there are no extenuating circumstances; this is the Student's second offence, which was committed shortly after their previous suspension ended; the University undertakes significant and expensive measures to protect the integrity of its examinations; it is important to send a clear message that surreptitious attempts to undermine the academic integrity of examinations will be taken very seriously; a significant period of suspension is required to send a clear message to the Student; given the lack of mitigating factors and that the Student failed to learn from their first offence, the sanction proposed by the University was appropriate.

### **NOTE: THE STUDENT APPEALED THE FINDING AND THE IMPOSED SANCTIONS**

In dismissing the Student's appeal, the Discipline Appeal Board ("DAB") noted the following: there was a reasonable basis for each of the Tribunal's specific findings; the Student's list of alleged discrepancies does not provide a basis upon which to dislodge the finding that the charge was made out; there is no basis for an appellate body to interfere with the findings; the DAB does not have the jurisdiction nor the relevant information to be able to attempt to reassess the weight of the evidence on which the Tribunal relied; and the DAB's review of the evidence to assess the Student's arguments has reinforced the reasonableness of the Tribunal's conclusion.

### **MISREPRESENTATIONS**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; grade of 0 in the courses; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student made misrepresentations in two emails forwarded to two Professors in an attempt to obtain an accommodation and passing grades. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had one prior offence of plagiarism; the nature of the offence is serious; by taking advantage of the University's accommodation process, the Student potentially caused harm to other students who had legitimate accommodation needs; the University should be able to trust students to take advantage of the accommodation process in good faith; offences of this nature compromise the integrity of the academic accommodation process; the Student had taken full responsibility for their conduct, expressed deep remorse, and cooperated throughout the discipline process; the Student's personal stressors and those associated with the Covid-19 pandemic were considered mitigating factors; and a penalty on the lenient end of the range was not unreasonable.

## **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of five years; notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student submitted a final paper that was copied from outside sources without citation. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had four prior academic offences which were all resolved at the divisional level; there should be a general consistency in the approach of a Panel to sanction, so that students are treated fairly and equitably; the Student admitted guilt at an early opportunity; the Student's remorse and prospect of rehabilitation mitigated against a more severe penalty; due to the four prior offences, there remains a concern about possible repetition and therefore, a significant period of suspension was appropriate; plagiarism is a significant offence that is very deliberate in nature; the University must be able to trust that students complete research and work on their own or provide proper citations as part of the University's accreditation process; the integrity of the University, and the values of the degrees it confers, is affected when students engage in academic misconduct; and academic misconduct impacts the University's reputation in the community and the reputation of other students who graduate from it.

**NOTE: THE FOLLOWING TWO CASES INVOLVED SIMILAR FACTS AND WERE HEARD BY THE SAME PANEL**

## **OBTAINING UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE AND AIDING OR ASSISTING IN THE USE OF AN UNAUTHORIZED AID**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with an exam and aided other students in the use of an unauthorized aid by posting exam questions to a subscription website that allows students to post problems to the site and obtain answers to those problems. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had a prior offence of plagiarism; the Student attended the hearing and admitted to the offences, which shows some insight and remorse; the Student sacrificed their integrity and future; by cheating on the exam, the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke the honour code essential to online learning; cheating on exams must be denounced and deterred in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; and it is too easy for students to find new outlets for unauthorized assistance in today's online world and other students must understand that this kind of misconduct will have serious repercussions.

### **OBTAINING UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE AND AIDING OR ASSISTING IN THE USE OF AN UNAUTHORIZED AID**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with an exam and aided other students in the use of an unauthorized aid by posting exam questions to a subscription website that allows students to post problems to the site and obtain answers to those problems. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had two prior offences of plagiarism; the Student attended the hearing and admitted to the offences, which shows some insight and remorse; the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke the honour code essential to online learning; cheating on exams must be denounced and deterred in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; and it is too easy for students to find new outlets for unauthorized assistance in today's online world and other students must understand that this kind of misconduct will have serious repercussions.

### **OBTAINING UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with a final exam. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had no prior offences; the Student did not attend the hearing and therefore the Panel had no evidence of mitigating factors; it is not appropriate for the Panel to draw an inference that the non-attendance of the Student reflected a lack of contrition; there was no evidence about whether the Student is contrite; non-attendance itself is not an aggravating factor; and consistency of penalties within the Tribunal is an important value in assessing penalties and recognizing the importance of academic integrity and honesty.

### **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted a final examination that contained answers that were copied from a subscription website. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the

Panel noted the following: there was no evidence before the Panel that the Student purchased the subscription; the Student intended to and did access the website; the Student chose not to participate in the hearing and forgo the opportunity to provide evidence on mitigation for penalty; it was mindful of the fact that the offence occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic and that the Student is a foreign student; in light of the circumstances, the penalty sought was not in the high end of the range; and the suspension is to run concurrently with the Student's current academic suspension.

### **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted a final examination that contained an answer that was copied from a subscription website. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: this was the Student's first offence; there was no evidence of the character of the Student or other mitigating factors; there was not enough evidence to determine whether an offence was likely to be repeated; the nature of the offence is serious; there is a need for general deterrence; the guidance outlined in Appendix A of the Code, although not binding on the Panel, demonstrates the expectations that have been communicated to students if they violate the Code; the guidance provides for a two-year suspension for a first offence of plagiarism; and although precedents do not bind the Panel, the penalty sought is one that has been imposed on other students in similar circumstances, and it is important to have general consistency at the Tribunal.

### **SUBMISSION OF ACADEMIC WORK THAT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted an essay that was previously submitted, and for which credit had previously been obtained for the same course in a different term, without the instructor's approval. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in accepting the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had two prior plagiarism offences; the penalty achieves both general and specific deterrence; the penalty balances the objective of deterrence with the opportunity for rehabilitation and return to the University; and the penalty would not be contrary to the public interest or bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

## **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted a research paper that contained passages that were copied from outside sources without proper citation or attribution. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had two prior plagiarism offences; the failure to properly reference the sources in the research paper could not be characterized as a one-time lapse in judgment; plagiarism is a serious offence that diminishes the relationship of trust between the University and its students; plagiarism undermines the evaluative process fundamental to the academic setting; entering a plea and agreeing to the sanctions showed remorse and insight; the Student was experiencing health issues at the time of the offence; the conduct of the Student was towards the relatively low end of the range of seriousness; and the penalty would not be contrary to the public interest or bring the administration of justice into disrepute.

## **SUBMISSION OF ACADEMIC WORK THAT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted an essay that was previously submitted, and for which credit had previously been obtained in another course, without the instructor's approval. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: this was the Student's first offence; since the Student did not participate in the proceeding, there was no evidence regarding the Student's character or of mitigating or extenuating circumstances; resubmissions of one's own work, arguably, is not as egregious as submitting the work of another person as one's own; the actions of the Student constitute plagiarism; this was a serious and deliberate offence that is expressly noted in the Code; a strong message must be sent to other students that such misconduct is considered a serious offence; and the penalty proposed by the University was appropriate.

## **FORGED OR FALSIFIED DOCUMENT**

**Expulsion; Suspension for up to five years; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student misrepresented their academic record in an application for employment by altering, falsifying, and circulating an unofficial copy of their transcript. The Student pled



guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: it ought not to depart from a penalty agreed upon by the parties unless it was "unhinged from the circumstance" or unreasonable; and in previous cases before the Tribunal, a recommendation for expulsion had been imposed regardless of whether it was a student's first offence, and regardless of whether a student participated and signed an agreed statement of facts or a joint submission on penalty.

#### **PLAGIARISM – PURCHASED PAPER**

**Suspension of just under five years; notation on the Student's transcript for just under five years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student plagiarized an essay which they purchased. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts. In accepting the guilty plea and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: expulsion is the appropriate starting point for offences involving purchased papers although mitigating factors sometimes lead to a reduction, generally to a five-year suspension; reduction in suspension to less than five years would require evidence of exceptional mitigating or extenuating factors; the Student's remorse and admissions weighed in favour of not recommending that the Student be expelled; evidence of exceptional mitigating or extenuating factors were not present in this case; and the seriousness of the offence combined with the detriment to the academic integrity of the University and the strong need for general deterrence all supported a five-year suspension.

#### **UNAUTHORIZED AID AND INTENT TO COMMIT AN OFFENCE**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; a grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student was in possession of a cell phone during a midterm examination. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: this was the Student's first offence; the offence in question is very serious in nature and causes detriment to the University and its student body; there is a need to deter others from committing a similar offence; the use of unauthorized aids during an exam is a threat to the integrity of the University's processes for evaluating students, is unfair to other students, and jeopardizes the University's reputation; and it is important to send a clear message that such offences will be regarded as very serious and treated accordingly.

### **UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; a grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted a test that contained an answer that was the same as one posted on a subscription website. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: this was the Student's first offence; the Student's adamant denial of the allegations and her refusal to accept responsibility for her conduct was troubling in the context of assessing her character; there was a real likelihood that the Student would potentially commit a repetition of the offence; the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke the honour code that is essential to modern learning; the sanction must denounce cheating on tests and deter others in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; students must understand that this kind of misconduct will have serious repercussions so that they will be deterred from cheating; the Student committed a more serious form of academic misconduct by using a paid commercial subscription service; the use of the paid subscription service was an aggravating factor; and normally the sanction for the first offence would be a two-year suspension but given the circumstances of this case combined with the aggravating factors, a three-year suspension was appropriate.

### **FORGED OR FALSIFIED DOCUMENT**

**Expulsion; Suspension of up to five years; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student misrepresented their academic record in an application for employment by altering, falsifying, and circulating an unofficial copy of their academic record. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student's prior sanction was an aggravating factor; the Student did not meaningfully participate in the academic discipline process or at the hearing at all; the Student's expressions of remorse do not describe any extenuating circumstances faced by the Student at the time of the offence; circulating a false academic record is premeditated and egregious conduct; forgery of an academic record is one of the most serious offences a student can commit; and it was appropriate to make a recommendation for expulsion.

### **OBTAINING UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student made use of answers posted on a subscription-based website to complete a final exam. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted

the following: this was the Student's first offence; since the Student did not participate in the process, there was no evidence regarding the Student's character or extenuating or mitigating circumstances; there was no evidence of remorse, insight or a willingness to take responsibility for their actions or to learn from their mistakes; there was no evidence of a pattern of misconduct but also no evidence to show that the Student appreciated the gravity of the misconduct; this is an extremely serious offence that harms the institution and the academic process; the offence is a serious breach of academic integrity and can be seen as an attempt to defraud the University; the associated penalty must act as a general deterrent against this type of behaviour; students must be treated fairly and equitably when being sanctioned; and there must be general consistency in the approach of the Tribunal.

### **FORGED OR FALSIFIED ACADEMIC RECORD**

**Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student wrote a false name and student number on an examination booklet during a final examination. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: there was no evidence of extenuating circumstances; there was no evidence of insight regarding the Student's conduct; forgery or falsification of an academic record is an offence of the utmost seriousness; such falsification undermines the credibility of the University and of other students who legitimately earn their degrees; and those invigilating and marking the exam went to great lengths to protect the integrity of the examination process.

### **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of four years; notation on the Student's transcript for five years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.**

The Student submitted an assignment that was written by a third party whom they hired through an online service. The assignment was nearly identical to an assignment submitted by another student in the same course who had also hired the same online service. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: this was the Student's first academic offence; plagiarism is an extremely serious offence that must be treated with the appropriate penalty; deterrence must be recognized and severe penalties enforced; the commercial nature of this offence is an aggravating factor; the Student admitted guilt from the outset and readily accepted responsibility for their actions; where a student has accepted responsibility for their

actions, a suspension that runs concurrently with a current academic suspension is appropriate; and the penalty proposed by the parties was appropriate.

### **UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE**

**Suspension of three years; notation on the Student's transcript for four years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance during a test. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student's previous admission of guilt to the same offence was an indication that the Student had not learned from the previous offence; the Student provided unbelievable explanations for both delaying the hearing and explaining the exam results which was dishonest; there was no evidence of extenuating circumstances; there was no basis to consider a lesser penalty than those imposed in similar circumstances; members of the public must be able to rely on the academic integrity of the University's evaluation processes; using an unauthorized aid is cheating; allowing cheating to go unsanctioned is unfair to other students who abide by and follow the rules and regulations; and, if not sanctioned, cheating undermines the value of the University's degrees.

### **UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

**Suspension of five years; notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the courses; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student used a paid commercial tutoring service to assist in the completion of a term assessment. The commercial tutoring service used the Student's version of the term assessment to aid over 100 other students in cheating on the same term assessment. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student admitted guilt and was remorseful; the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke the honour code that is essential to modern learning; by providing the term assessment to a commercial tutoring service, the Student permitted it to assist over 100 other students to cheat; the pandemic and the resulting online learning provides more opportunities for students to cheat, requiring the University to go to considerable lengths to detect and uncover students' misconduct; in today's online world, it is easy for students to find new ways to access unauthorized assistance and so any sanction must denounce cheating and deter others in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; students must understand that this type of misconduct will have serious repercussions; and despite the aggravating factor related to the use of a paid tutoring service, the Student's admission and remorse made a suspension rather than expulsion a more appropriate sanction.

## **UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE**

**Suspension of two years and four months; notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student used a subscription-based website to complete a final exam. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student admitted guilt early on in the process and took responsibility for their actions; the Student had no prior offences; the personal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Student; by entering into the agreed statement of facts and the joint submission on penalty, the Student demonstrated insight; the offence is serious in nature; there is a need for general deterrence, especially in the context of the shift to online learning; and the joint submission on penalty was reasonable.

## **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of four years; notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student copied answers from a subscription-based website to complete a final exam. In finding the Student guilty, and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had pled guilty to the same offence on two previous occasions, which indicated that they had not learned from those previous experiences; there was no basis on which to consider a lesser penalty than that requested by the University; the Student provided unbelievable explanations for both delaying the hearing and explaining the exam results, which was dishonest; the Student's previous offences and the use of a paid service was a basis for imposing a four-year suspension rather than the three years that have been imposed in other cases involving the same subscription-based website; using an unauthorized aid is cheating; allowing cheating to go unsanctioned is unfair to the other students who abide by the rules and regulations; and if not sanctioned, cheating undermines the value of the University's degrees and the grades of honest students.

## **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of four years and eight months; notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student purchased an assignment from a third party agency and submitted it for academic credit. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: a joint submission may be rejected only in circumstances where to give effect to it would

be contrary to the public interest or would bring the administration of justice into disrepute; the joint submission must be measured against the understood and entrenched set of values and behaviours; a joint submission may only be rejected if it is offensive to these values of the University; and the joint submission was reasonable and appropriate.

### **PLAGIARISM**

**Suspension of five years; notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student paid an essay writing service to write an essay, which the Student submitted for academic credit. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student had no prior offences; the Student demonstrated insight and remorse; purchased essay offences are about as serious as can be committed in a University setting; a joint submission may be rejected only in circumstances where to give effect to it would be contrary to the public interest or would bring the administration of justice into disrepute; and the proposed penalty fell within the range of penalties imposed in similar cases.

### **FORGED OR FALSIFIED DEGREE**

**Suspension of five years; notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld**

The Student misrepresented their academic status by altering a copy of another person's University of Toronto Degree and submitting it as part of an application for employment. The Student pled guilty and agreed with the facts. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: a joint submission on penalty is a strong indication that the appropriate balancing of interests has occurred; this was the Student's first offence; the Student admitted to the offence at the first opportunity; the Student led evidence of a number of circumstances including both economic and emotional pressures imposed by the earliest days of the Covid-19 pandemic; the offence may have not come to light if the prospective employer had not employed a verification service to check the Student's academic qualifications; a falsified degree certificate in order to secure employment is one of the most serious academic offences; forging a degree certificate from the University can devalue its reputation for academic excellence, and is profoundly unfair to students who fully complete their degree programs; deliberate dishonesty must always be denounced and deterred in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; the facts of this case did not warrant expulsion; a notation until graduation was flexible and would fulfil the aims of the sanction; and the joint submission does not bring the administration of justice into disrepute and is not otherwise contrary to public interest.