

**THE UNIVERSITY TRIBUNAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

IN THE MATTER OF charges of academic dishonesty filed on January 23, 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 -

B [REDACTED] L [REDACTED]

REASONS FOR DECISION

Date of Hearing: July 7, 2025, via Zoom

Members of the Panel:

Karen Symes, Chair

Professor Manfred Schneider, Faculty Panel Member

Ariana Abbaszadeh, Student Panel Member

Appearances:

Lily Harmer, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Adam Iggers, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Hearing Secretary:

Christina Amodio, Special Projects Officer, Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

Not in Attendance:

B [REDACTED] L [REDACTED]

Charges and Hearing

1. This Panel of the University Tribunal held a hearing, by Zoom, on July 7, 2025, to consider the charges brought by the University of Toronto (the “University”) against B■■■■ L■■ (the “Student”) under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 2019* (the “Code”).
2. The charges against the Student are as follows:
 - i. On or before October 17 2024, 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 7, 2023, which you submitted to the University of Hong Kong, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the Code.
 - ii. In the alternative, on or before October 17, 2024, 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, when you submitted a Transcript of Consolidated Academic Record in your name that purported to be from the University of Toronto dated June 7, 2023 to the University of Hong Kong, contrary to Section B.I.3(b) of the Code.

The particulars are as follows:

- i. You were a student at the University of Toronto Scarborough (the "University") at all material times.
- ii. You did not graduate from the University.
- iii. You are not eligible to graduate from the University.
- iv. You have not attended courses at the University since at least August 2022. You are currently suspended from attendance at the University.
- v. On or before October 17, 2024, you submitted to the University of Hong Kong a transcript of consolidated academic history dated June 7, 2023 from the University in your name and with your student number (the "Transcript").
- vi. The Transcript falsely purported to confirm that you had been admitted to an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree from the University in June 2023, and that you had earned 21 credits from the University, when you had not done either of these things.
- vii. The Transcript also purported to inflate your grades in three courses by substituting passing grades in LINC12 and LINB09 in Fall 2021, and in LINCO2 in Winter 2022, for grades that had not yet been determined, and to inflate the resulting sessional and cumulative grade point averages.

- viii. You submitted the Transcript to support your application for admission to the University of Hong Kong or for a similar purpose, knowing that the Transcript was forged and contained false information and did not accurately represent your academic status or history at the University.
- ix. The Transcript falsely represented your academic record in multiple ways, including but not limited to your eligibility for graduation, grades, marks, and/or credits.
- x. You knew or ought to have known that the Transcript was forged, altered, or falsified and misrepresented your true academic status and history with the University when you uttered, circulated, or made use of it.
- xi. You had an obligation to provide accurate and true information about your academic status and record from the University and not to misrepresent your academic status and record with the University when you were communicating with the University of Hong Kong.
- xii. In engaging in the above conduct, you knowingly engaged in a form of cheating, academic dishonesty or misconduct, fraud or misrepresentation not otherwise described in the Code to obtain academic credit or other academic advantage of any kind in connection with the Transcript.

PRELIMINARY ISSUE: Proceeding in the Absence of the Student

- 3. The absence of the Student gave rise to a preliminary issue.
- 4. The Student was neither present nor represented. The University filed evidence that on October 28, 2024, the Student was first advised of the allegations that they had submitted forged and/or falsified documents to an external institution. This notification was sent by email at the email address provided by the Student to the University of Toronto in the Repository of Student Information (“ROSI”).¹
- 5. On January 23, 2025, the Student was served with the charges by email at the email address provided by the Student to the University of Toronto in ROSI. The University also filed evidence that on June 17, 2025, the Student was served with the Notice of Electronic Hearing, again via the email address provided in ROSI.²

¹ Exhibit 1 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Notice/Service) – affidavit of Ayeshika Wicks.

² Exhibit 1 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Notice/Service) – affidavit of Natalia Botelho.

6. Further, the University filed evidence that the Student's last login to the email address was on October 31, 2024. This was *after* the initial email notification of the allegations and investigation.³
7. Given the above, the Panel found that the Student was provided with reasonable notice and proper service as contemplated by rule 13 of the Tribunal's *Rules of Practice and Procedure* (the "Rules"). As such, the hearing proceeded in the absence of the Student.

SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE

8. The Panel received affidavit evidence from Rachelle Allen and Ayeshika Wicks.⁴ The Panel also heard *viva voce* evidence from Rachelle Allen.

Background

9. The Student enrolled at the University of Toronto Scarborough in Fall 2018. As of October 21, 2024, the Student had earned 19.5 credits and had a cumulative grade point average ("CGPA") of 2.33. A copy of the Student's "true transcript" was filed as an Exhibit at the hearing.⁵

Rachelle Allen

10. Rachelle Allen works as the Service Coordinator, Transcripts, in the University Registrar's Office ("URO") at the University of Toronto. She has held this position since March 2023. She has held other positions within the University in relation to transcripts since 2009.
11. The URO is the official custodian of student academic records and the student information system. The URO receives requests to verify student academic records from third parties, such as academic institutions, employers, or government agencies. Third parties may ask the URO to confirm the accuracy of a transcript or the authenticity of a degree presented to them by a student. These requests for verification are received by the URO via the Service Now portal ("The Portal"), or by emailing the URO directly. Requests sent by email are re-routed through the Portal. The URO uses ROSI to verify the authenticity of a provided transcript against the permanent records of the University.
12. On October 17, 2024, Ms. Allen received an email from Elaine Yu, Programme Office, Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong, through a request on the Portal. The email stated:

³ Exhibit 1 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Notice/Service) – affidavit of Andrew Wagg.

⁴ Exhibit 2 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Offence).

⁵ Exhibit 2 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Offence) – Tab 3, Exhibit A.

“I am writing on behalf of Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. We received the attached hard copy of transcript from Ms. B■■■ L■■■ (Student No. ■■■■■■■■■■) in June 2023. To verify the authenticity, please confirm if the transcript was issued from the University of Toronto. Thank you.”⁶

13. On October 18, 2024, Ms. Yu sent the relevant transcript (the “submitted transcript”).⁷ The submitted transcript was dated 2023-06-07 and resembled a transcript issued by the University of Toronto. It contained the Student’s name, student number, and birth day and month. These details aligned with the Student’s information in the University records. The submitted transcript showed a registration history from Fall 2018 to Winter 2023, the conferral of an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in June 2023, and listed courses adding to a total of 21.0 credits with a CGPA of 2.33.
14. Ms. Allen compared the submitted transcript with the true transcript and noted a number of discrepancies. These included:
 - The submitted transcript shows that the Student was conferred an Honours Bachelor of Arts degree from the University in June 2023, which is not true;
 - The Student’s true registration history ended in Summer 2022, whereas the submitted transcript shows it continued until Winter 2023;
 - The true transcript shows the Student’s programs as “In Progress”, whereas the submitted transcript indicates “Completed”;
 - The number of total credits earned by the Student was 19.5 credits in the true transcript but 21.0 in the submitted transcript;
 - The grades and marks that the Student received in courses in Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 were improved in the submitted transcript as compared to the true transcript.
15. Ms. Allen also provided evidence that the Student did not order a copy of their transcript on or around the date recorded on the submitted transcript as the date that it was ordered.
16. During the hearing, the Panel raised questions arising from the affidavit evidence of Ms. Allen. As a result, Ms. Allen was called as a witness to provide further evidence through *viva voce* testimony.

⁶ Exhibit 2 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Offence) – Tab 3, Exhibit B.

⁷ Exhibit 2 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Offence) – Tab 3, Exhibit C.

17. Ms. Allen was asked if she has ever received a request for authentication from the University of Hong Kong before. Ms. Allen believed that she had but could not independently recall without checking through records. Ms. Allen testified that it is possible for someone other than the Student to order a copy of the Student's transcript, but that individual would need to know personal information about the Student to do so. Ms. Allen was not personally aware of any instance where an individual has submitted a falsified transcript of someone else.
18. In response to the question raised by the Panel, Ms. Allen could not provide any information about the provenance of the submitted transcript at the University of Hong Kong beyond what was included in the request for verification from Ms. Yu. Ms. Allen did not speak to Ms. Yu, or anyone else at the University of Hong Kong, directly beyond the email exchange that was filed as part of her affidavit. Ms. Allen could not answer the following questions raised by the Panel:
 - If the submitted transcript was provided to the University of Hong Kong in June of 2023, why was the request for verification not made until October 17, 2024, approximately 16 months later?
 - Ms. Yu stated that "we received" the submitted transcript. Who is "we"?
 - How was the submitted transcript provided to the University of Hong Kong? i.e. by hand, mail or electronically?
 - Was the submitted transcript received personally from the Student or assumed to have been received by the Student?

The Investigation

19. The Panel received the affidavit evidence of Ayeshika Wicks. Ms. Wicks is an Academic Integrity Specialist with the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean (the "Dean's Office").
20. In the Fall of 2024, the Dean's Office received a report that the Student had submitted a forged and/or falsified document to another academic institution. On October 28, 2024, Ms. Wicks emailed the Student a letter inviting the Student to a virtual meeting to discuss the allegations. The meeting was originally scheduled to take place on November 5, 2024, at 3:15 pm. On October 30, 2024, Ms. Wicks emailed the Student to advise that the time for the meeting was changed from 3:15 pm to 1:00 pm. On November 4, 2024, Ms. Wicks emailed the Student to remind them of their meeting the following day. Ms. Wicks did not receive a response to any of these emails.

21. The Student did not attend the meeting on November 5, 2024. On November 7, 2024, a letter was sent to the Student informing the Student that the matter would be sent to the Vice-Provost of the University for resolution.⁸

ARGUMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

22. Given the above evidence, the University argued that the Student knowingly submitted an altered and false transcript to the University of Hong Kong.
23. The Panel raised the following question during the hearing: if we do not know who the “we” is that the submitted transcript was submitted to and we do not know how the submitted transcript was submitted, how do we know it was submitted by the Student, or even with the knowledge of the Student?
24. In response to this question, the University argues that (1) the only person who stood to gain from submitting the falsified transcript was the Student; and (2) there is no evidence that someone other than the Student is responsible for submitting this falsified document.

FINDINGS OF THE PANEL

25. Following deliberations, the Panel determined that the evidence established, on a balance of probabilities, that the Student had knowingly submitted an altered and false transcript to the University of Hong Kong. It was clear from the evidentiary record that the submitted transcript had been altered in several material ways.
26. The Panel had concerns about the gaps in the evidentiary record about who the submitted transcript was provided to and how the submitted transcript was provided to the University of Hong Kong. The Panel had concerns about the lack of direct evidence that the submitted transcript was personally submitted by the Student or with the Student’s knowledge. Finally, the Panel was concerned about the lack of explanation for the 16 months that elapsed between when the submitted transcript was provided to the University of Hong Kong (in June 2023) and the request for verification (in October 2024).
27. However, the Panel was ultimately persuaded that it is more likely than not that the Student was the individual who provided the submitted transcript to the University of Hong Kong. The Panel was persuaded by the University’s argument that there is no evidence that anyone other than the Student stood to gain from the falsified transcript. This supports the inference that the falsified transcript was submitted by the Student.

⁸ Exhibit 2 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Offence) – Tab 4.

28. To be clear, the Panel did not arrive at this conclusion because the Student did not present evidence at the hearing that someone else was responsible for submitting the falsified transcript to the University of Hong Kong. While the University made this submission to the Panel, the burden of proof is not on the Student to prove that they did not commit this offence. The burden of proof is on the University to establish guilt on a balance of probabilities. While the Student does not have the burden of proving that they did not commit this offence, the absence of any evidence that someone else is responsible for the falsified transcript is one piece of circumstantial evidence supporting the conclusion that the Student is guilty of the offence charged.
29. The Panel determined that it was *possible* on the evidentiary record before them that an individual other than the Student submitted the falsified transcript to the University of Hong Kong. However, a possibility that another person was involved is not sufficient to find the Student not guilty of the offence charged. This is not a criminal trial where the prosecution is required to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The University is only required to prove that it is more likely than not that the Student is responsible for submitting the falsified transcript. The Panel concluded that the University had met that burden and found the Student guilty of the first offence (section B.I.3(a)). The second charge was withdrawn.

PENALTY

30. The University submitted that the appropriate sanction in this case was (1) a recommendation that the Student be expelled from the University, and (2) an immediate suspension of the Student from the University for a period of up to five years or until the Governing Council makes its decision on expulsion, whichever comes first. The University also submitted that a corresponding notation should be placed on the Student's academic record and transcript. The University also submitted that this case should be reported to the Provost for publication of a notice of the decision of the Tribunal and the sanction imposed, with the name of the Student withheld.
31. After reviewing the evidence and hearing submissions, the Panel concluded that the penalty recommended by the University was appropriate in the circumstances. In arriving at this decision, the Panel took into consideration the nature of the offence, the detriment to the University occasioned by the offence, the need to deter other students from acting in a similar manner, the character of the Student, and the circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence (*University of Toronto and Mr. C.* (Case No. 1976/77-3, November 5, 1976) at p. 12).

32. The Panel considered the character of the Student. The Panel was provided with a Book of Documents on Sanction.⁹ The Student has six prior academic offences:
- Plagiarism in connection with the final exam in FSTA01H3 in Fall 2018 for which the Student received a zero on the exam and a notation on her transcript until graduation. The Student was also warned about the seriousness of this offence;
 - Unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in LINB09H3 in Fall 2020 for which the Student received a zero on the final exam and a notation on her transcript for one year. The Student was also warned about the seriousness of this offence;
 - Unauthorized assistance in connection with an assignment in LINC12H3 in Fall 2021;
 - Unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in LINB09H3 in Fall 2021;
 - Plagiarism in connection with the final paper in LINC02H3 in Winter 2022;
 - Concoction of sources in connection with the final paper in LINC02H3 in Winter 2022.
33. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth offences were addressed collectively. The Student admitted to these offences, and they were referred to the Provost's Office for resolution because the Student had multiple prior offences. Following a Tribunal hearing, the Student was found guilty of all of the offences. On June 19, 2024, the following sanctions were imposed: (1) a final grade of zero in each of the three courses, (2) a suspension from the University for five years, and (3) a notation of the sanction on the Student's academic record and transcript for six years, or until graduation (whichever comes first).
34. The Student committed a very serious offence. The Tribunal has repeatedly made it clear that forgery is regarded as a most-serious academic offence that undermines the integrity of the University. It misrepresents a student's academic accomplishments. Preventing this type of offence from occurring is critical to protecting the reputation of the University.¹⁰

⁹ Exhibit 3 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Sanction).

¹⁰ *University of Toronto and S.W. (Case No. 948, April 16, 2020); University of Toronto and S.G. (Case No. 1052, October 20, 2020)*

35. Given the seriousness of forgery offences, the most serious sanction is commonly imposed – a recommendation of expulsion – other than in exceptional circumstances.¹¹ Expulsion has not been recommended in cases where the Student participated in the discipline process, agreed to a joint statement of facts and/or joint statement on penalty, or showed remorse. None of those factors are present in this case.
36. The University provided the Panel with authorities on the appropriate sanction in cases of forgery.¹² Of the 14 cases provided, all but one case resulted in a recommendation for expulsion. Many of the cases provided by the University that did result in a recommendation for expulsion were comparatively less serious than the present case. The one case that did not result in a recommendation for expulsion was *University of Toronto and B.L.* (Case No. 1496, November 18, 2024). In deciding to impose a five-year suspension instead of a recommendation for expulsion, the Panel noted that this was “not without some hesitation.” In *B.L.*, the Student had two prior academic offences but had only received “mild” sanctions for those offences and had not been previously suspended. The offences all occurred within a relatively short period of time, as contrasted with the present case in which the offences span from 2018 until 2023. In *B.L.*, the Panel noted with considerable importance that the Student was on the verge of graduation.
37. This is the Student’s seventh offence. The Student is currently suspended from the University because of the Order dated June 19, 2024. The Student has been warned multiple times about the seriousness of this type of conduct. The Student appears to be unrepentant and to have learned absolutely nothing from prior sanctions. There are no mitigating factors or extenuating circumstances present in this case. There is a high likelihood of repetition of the offences if the Student is allowed to remain a part of the University of Toronto. In all of the circumstances, the Panel is in agreement with the University that the appropriate sanction in this case is a recommendation of expulsion.
38. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Panel issued the following Order, which is hereby confirmed:
- i. The hearing may proceed in the absence of the Student;
 - ii. The Student is guilty of knowingly forging or in any other way altering or falsifying an academic record, and/or uttering, circulating, or making 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 7, 2023,

¹¹ *University of Toronto and N.R.* (Case No. 714, October 11, 2013); *University of Toronto and S.W.* (Case No. 948, April 16, 2020);

¹² Exhibit 3 – Book of Documents of the University (re: Sanction) – Tab B.

which the Student submitted to the University of Hong Kong,, contrary to section B.I.3(a) of the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*;

- iii. Recommends to the President of the University that the President recommend to the Governing Council that the Student be expelled from the University;
- iv. The Student shall be immediately suspended from the University for a period of up to five years from July 7, 2025, or until the Governing Council makes its decision on expulsion, whichever comes first, and that a corresponding notation be placed on their academic record and transcript; and
- v. This case shall 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.

Dated at Toronto this 3rd day of November, 2025.

Original signed by:

Karen Symes, Chair

On behalf of the Panel