

**THE UNIVERSITY TRIBUNAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

IN THE MATTER OF charges of academic dishonesty made on July 17, 2024, as revised on September 26, 2024,

AND IN THE MATTER OF the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 2019*,

AND IN THE MATTER OF the *University of Toronto Act, 1971*, S.O. 1971, c. 56 as am. S.O. 1978, c. 88

B E T W E E N:

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

- and -

A [REDACTED] G [REDACTED]

REASONS FOR DECISION

Hearing Date: June 18, 2025, via Zoom

Members of the Panel:

Douglas F. Harrison, Chair
Professor Michael Saini, Faculty Panel Member
Laiba Butt, Student Panel Member

Appearances:

Lily Harmer, Assistant Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP
Adam Iggers, Assistant Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Hearing Secretary:

Karen Bellinger, Associate Director, Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

In Attendance:

A [REDACTED] G [REDACTED]

Charges and Hearing

1. The Trial Division of the Tribunal held a hearing by videoconference on June 18, 2025, to address the charges brought by the University of Toronto (the “University”) against A■■■■■ G■■■■■ (the “Student”) under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 2019* (the “Code”). The Student attended the hearing, without representation. The charges against the Student were set out in a letter to the Student dated September 26, 2024, as follows:

1. On or about September 13, 2023, you did knowingly forge or in any other way alter or falsify an academic record, or did utter, circulate or make use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely a document that purported to be an official transcript from Athabasca University as of September 12, 2023, that you submitted to the University of Toronto in support of your application for transfer credits to support Guaranteed Admission to the Rotman Commerce program, contrary to Section B.I.3(a) of the *Code*.
2. In the alternative, you did knowingly engage in a form of cheating, academic dishonesty or misconduct, fraud or misrepresentation not otherwise described in order to obtain academic credit or other academic advantage of any kind in connection with documents purporting to be an official transcript from Athabasca University as of September 12, 2023, that you submitted to the University of Toronto in support of your application for transfer credits to support Guaranteed Admission to the Rotman Commerce program on September 13, 2023, contrary to Section B.I.3(b) of the *Code*.

Particulars of the offences charged are as follows:

1. At all material times, you were a student at the University of Toronto.
2. On or about September 13, 2023, you knowingly submitted a forged, altered and/or falsified transcript purporting to be from Athabasca University, dated as of September 12, 2023 (the

“Purported Transcript”) to the University in support of your eligibility for Guaranteed Admission to the second year of the Rotman Commerce program.

3. You did not take the courses and/or you did not earn the grades listed on the Purported Transcript.
4. You knew or ought to have known that the Purported Transcript was forged, altered, or falsified and misrepresented your true academic history when you uttered, circulated, or made use of it.
5. You had an obligation to provide accurate and truthful information and not to misrepresent your academic record.
6. You submitted the false information in the form of the Purported Transcript in order to improve your chances for admission to the second year of the Rotman Commerce program.
7. You knowingly engaged in a form of cheating, academic dishonesty or misconduct, fraud or misrepresentation not otherwise described in the Code in order to obtain academic credit or other academic advantage of any kind in connection with the Purported Transcript.

Facts

2. The parties filed an Agreed Statement of Facts (“ASF”) with the Panel. The Student acknowledged that she had received a copy of the charges, waived the reading of them, pled guilty to all charges, and had reasonable notice of the hearing. The Student also acknowledged that she received and reviewed the affidavits of Kaki Narh Blackwood, affirmed May 1, 2025, Cassandra Derr, affirmed June 10, 2025, Hiu Ching (Rita) Tang, affirmed April 29, 2025, and Laurie O’Handley, affirmed May 30, 2025. The Student accepts the affiants’ evidence, agrees with the facts as set out in the affidavits, and confirmed that she waived her right to cross-examine any of the affiants. The facts agreed to are as follows.

3. The Student was registered as a first-year student in the Faculty of Arts & Science (“FAS”) in the Rotman Commerce program offered jointly by FAS and the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto at all material times.

4. Rotman Commerce offers a guaranteed admission process for a place in the Rotman Commerce program beginning in second year to eligible FAS students. To be eligible, the Student was required to successfully complete certain courses with grades above specified levels. These included at least a grade of 67 in RSM100, and grades of at least 63 in each of ECO101, ECO102 and MAT133.

5. The Student successfully achieved a grade of 71 in RSM100. She first obtained a grade of 52 in ECO101 in Winter 2022, then of 63 in that same course which she took a second time in Summer 2022. She received a grade of 42 in MAT133 in Winter 2022.

6. On September 13, 2023, the Student sent an email to Academic Services at Rotman Commerce. In her email, the Student said she had taken three courses over the summer at Athabasca University. She attached a transcript of her academic record from Athabasca University (the “AU Transcript”), which she said she had recently received from Athabasca University. On the basis of the forged transcript, the Student asked to be enrolled in Rotman Commerce courses as soon as possible. The Student further indicated that she had applied for transfer credits for the three Athabasca University courses.

7. The Student had an obligation to provide accurate and truthful information and not to misrepresent her academic record.

8. The Student did not take the courses and/or did not earn the grades listed on the AU Transcript.
9. The Student did not obtain the AU Transcript from Athabasca University, which confirmed that the AU Transcript was not a true academic record of the Student.
10. The Student created the AU Transcript herself and submitted it to the University in order to gain admission into the Rotman Commerce program.
11. The Student knew when submitting the AU Transcript to the University that it was not an authentic transcript and that it contained false information, namely courses that she had not taken and/or grades she had not earned.
12. The Student admits that she knowingly forged or in any other way altered or falsified an academic record, or uttered, circulated, or made use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely the AU Transcript, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the *Code*.
13. The Student admits that she knowingly engaged in a form of cheating, academic dishonesty or misconduct, fraud or misrepresentation not otherwise described in the Code in order to obtain academic credit or other academic advantage of any kind in connection with the AU Transcript, contrary to section B.I.3(b) of the Code.
14. The Student acknowledged that she signed the ASF freely and voluntarily, knowing of the potential consequences she faced, and did so with the advice of counsel or having waived the right to obtain counsel.

Finding on Charges

15. On the basis of the ASF, the submissions of counsel and the Student, the Panel is satisfied on a balance of probabilities that the University has proven the elements of charge 1. The Panel therefore accepted the Student's guilty plea with respect to this charge and found her guilty of knowingly forging or in any other way altering or falsifying an academic record, or uttering, circulating or making use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely a document that purported to be an official transcript from Athabasca University as of September 12, 2023, that she submitted to the University of Toronto in support of her application for transfer credits to support Guaranteed Admission to the Rotman Commerce program, contrary to Section B.I.3(a) of the Code.

16. Upon these findings, counsel for the University advised that the Provost was withdrawing charge 2 as set out in paragraph 1, above.

Sanction

17. For the purpose of the sanction phase of the hearing, the Provost and the Student prepared and presented a joint submission on penalty ("JSP").

18. The Provost and the Student submitted that, in all the circumstances of the case, the University Tribunal should impose the following sanctions on the Student:

- a. A suspension from the University for a period of five years from the date of the Tribunal's order; and

- b. A notation of the offence on the Student's academic record and transcript for six years from the date of the Tribunal's order.
19. The parties also agreed that this case should be reported to the Provost for publication of a notice of the Tribunal's decision and the sanction imposed, with the Student's name withheld.
20. This request in the JSP was in part based on factors laid out in the Code and prior cases, sanctions previously handed down by the Tribunal, and the Provost's Guidance on Sanctions (but which are not binding on this Tribunal).
21. The Student acknowledged that the Provost had advised her of her right to obtain legal counsel and that she had obtained that advice or waived her right to obtain that advice.
22. The Student acknowledged that she signed the JSP freely and voluntarily, knowing of the potential consequences she faced and knowing that the Tribunal was not bound by the JSP and has the discretion to impose and/or recommend a different sanction, including one that is more severe than the JSP recommends.
23. Section C.II.(B) of the Code sets out that the Tribunal may impose a range of sanctions on a student who has been convicted under the Code, ranging from an oral reprimand to a five-year suspension or, more severely, a recommendation to the President to recommend to Governing Council of expulsion, or a recommendation to Governing Council of cancellation of a degree. The Tribunal may also order that any sanction it imposes be recorded on the student's academic record and transcript for a period of time and may also report any case to the Provost, who may publish a

notice of the decision and sanction in the University newspapers, with the name of the student withheld.

24. The Code also contains, in Appendix “C”, the Provost’s Guidance on Sanctions. Section B.8 provides, “absent exceptional circumstances, the Provost will request that the Tribunal: ... (b) suspend a student for two years for any offence involving academic dishonesty, where a student has not committed any prior offences;”

25. The sanction in a particular case is to be determined based on the circumstances of that case. However, previous decisions of the Discipline Appeals Board and this Tribunal have found that students must be treated fairly and equitably when being sanctioned, and that there must be a general consistency in the approach of the Tribunal generally (see *University of Toronto and B.S.* (Case No. 697, January 17, 2014 (Sanction)), at paragraphs 8-11).

26. As noted by the University’s counsel in their submissions in this case, *University of Toronto and Mr. C* (Case No. 1976/77-3, November 5, 1976) (“*Mr. C*”) is a foundational decision for this Tribunal insofar as its reasons for decision set out factors that a tribunal should consider when imposing a sanction:

- a. The character of the person charged;
- b. The likelihood of a repetition of the offence;
- c. The nature of the offence committed;
- d. Any extenuating circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence;
- e. The detriment to the University occasioned by the offence; and

f. The need to deter others from committing a similar offence.

27. With respect to her character, the Student ultimately admitted the offence and demonstrated remorse. This is her first offence, and, undoubtedly, she will learn from this process. During her submissions on sanction, she told the Panel that she deeply regrets what occurred here and apologized for her behaviour. The Panel concluded that the Student demonstrated insight into her actions and that there is little to no likelihood of a repetition of the offence.

28. The nature of the offence committed is egregious. Forging a transcript in order to take advantage of one of the University's programs, requires deliberation, planning and implementation. It is also not easy to detect and causes detriment to the University. The University has to be able to trust students not to submit false transcripts. Where that trust is breached by a student who knowingly submitted a false transcript, a strong sanction is warranted even when there is cooperation.

29. With respect to deterrence, the University takes its degree-granting power very seriously and must take steps to protect itself. Had the University accepted the Student's forged transcript, she would have been admitted to the Rotman program, thereby receiving a benefit to which she was not entitled, and depriving another, worthy student of that benefit. Had she gone on to graduate from the program, her degree would have tarnished the University's reputation, and the degrees rightly earned by other students. Not only must a strong message be sent to the Student in this instance, but also to the wider community to deter others from attempting something similar. The sanction must be severe in order ensure those who might otherwise be tempted to take such actions are dissuaded from doing so. As noted by the tribunal in *University of Toronto and X.Z.* (Case No. 1317, August 24, 2022), at para. 32, student forgeries of transcripts "undermine the credibility and

standing of the institution and of their peers who are attempting to legitimately use their transcripts and degrees.” In that case, the student was expelled.

30. The parties have submitted a JSP that seeks an order of suspension for the longest period provided for in the Code, effectively stopping just short of an outright expulsion. While the Tribunal is not bound to accept the JSP, there is a high threshold to clear for a Tribunal to deviate from it. The agreed, recommended sanction must be fundamentally contrary to the interests of the University and objectively unreasonable or unconscionable before a Tribunal should reject it, per the Discipline Appeals Board’s decision in *University of Toronto and M.A.* (Case No. 837, December 22, 2016), at para. 29.

31. The Provost brought to the Tribunal’s attention the decision in *University of Toronto and S.W.* (Case No. 948, August 23, 2019; January 17, 2020 (sanction)), in which the student had submitted a forged transcript, purportedly from Simon Fraser University, to the University in order to gain admission to the University and to transfer credits. In that case, the student did not have any prior offences, but she did have counsel and testified at the hearing. The panel in that instance recommended expulsion but noted there could be circumstances involving forgery or falsification of academic records where expulsion was not the appropriate sanction. The *S.W.* case is distinct from the present one, insofar as the student in *S.W.* did not cooperate with the University, had been admitted to the University, and attended as a student until such time as the forgery was detected. While she ultimately conceded that the transcripts at issue were forgeries, she said she fully intended to continue to take advantage of the forged documents if she had not been caught. This is in contrast to the Student before us now, who has acknowledged the offence and owned up to it, to face the consequences, and never was admitted to the Rotman Commerce program to which she

applied. In the Panel’s view, the Student is entitled to some credit for her actions following being charged.

32. In *University of Toronto and K.H.* (Case No. 1492, January 15, 2024) (“K.H.”), a student had forged her University transcript in an employment application. The panel noted, at para. 63, that in cases of forgery, a student “normally only avoids a recommendation of expulsion where there are significant mitigating factors, or where there is a joint recommendation on sanction, or both.” [emphasis added]

33. *K.H.* was a case in which there was no JSP, and the student did not attend the hearing. The Provost brought the Tribunal’s attention to other cases involving forgeries used in support of admission in which the sanction was a recommendation of expulsion. This Tribunal notes that in those cases, *University of Toronto and Z.Z.* (Case No. 958, April 17, 2018), and *University of Toronto and Q.W.* (Case No. 963, September 7, 2018), both of which involved a forged transcript and other documents purportedly from another university sent to the University for admission, there was no JSP and the students involved did not attend the hearing.

34. Here, the Student has recognized her wrongful behaviour, accepted responsibility, admitted guilt and cooperated with the University. The Tribunal accepts the University’s submission that these factors “take the student a long way” in obtaining credit towards her ultimate sanction. The Tribunal is satisfied that in this case a recommendation of expulsion is not warranted. Instead, the Tribunal finds that the proposed five-year suspension brings home the significance of what the Student has done.

35. Accordingly, the Tribunal finds that the JSP is not contrary to the interests of the University, is reasonable, not unconscionable and within the accepted range for similar cases.

36. The Tribunal therefore orders that the following sanctions be imposed on the Student:

- a. a suspension from the University for five years from June 18, 2025, to June 18, 2030; and
- b. a notation of this sanction on the Student's academic record and transcript for six years from the date of the Tribunal's order.

37. In addition, the Tribunal orders that this case be reported to the Provost for publication of a notice of the decision of the Tribunal and the sanctions imposed, with the name of the Student withheld.

Dated at Toronto, this 16th day of October, 2025.

Original signed by:

Douglas F. Harrison, Chair
On behalf of the Panel