

**THE UNIVERSITY TRIBUNAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

IN THE MATTER OF charges of academic dishonesty filed on January 9, 2025,

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 -

R [REDACTED] L [REDACTED]

REASONS FOR DECISION

Hearing Date: July 11, 2025, via Zoom

Members of the Panel:

Andrew Bernstein, Chair

Professor Marvin Zuker, Faculty Panel Member

Zoë Reichert, Student Panel Member

Appearances:

Lily Harmer, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Adam Iggers, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Hearing Secretary:

Carmelle Salomon-Labbé, Associate Director, Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

Not In Attendance:

R [REDACTED] L [REDACTED]

1. A hearing was held on July 11, 2025, by the University Tribunal. R [REDACTED] L [REDACTED] (the “Student”) is charged with the following offences:
 - i. You knowingly forged or in any other way altered or falsified an academic record, and/or uttered, circulated or made use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely, a document that purported to be a Transcript of Consolidated Academic Record from the University of Toronto, dated February 15, 2024, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the Code.
 - ii. You knowingly forged or in any other way altered or falsified an academic record, and/or uttered, circulated or made use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely, a document that purported to be a Transcript of Consolidated Academic Record from the University of Toronto, dated June 4, 2024, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the Code.
 - iii. In the alternative to each of the foregoing charges, 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, contrary to Section B.I.3(b) of the Code.
2. The Student retained his student status at the University of Toronto Mississauga in 2024, although he had not been enrolled in any classes since 2021.

Proceeding in the Student’s Absence

3. The Student did not attend the hearing and was not represented by counsel. The Tribunal called the hearing to order at 9:45 a.m. through the Zoom portal.
4. As the Student did not attend the hearing, counsel for the Provost asked the Tribunal to find that the Student had been provided with proper notice of the hearing, and that the hearing should proceed in the Student’s absence, under rule 17 of the Tribunal’s *Rules of Practice and Procedure* (the “Rules”), and section 7 of the *Statutory Powers Procedure Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. S.22 (the “Act”). Rule 17 and section 7 require that the Provost provide the Student with reasonable notice of the hearing before we proceed in the Student’s absence. These provisions do not require the Provost to prove that the Student actually received the notice. Rather, they require that the Provost establish that the University has given the Student reasonable notice of the charges against him and the date and time of the hearing. As explained below, we are satisfied that it did so.
5. As explained in the record, the Student had initially permitted his UToronto e mail to lapse. When the academic integrity team first e-mailed him to invite him to meet with the Dean’s Designate, it received a “bounce-back message.” It

sought an alternate e-mail and found one from his application, and tried again several times, both the alternate e-mail and the UToronto e-mail. It then forwarded the matter to the Office of the Provost for resolution.

6. After several attempts from the academic integrity team, the Student e-mailed back from his UToronto e-mail, indicating that he wanted to meet with the Dean's Designate. But the Academic Integrity Office replied that they could not assist any further (other than providing information) as the matter had been forwarded to the Office of the Provost. The Student replied further to apologize from his UToronto e-mail in late December 2024. That was the last time the Student responded.
7. The Office of the Vice-Provost served the charges to his UToronto e-mail on January 9, 2025, and the Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances (the "ADFG Office") sent him a letter to the same e-mail on January 10, 2025, with information about the process.
8. A lawyer at the office of the University's Discipline Counsel e-mailed the Student on March 25, 2025, to introduce himself and to provide a disclosure letter. It included a note indicating that he was expected to monitor and retrieve e-mails on a regular basis in accordance with the University's *Policy on Official Correspondence with Students*. The letter was to the same effect. He provided correspondence to the Student several more times at both his UToronto e-mail and the alternate e-mail, including on April 14, April 29 and May 13.
9. On June 10, counsel e-mailed again (to both addresses) to discuss scheduling the hearing, and advised that if he did not reply, the hearing would be scheduled without him. He reminded him on June 16, and on June 17, e-mailed him to say that the hearing would be on July 11 at 9:45 a.m. There was a further e-mail about the prospect of hearing two similar matters together (although they were not ultimately heard together).
10. On June 23, the ADFG Office issued a Notice of Virtual Hearing for July 11 and sent it to both e-mail addresses (the UToronto and the alternative addresses).
11. Counsel made several other attempts to contact the Student, including contacting him at his last known phone numbers and sending a courier package to his last known address in Hong Kong. The courier package was delivered and signed for by someone with the same last name as the Student.

12. Rule 13 of the Tribunal's Rules states that charges, notices of hearing, disclosure and other materials may be served on students by a variety of means, including sending a copy of the document by courier to the student's mailing address contained in ROSI, sending a copy of the document to the student's e-mail address contained in ROSI, or by any other means authorized under the *University's Policy on Official Correspondence with Students*.
13. Under the circumstances, we are satisfied that the University complied with its policy, and this rule. The University made substantial attempts to notify the Student of this hearing, in numerous ways. We therefore ordered that the matter proceed in the Student's absence.

Finding of Offence

14. The essence of this case is that the Student twice submitted a forged U of T transcript to another institution. Since the Student did not attend the hearing, the facts are not contested, and we do not know the Student's position on any of this. But the evidentiary record is rather telling.
15. The University Registrar's Office (URO) received a request from the School of Engineering at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) to verify two transcripts provided by the Student (the "Submitted Transcripts"). The transcripts themselves had discrepancies between each other, which raised a red flag for HKUST.
16. When the URO compared the Submitted Transcripts with their own records, they noted a number of discrepancies. These included:
 - a. Showing that the Student enrolled in 26 courses that the Student had not taken.
 - b. Showing a total of 17.5 credits earned (in the first transcript) or 19.5 credits earned (in the second transcript), when the Student had earned only 4.0 credits.
 - c. Showing that the Student earned more credits in four different terms than he actually did.

- d. Showing incorrect grades and marks for courses that the Student had not actually taken.
 - e. Showing that the Student completed his studies and had received an Honours B.A. when he had not done so (while at the same time showing that he was still enrolled in courses).
17. There were also other more minor discrepancies, such as the Submitted Transcripts showing order dates that were not reflected in the University's records.
18. The Student admitted to using a false transcript. Although he was too late to meet with the Dean's Designate, he corresponded with Alexandra Chee, an Academic Integrity Specialist at the Dean's Office at U of T Mississauga. In his second e-mail to Ms. Chee (on December 24, 2024), he wrote:

I am writing to sincerely express my regret for the academic integrity issue I was involved in. My original intent in forging the transcript was purely to reassure my family, and I never intended for it to be used for any academic applications. Unfortunately, my family unknowingly used the forged transcript to apply to HKUST, which has caused further complications.

19. However, the Student did not attend the hearing to give evidence or make any submissions. Thus, the Provost's office has not had an opportunity to test this assertion by cross-examination. We give the explanation in this e-mail essentially no weight, although note that he has now admitted that he forged the transcript.

Analysis

20. The relevant charges are as follows:
- i. You knowingly forged or in any other way altered or falsified an academic record, and/or uttered, circulated or made use of such forged, altered or falsified record, namely, a document that purported to be a Transcript of Consolidated Academic Record from the University of Toronto, dated February 15, 2024, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the Code.
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21. The first charge relates to the First Submitted Transcript and the second charge to the Second Submitted Transcript.
22. It is clear that these offences are made out, for two reasons. First, the Student admitted to “forging” the transcript and did not say that he had done so accidentally or unintentionally. The only reasonable inference is that he did so knowingly. Even if one was to believe (which we do not) that it was to “reassure his family,” the reason the Code contains a prohibition against “forging” and not just “circulating” or “using” is to cover off the possibility that the Student adverted to in his email: that once he creates the forgery, someone else can use it.
23. That said, we do not believe that someone else submitted the transcript to HKUST. The Student was an adult. He must have known that he was applying to HKUST and that he would require a transcript from his time at U of T. Even if someone else physically uploaded the transcript (a fact for which there is no evidentiary basis), he would have known that someone was doing so. Ultimately, it was his application, and he is responsible for its contents. We therefore find the offence with respect to both charges is made out.

Penalty

24. The typical penalty for a forged transcript is a recommendation of expulsion, absent mitigating factors. The Provost has provided a list of cases to that effect, and it’s best phrased in a case called *University of Toronto and K.H.*, (Case No. 1492, January 15, 2024) at para. 63, as stating “Where forgery has been found, 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.”
25. There is good reason for this. Forgeries strike at the heart of academic integrity. U of T has an outstanding international reputation. To maintain that reputation, other institutions must know that U of T’s transcripts are reliable. Students who submit false transcripts undermine that reliability.
26. We also considered the likelihood of repetition, given the Student had committed two prior academic offences. In Fall 2019, the Student admitted to committing the offence of obtaining unauthorized assistance in relation to a course. He made the same admission in relation to another course in Winter 2021.

27. Moreover, since the Student did not attend the hearing, we are not aware of any mitigating factors. So, at the conclusion of the hearing, we recommended to the President of the University that the President recommend to the Governing Council that the Student be expelled from the University. We also ordered that the Student be immediately suspended from the University for a period of up to five years from the date of the order or until Governing Council makes its decision on expulsion, whichever comes first, and that a corresponding notation be placed on their academic record and transcript.

28. We ordered that this case be reported to the Provost for publication of a notice of the decision of the University Tribunal and the sanctions imposed, with the name of the Student withheld.

Dated at Toronto, this 29th day of October, 2025,

Original signed by:

Andrew Bernstein, Chair
On behalf of the Panel